# Material and cultural studies

## Prof. Emanuela Mora; Prof. Silvia Mazzucotelli Salice

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course introduces the two areas of material culture that constitute the pillars on which the degree program is based, namely fashion and food. For this reason, the course aims to offer students the tools to understand how fashion and food shape our daily life and the socio-economic systems in which we live. The fashion system and the food system are in fact also two important sectors in the economies of many countries all over the world. The reasons are innumerable: in the very first place these sectors employ a large number of people, in very diversified positions and with differentiated professional profiles. In addition, their products incorporate elements typical of the cultures of their countries of origin such as raw materials, craftsmanship, knowledge, values and meanings significant for local populations. In the present time, the industrial systems of fashion and food have undergone noteworthy transformations due to globalization processes, the introduction of new digital technologies, the pressure for the transition toward sustainability and, last but not least, the increasing focus on the circularity of the business process.

The course aims to:

1. Illustrate what material culture is and the central role played by artifacts in organizing social life and in carrying out people's daily lives.

2. Illustrate the role of the digital turn in contemporary forms of material culture.

3. Illustrate the main methods of studying material culture, to bring out the role of specific material culture artifacts in contemporary societies.

4. Illustrate the intertwining of material value and symbolic value of clothing and food.

5. Present the specific production chains of fashion and food, distinguishing the processes of creating material added value and those of creating symbolic added value.

6. Present the fundamental principles of the culture of sustainability in the context of the action of companies in the fashion and food sectors and their consumers.

At the end of the course students will be able to:

1. recognize the role of material culture in organizing the social life of daily life;

understand the effects of the digital turn on material culture;

2. set up an empirical study to understand the role of specific artifacts in the social contexts in which they operate;

3. distinguish the material and symbolic components of fashion and food products;

4. orienting themselves in the complex production chains of fashion and food, distinguishing the material and symbolic added value of their products;

5. master the main problems related to the transition towards the sustainability of the fashion and food supply chains;

***COURSE CONTENT***

The study of material culture has emerged in the last decades as an interdisciplinary field. It sees materiality as an integral dimension of culture and explores the complex and multi-dimensional relationship between the social world and the material world. The course will introduce key theories and analytical methodologies in this field and it will address and discuss central issues with which the field of cultural and material studies is concerned such as:

1. The definitions of culture;

2. The definition of material culture;

3. Representation and the construction of identity through material culture;

4. The production of meanings and the communicative function of cultural products;

5. Creative development of the cultural industries.

6. Convergence between practices of cultural consumption and production.

The course will approach each topic through relevant theoretical and interpretative contributions, as well as through practical examples. A specific focus will be dedicated to Fashion and Food industries.

***READING LIST***

A Specific reading list for the preparation of the exam will be provided during the course and collected by the professors in a lecture note that will be made available on the Blackboard page of the course itself. The slides of the lessons and any additional didactic material used will also be available on Blackboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course takes place remotely in the first semester (I module) and in blended mode in the second semester (II module). However, it will be possible to attend the whole course from home.

The course includes lectures, practical exercises, webinars with experts from the fashion and food sectors, and discussion sessions with students to deepen the topics covered in the lessons. In the first module, the lessons will partly take place in live streaming and partly will be pre-recorded and uploaded on the e-learning platform. The practical exercises will be introduced by a live briefing session and will then be carried out by the students independently and uploaded onto the platform. Webinars and Q&A sessions will be live online, however they will also be recorded and uploaded onto the platform for home use. In module II, if possible, the lessons will be in attendance, but still recorded and uploaded to the e-learning platform.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The learning outcomes acquired by the student are verified through ongoing assessment. In each module students will face a practical assignment (specifically an individual assignment in the first module; and a group assignment in the second module); each of these two constitutes 25% of the final evaluation; in addition, students will take a written exam at the end of each teaching module for a total of 2 written tests (each written exam provides 25% of the final assessment).

Further information or clarifications in this regard will be provided by the professors during the course; the answers to the most frequently asked questions will be available in the Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) section on the Blackboard page of the course itself.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

No prior knowledge is required; however, intellectual curiosity for the study of material cultures and cultural dynamics and a minimum knowledge of sociological terminology are desirable. To this end, the consultation of a Sociology Dictionary is recommended.

Students are encouraged to regularly consult the Blackboard platform for alerts and updates. In the event that the sanitary emergency relating to the Covid-19 pandemic will not allow face-to-face teaching, distant learning will be guaranteed as said in the previous part of this program.

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching and assessment will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

*Place and time of consultation hours*

Prof. Emanuela Mora: By appointment, on Skype and/or Teams. During the Summer Term also in presence, on Wednesda, at 10.30am. Department of Sociology, Franciscanum Building, III Floor

Prof. Silvia Mazzucotelli Salice: by appointment, Department of Sociology, Franciscanum Building, III Floor. Please, ask the Secretariat for Prof. Mora’s office directions.