Fashion Icons: Power and Style

Spring 2024

Instructor: Vivien Chung
Class Times: M/W 3:00-4:15 PM & 4:30-5:45 PM

Course Description:

Fashion icons are individuals who have a significant influence and possess distinctive styles. This course aims to explore the relationship between the two: Does style become powerful once a person becomes influential, or does style play a role in the person gaining significance in their field? We'll also consider the types of power that style carries and how it's exercised. In the first unit, we will study fashion icons from the fashion industry, such as Coco Chanel, André Leon Talley, Kate Moss, Gigi Hadid, and Kendall Jenner. By examining biographies, editorials, and columns about these individuals, we will delve into questions such as: What defines style? Is it just about clothing? How does someone become a fashion icon? In the second unit, our focus will shift to figures outside of the fashion industry, such as Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, and Michelle Obama. We will explore the role style has played in their careers and its part in authority-building and social positioning. We'll also examine how attire is linked to character and job performance, including leadership and entrepreneurship. This will lead to a discussion on the influence of class, race, and gender in forming these connections, and whether style is deceptive or substantial in its power. Throughout both units, students will explore studies on style conducted by anthropologists, sociologists, and business scholars. Using these insights, we will apply these concepts to understand how fashion icons are made. For the final unit, students will select a fashion icon and write a research paper analyzing their rise to stylistic prominence. By the end of the semester, students will have cultivated their unique perspective on style, shaped by their own research and analysis.

Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Attendance

The Writing Program attendance policy is intended to make sure that you get everything you can out of your Expos course. Because Expos has fewer class hours than some other courses; because the course is largely discussion-based; and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential to your learning in the course.

While I of course encourage you to be present every day in class, you are allowed two *unexcused* absences for the semester with no consequence. Some absences (religious holidays and medical situations) are automatically considered excused; some family circumstances may also be counted as excused absences. You are expected to notify me ahead of time about those absences unless circumstances make that impossible. If you miss a third class for unexcused reasons, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss your plan for catching up with any missed work, as well as issues that may be affecting your attendance or that might require attention or support from your advisers or from other College resources. If you miss a fourth class, your Resident Dean will be notified about those absences, so that your Dean can give you any support you may need to help you get back on track in the class. Missing four classes—the equivalent of two full weeks of the semester—puts you at risk for missing crucial material necessary to complete your work. Unless there is a medical or other emergency issue preventing consistent engagement with the class, students who miss four classes will receive a formal warning that they are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

In the case of a medical problem, you should contact me before the class to explain, but in any event within 24 hours; you should also copy your Resident Dean on that message. In the case of extended illness, you may be required to provide medical documentation. Absences because of special events or extracurricular involvement are *not* excused absences. If such circumstances lead you to want to miss more than two unexcused absences, you must petition the Associate Director of the Writing Program for permission.

Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Completion of Work

Because your Expos course is a planned sequence of writing, you must write all of the assigned essays to pass the course, and you must write them within the schedule of the course (not in the last few days of the semester after you have fallen behind). If you are unable to complete your work on time due to medical or family issues, please contact me before the deadline to discuss both the support you might need as well as a possible new arrangement for your deadline. Communication about your situation is essential so that we can determine how best to help you move forward. If we have not already discussed your situation and you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit, you will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements and asking you to meet with me and/or your Resident Dean to make a plan for catching up on your work. (In the research paper assignment, the paper must include work with multiple sources to be accepted.) The letter will also specify the new date by which you must submit the late work. If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date, *and* if you have not documented a medical problem or been in touch with your Dean about other circumstances, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you think you will require some flexibility in deadlines or participation in the course for reasons of a documented disability, please schedule a meeting with me early in the semester so we can discuss appropriate accommodations. (To be eligible for such accommodations, you need to have provided documentation to the [Disability Access Office](#) ahead of time. Please let me know if you are unfamiliar with that process.) The Disability Access Office works closely with Expos courses, and we will develop a plan that is appropriate for your needs. Please note that it is always your responsibility to consult with me as the need for those accommodations arises.

Policy on Academic Integrity

One of the essential elements of the Expos curriculum is the work we do on effective source use, appropriate acknowledgement of sources, and expectations for citing sources in academic writing. In each unit, we will practice strategies for working with the ideas of other authors and sources, and for developing your own ideas in response to them. Most forms of academic writing involve building on the ideas of other writers and thinkers, contributing ideas of your own, and signaling clearly for readers where each idea comes from. This complex relationship with sources is part of our work through the whole semester, and you should always feel free to ask me questions about this material.

As we become familiar with the expectations of an academic audience, we will also work on strategies to avoid errors in citation and unintentional plagiarism. As with all your courses, the expectation in Expos is that *all the work that you submit for this course must be your own. Your work should not make use of outside sources unless such sources are explicitly part of the assignment*. Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to review by the Honor Council, including potential disciplinary action.

In addition to acknowledging how other writers have contributed to your work, doing your work with integrity means developing ideas that are wholly and genuinely yours. For this reason, students are prohibited from using ChatGPT or other generative AI tools for any stage of the writing process in Expos. The reasons for this policy in Expos are important: you discover your ideas in the messy process of drafting and revising them. Engaging with that writing process develops your ability to think clearly, organize that thinking, find appropriate evidence, pursue deeper nuances in and counterarguments to your claims and the evidence you use to present them, and work through alternative positions and evidence. To outsource any of that process to AI robs you of the practice with these skills that will strengthen your thinking; turning to AI essentially means you are giving up *your voice* in an essay, accepting instead an average and generic answer (which is what generative AI produces). In your Expos course, submitting work as yours that you did not develop or create on your own is a violation of the Harvard College Honor Code.

While the product of an Expos class may be the papers that you write, the broader goal is to strive to become better *thinkers*. The ability to participate independently in important discussions, the confidence to add your voice to challenging topics, the precision of mind to understand when a speaker is credible and should be taken seriously and when that isn't the case—these are all skills you develop through that rigorous thinking process that writing fosters. Allowing generative AI to take the place of that thinking shortchanges your development as a writer, a thinker, and a creative participant in developing ideas. In our class, your classmates and I are eager to hear what *you* have to say.

Policy on Deadlines and Extensions

Expos is a course that builds sequentially: the class exercises and response papers prepare you for the draft; your work in the draft lays the foundation for a strong revision; the skills and strategies you learn in Unit 1 remain essential in the new challenges of Unit 2. Because of this sequential work, keeping up with the course deadlines is necessary to your continued learning. For this reason, I grant extensions only in exceptional circumstances.

As a first-year student, part of what you are learning is how to manage your time, to balance your academic and extracurricular responsibilities, and to build habits of working that allow you to complete long and complex assignments independently. These are challenges that every student in the class faces this semester. However, situations can arise that go beyond these typical first-year challenges. If you find yourself dealing with medical issues, family emergencies, or extraordinary situations that genuinely interfere with your work, please let me know. I won't need to know personal details, but we can meet to make a plan to help you move forward in a reasonable way in light of the circumstances you are facing. In these situations I also urge you to reach out to your Resident Dean, your proctor, or your adviser so that you have the necessary support in all of your courses.

Policy on Electronic Submissions

You will submit your work electronically this semester through our Canvas site. As you send or upload each document, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have saved the document as a word file. It is also your responsibility to ensure that the file you are sending is not corrupted or damaged. If I cannot open or read the file you have sent, the essay will be subject to a late penalty.

Policy on Collaboration

As in many academic situations, our Expos class will be a setting that involves frequent collaboration—we will develop ideas together through class discussion, peer review, and draft

workshops. The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students and through peer review of written work (including feedback from Writing Center tutors). It is a form of academic integrity to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay; you can do this in a footnote at the beginning of the paper. As stated in the *Student Handbook,* "Students need not acknowledge discussion with others of general approaches to the assignment or assistance with proofreading." However, all work submitted for this course must be your own: in other words, writing response papers, drafts or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

Policy on Course Materials

The work we do together in class—discussions, exercises, workshopping essays—is intended for the members of our class. Students are not allowed to record class and are not allowed to post video or audio recordings or transcripts of our class meetings. (Students needing course recordings as an accommodation should contact the [Disability Access Office](#).) While samples of student work will be circulated within the course (and all work you do may be shared with your classmates), you may not share fellow students' work with others outside the course without their written permission. As the *Handbook for Students* explains, students may not "post, publish, sell, or otherwise publicly distribute course materials without the written permission of the course instructor. Such materials include, but are not limited to, the following: video or audio recordings, assignments, problem sets, examinations, other students' work, and answer keys." Students who violate any of these expectations may be subject to disciplinary action.

Policy on Feedback and Conferences

Feedback is central to Expos. As spelled out in each assignment, you will receive either substantive written feedback, a conference about your draft, or both. Every writer benefits from having an attentive reader respond to their work, and one of my roles as your preceptor is to provide that response: identifying the strengths of a draft; noting questions and reactions to help you develop your ideas further; and offering clear assessment of your revised work. There are educational reasons for the types of feedback I'll give you: they complement one another throughout the writing process and help you think about receiving feedback from different audiences at different stages of writing. Each form of feedback will help you think about another way you can ask for and receive feedback in future writing circumstances. (Feedback throughout the course also comes in other forms, such as peer review or principles from workshop that you apply to your own essays.)

There are also educational reasons for the amount and timing of the feedback I will offer. The goal of all my feedback is that you learn to incorporate the principles I'm identifying into your *own* thinking and your revision, so that eventually you are making more independent decisions in your essays about what a reader needs to understand or what the most effective structure

might be. If I as your instructor were to read a draft multiple times, offering several rounds of feedback, I would then in effect be taking over some of those decisions for you, and you would not be gaining the autonomy as a writer that you need to achieve this semester; that dynamic would shortchange the learning that you can accomplish in the course.

There are also important reasons that I schedule <u>one</u> draft conference per student for the first and final essay. Conferences are important opportunities for thinking together about questions in your argument and strategies for revision; during conference week I am meeting with all students and attempting to offer the same level of intensive work with everyone. If I were to grant a second full conference to any student, for reasons of equity I would need to offer a second meeting with everyone, and it is not possible to schedule a second round of meetings in an already busy unit.