

Master of Science in Sustainability Management**SUMA PS6125 Fashion Policy and the Politics of Government Action****Scheduled Meeting Times: TBD****Number of Credits (3)****Elective**

Instructor: Ms. Cline, Michelle Gabriel
Office Hours: By appointment. Please provide a 24 hours' notice to schedule an appointment.
Response Policy: Responds within 24 hours during the workweek.

Teaching Assistants: TBD
Office Hours: TBD
Response Policy: TBD

Course Overview

The fashion industry is an ideal case study of how governments, communities, citizens, and international institutions attempt to improve the social and physical sustainability impacts of major industries. Apparel is one of the largest consumer sectors in the world and is said to have the most globalized supply chain, meaning its impacts and importance touch nearly every corner of our planet.

Historically, apparel, footwear, and textiles have been at the center of some of the most consequential government actions as we strive for liberal Western democracy, including the abolition of slavery and the passage of the first workplace safety, labor, and environmental laws in the United States. In recent years, fashion has returned to the center of dynamic policy debates within the sustainability and social impact space, from issues of greenwashing and climate change to forced labor.

Today, the \$2.5 trillion global fashion industry's social and environmental impacts often evade regulation. Major brands leverage long and opaque supply chains for raw materials and cheap manufacturing costs with little accountability. Private regulation and voluntary commitments have policed global supply chains for the better part of four decades, an approach, as this class explores, that arguably has ended in failures to protect human and environmental rights. The fashion industry's lack of accountability has cost lives, including the notorious Rana Plaza building collapse in 2013, where 1,132 garment makers died, and has led the industry to contribute to a sizable percentage of annual climate change. Profits have been pushed to the top of the supply chain, while garment makers consistently toil for poverty wages, and the pollution and environmental degradation of fashion is a burden almost exclusively carried by low-income nations and communities of color that manufacture clothing and produce raw materials.

But the tide is turning. Governments are once again being asked to step in and regulate the fashion industry and other consequential consumer industries. Can effective policies police international supply chains and achieve their intended aims? How can they be designed to address root causes and systemic injustices, and how can the policy process be inclusive and representative? Can policies be designed to avoid unintended consequences, or is the democratic policy process doomed to compromise and thus flaws? This course is a survey of the fast-evolving space of modern environmental and labor policy as it intersects with the fashion industry and seeks to incentivize more responsible business behavior in the realm of social, environmental, and governance impacts. The class will use recently passed and proposed fashion social and sustainability policies as our case studies, mostly in the US and the

EU, such as the New York State Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act (the Fashion Act); the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Draft Directive (EU CSDDD); the US federal FABRIC Act; the EU's Waste Framework Directive, to name a few.

In this course, we also critically explore the history, practicalities, limitations, and power dynamics of policy-making as a tool for problem-solving social and environmental problems through the lens of fashion with an emphasis on US and EU policy, looking at (1) the history and modern evolution of fashion policy in the environmental, civil rights, labor, and human rights space using both historical and current case studies, (2) the contested role of government in society, and the class, race, and gender politics of government engagement, and efforts to democratize the policy-making process, (3) the shift from private to public regulation and the varied approaches to regulating fashion, from soft to hard law, and (4) the industry opportunities and responses to and impacts from policy, including preparing for compliance and lobbying government.

This class will focus on developing the skills to critically understand and react to the fashion policy landscape and to analyze the government's power and limitations and the industry's role in shaping social change in fashion through the lens of social, environmental, racial, and economic justice for the full fashion supply chain.

Learning Objectives

- L1: Students will demonstrate an understanding of **the history of government efforts in developing labor and environmental standards** through the lens of the apparel, textiles, and footwear industry and learn to identify **the key stakeholders** that shape policy and are affected by it.
- L2: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the **history and power dynamics** that determine how environmental and labor policy is made and what outcomes it produces, and how power, money, inequality, and organizing shape this process.
- L3: Students will demonstrate an understanding of and learn to **critically analyze the key components and approaches and potential effectiveness of emerging policies**. Students will apply **social science methods** to current policy case studies.
- L4: Students will develop an understanding of **how ethics, equity and bias** influence the development of fashion supply chains and policy's potential and limitations for influencing these dynamics.
- L5: Students will **demonstrate an understanding** of how the fashion industry is impacted by, engages with, and shapes the policy process. They will develop the capacity to understand the business perspective and how companies can prepare for social and environmental regulations.
- L6: Students will develop an **authoritative and informed position on policy matters**, which they will demonstrate through writing a final policy analysis that makes a recommendation to either industry or civil society on either for or against one of our fashion policy case studies.

Readings

Required books: None.

Other Required Readings: These materials will be made available directly in electronic or hard copy form, or made available on Canvas through an Internet link or a posted item.

This Syllabus may be revised during the course of the semester to reflect the inclusion of additional material or adjustments to the schedule. You are obliged to look for updates on Canvas.

Course Policies

Participation and Attendance

I expect you to attend all classes as we will be covering a lot of material and in-class discussion and learning is integral to the course. Students can miss up to two classes per semester with prior notification from the instructor

without their Participation and Attendance being impacted. Participation is graded based on in-class work. Your attendance and participation will be assessed via a letter grade in Week 13.

Late work

Work that is not submitted on the due date noted in the course syllabus without advance notice and permission from the instructor will be graded down 1/3 of a letter grade for every weekday (not weekends) it is late (e.g., from a B+ to a B).

Citation & Submission

All written assignments must use APA format, cite sources, and be submitted to the course website (not via email).

Assignments and Assessments

Attendance and Participation - 20% (L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, L6)

Attending class in person is mandatory unless excused with prior permission, as participating in classroom discussions is critical to understanding the subject matter, fostering a healthy learning environment, and getting the most out of this course. Students should come to class having done the readings and be well prepared to listen, engage, and participate in classroom conversations and work. The participation portion of your grade is based on in-class written discussion questions, group work, and other activities announced throughout the semester and based only on whether the work is completed/performed.

Discussion posts - 30% (L1, L2, L3)

Weekly Discussion Posts: For the first 10 weeks of class, students will respond to 5 out of 10 discussion prompts of their choosing based on the topic and readings for the upcoming class. These prompts will be available on Courseworks, and students must complete any 5 of them throughout the first 10 weeks (worth 6 points each). To participate for a given week, the response must be posted by Tuesday before class at midnight EST (except for week 1, which is due Sunday after class). Responses do not have length requirements but should thoughtfully engage with the material, reflecting on and building on classroom readings and learnings. Discussion posts should be 100% original - no AI-generated text.

Mid-Point Historic Fashion Policy Memo - 20% (L3, L4, L5, L6)

Students will write a policy memo examining a historic fashion policy that explains the connection between fashion and the policy, touches on the stakeholders involved in the policy's development, and analyzes the policy's direct and indirect near-term impacts. Students will also suggest takeaways for today's policymakers. This assignment will be 15% of your grade. See Courseworks for the grading rubric and further instructions.

Final Presentations - 10% (L3, L4, L5, L6)

Each student will give a 5 to 10-minute presentation summarizing their final policy paper during the last two weeks of class. This assignment will be 10% of your grade. See Courseworks for the grading rubric and further instructions.

Final Fashion Policy Paper - 20% (L3, L4, L5, L6)

Your final paper will be a 7-to-10-page, double-spaced policy paper. Your final paper will analyze a recent or unfolding policy that analyzes the connections to fashion, identifies the relevant stakeholders, analyzes the potential or existing impacts (based on historical policies and other sectors / similar policies), and makes recommendations to strengthen/change/amend the policy. The paper should draw heavily on original research, course readings, and learnings and demonstrate comprehension of the course concepts. The grading rubric and further instructions will be posted to Coursework.

Grading

The final grade will be calculated as described below:

FINAL GRADING SCALE

Grade	Percentage
A+	98–100 %
A	93–97.9 %
A-	90–92.9 %
B+	87–89.9 %
B	83–86.9 %
B-	80–82.9 %
C+	77–79.9 %
C	73–76.9 %
C-	70–72.9 %
D	60–69.9 %
F	59.9% and below
ASSIGNMENT	% Weight
Attendance / Participation	20%
Graded Discussion Posts (5 posts / 6 points each)	30%
Mid-term historic fashion policy memo	20%
Final Fashion Policy Presentation	10%
Final Fashion Policy Paper	20%

School and University Policies and Resources

Copyright Policy

Please note—Due to copyright restrictions, online access to this material is limited to instructors and students currently registered for this course. Please be advised that by clicking the link to the electronic materials in this course, you have read and accept the following:

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

Academic Integrity

Columbia University expects its students to act with honesty and propriety at all times and to respect the rights of others. It is fundamental University policy that academic dishonesty in any guise or personal conduct of any sort that disrupts the life of the University or denigrates or endangers members of the University community is unacceptable and will be dealt with severely. It is essential to the academic integrity and vitality of this community that individuals do their own work and properly acknowledge the circumstances, ideas, sources, and assistance upon which that work is based. Academic honesty in class assignments and exams is expected of all students at all times.

SPS holds each member of its community responsible for understanding and abiding by the SPS Academic Integrity and Community Standards posted at <https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/academic-integrity-community-standards>. You are required to read these standards within the first few days of class. Ignorance of the School's policy concerning academic dishonesty shall not be a defense in any disciplinary proceedings.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

AI generative or machine learning tools can be used as a research assistant and editor to assist with specified course deliverables, provided that all utilized information is cited in accordance with program guidelines. In addition, note that information produced by AI generative tools may be inaccurate or outdated and that assignments are graded against a rubric that vets the quality of citations, sources, research, and comprehension. Please speak with your instructor if you have questions about course-specific policies relating to the usage of AI generative tools.

Inclusion

In any M.S. or M.P.S. program at SPS, faculty and staff are committed to the creation and maintenance of “inclusive learning” spaces— classrooms and other places of learning where you will be treated with respect and dignity, and where all individuals are provided an equitable opportunity to participate, contribute, and succeed. The School of Professional Studies welcomes students of all races/ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, disabilities, religion or spirituality, regional background, veteran status, citizenship status, nationality and other diverse identities.

Names/Pronouns

You deserve to be addressed in a manner that reflects your identity. You are welcome to tell me your name and pronoun(s) you would like used in class, at any time, either in person or via email.

Discrimination

The School of Professional Studies embraces the diversity of gender, gender identity and expression, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion and spirituality, disability status, family status, socioeconomic background, and other visible and non-visible identities. Columbia University does not tolerate unlawful discrimination, discriminatory harassment, sexual assault, domestic or dating violence, stalking, or sexual exploitation, and all such conduct is forbidden by Columbia University Policy.

Accessibility

The School of Professional Studies wants you to succeed in this course. Contact your SPS student advisor, who will connect you with Disability Services for learning accommodations. Columbia University is committed to providing equal access to qualified students with documented disabilities. A student's disability status and reasonable accommodations are individually determined based upon disability documentation and related information gathered through the intake process. For more information regarding this service, please visit the University's Health Services website: <http://health.columbia.edu/services/ods/support>

Duty to Report

It is Columbia University policy to require faculty and staff to report to Columbia's office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) any instance or allegation of prohibited conduct involving any undergraduate or any graduate student that is disclosed to, observed by, or otherwise known to that employee. This requirement to report is in place to help ensure that you are provided appropriate resources and to allow the University to mitigate harm to our community.

Confidential Resources

Only those Columbia University employees who work in a confidential capacity will not report information shared with them. Multiple campus resources are available to you whose representatives and staff work in a confidential capacity and do not have a duty to report. These resources include: • Sexual Violence Response & Rape Crisis/Anti-Violence Support Center (SVR) • OmbudsOffice • Medical Services • University Counseling and Psychological Services • University Pastoral Counseling • Columbia Office of Disability Services.

Class Recordings

All or portions of the class may be recorded at the discretion of the Instructor to support your learning. At any point, the Instructor has the right to discontinue the recording if it is deemed to be obstructive to the learning process.

If the recording is posted, it is confidential and it is prohibited to share the recording outside of the class.

SPS Academic Resources

The Division of Student Affairs provides students with academic counseling and support services such as online tutoring and career coaching: <https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/student-support-resources>.

Columbia University Information Technology

[Columbia University Information Technology](#) (CUIT) provides Columbia University students, faculty and staff with central computing and communications services. Students, faculty and staff may access [University-provided and discounted software downloads](#).

Columbia University Library

[Columbia's extensive library system](#) ranks in the top five academic libraries in the nation, with many of its services and resources available online.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center provides writing support to undergraduate and graduate students through one-on-one consultations and workshops. They provide support at every stage of your writing, from brainstorming to final drafts. If you would like writing support, please visit the following site to learn about services offered and steps for scheduling an appointment. This resource is open to Columbia graduate students at no additional charge. Visit <http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center>.

Career Design Lab

The Career Design Lab supports current students and alumni with individualized career coaching including career assessment, resume & cover letter writing, agile internship job search strategy, personal branding, interview skills, career transitions, salary negotiations, and much more. Wherever you are in your career journey, the Career Design Lab team is here to support you. Link to <https://careerdesignlab.sps.columbia.edu/>

Course Schedule/Course Calendar

Please refer to Courseworks for the most up-to-date assignments and readings.

Week	Topics and Activities	Readings	Assignments (due on this date)
Week 1	Session 1: Intro to Fashion Policy: • Introductions. • Class procedures/policies • Overview of semester/assignments / expectations • Fashion's impacts on society and the environment: Class-generated • Case study: Shein.	• Watch or read these resources on how politicians and journalists are trying to tackle and frame problems in fashion: ○ Video: Why lawmakers think Shein going public in the US is 'dangerous' The Hill (4 minutes) ○ Video: UK Politics: Business Secretary Badenoch Hasn't Met With Shein (1 minute) ○ Article: French lawmakers approve bill to apply penalties on fast fashion (Reuters) ○ Article: It's time to regulate the fashion industry the way we regulate oil (Fast Company) • Read these pieces related to fashion policy: ○ Book chapter: Read the intro of The Globalization Paradox, Dani Rodrik (22 pages) ○ Familiarize yourself with the Apparel Supplier's Guide to Key Sustainability Legislation (45 pgs) ○ Familiarize yourself with the Global Fashion Agenda Policy Matrix	Complete assigned readings /viewings, etc. before first class. Find 2 fashion “scandals” to share with class Attend class.

Week 2	Session 2: Why We Need Policy & Critique of Current Approaches • Theories on fashion's impact on planet and people: • Colonialism & slavery; hyperglobalization; monopsony power / smiling curve • Failure of voluntary and private regulations, e.g. factory audits / codes of conduct, voluntary reporting schemes, certifications and standards	Required Reading: • Article: "The Factory Oversight Industry Protects Profits, Not People," Maria Hengeveld, <i>The Nation</i> (5 pages) • Read the Preface and Intro of this book: "Private Regulation of Labor Standards In Global Supply Chain," by Sarosh Kuruvilla, Preface and Intro (16 pgs) • Read <i>The Economist's</i> 2022 Special Report on ESG reporting (6 pages) • Article: "Overselling Sustainability Reporting," Harvard Business Review, Kenneth P. Pucker (19 pgs) • Skim Shein's voluntary Code of Ethics and be ready to discuss it in class. Recommended: • Read the Executive Summary and Summary of Key Insights: "Not Fit-for-Purpose The Grand Experiment of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives in Corporate Accountability" Human Rights and Global Governance, MSI Integrity (10 pages) • Article: "The Twilight of the Ethical Consumer," Elizabeth L. Cline, <i>Atmos.</i> (5 pages)	Complete required readings, podcasts, videos, etc. Attend class.
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Week 3	Session 3: Fashion Policy and American History - Connecting fashion to landmark eco / human rights policies. - Abolition; the 13th and 19th Amendments; the New Deal; the CWA; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - Skills building: <i>Stakeholder analysis and power mapping</i>	Required: - Choose one of the following: - Podcast: Sha'mira Covington, Healing the Fashion Industrial Complex (55 minutes) - YouTube Video: Sven Beckert, Empire of Cotton: Global Origins of Modern Capitalism (53 mins) Read either all of the enviro or social policies: Environment: - Read this chapter, starting on pg. 117-132 (15 pgs); The Sharecropper's Story and An Ethics for Environmentalism Pests, Pollution, and Politics: The Nixon Administration's Pesticide Policy (15 pgs) - Read just the intro and summary/conclusions and recommendations of Influence of the water pollution amendments on SE textile mills (23 pgs) Social: - Journal article: Minchin, T.J. Black Activism, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry. <i>The Journal of Southern History</i>. (36 pages) - Blog post: Immigrant Garment Workers and Suffrage, GothamCenter.org (9 pages) - Article from <i>Race, Poverty, & Environment Journal</i>, The Fire Last Time: Worker Safety Laws after the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, P. Drier and D. Cohen (4 pgs)	Complete required readings and viewings, etc. Attend class.
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Week 4	Session 4: Climate Change - Measuring fashion's climate footprint - Skills building: How to read a bill - US: SEC climate disclosure draft rules and the New York Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act's (Fashion Act) climate elements. - EU: France's proposed climate labeling law, the EU CSDDD sustainability reporting requirements - Just Transition and critiques of emissions target-setting.	Required: - Skim this report: Apparel Impact Institute (Aii) and World Resources Institute (WRI): Roadmap to Net Zero: Delivering Science-Based Targets in the Apparel Sector (40 pgs) - Read: (Cornell ILR Global Labor Institute) Higher Ground Report 1: Fashion's Climate Breakdown and its Effect for Workers (55 pgs) - Read sections I through IV (Guiding Principles of the International Labor Organization (ILO)'s Guidelines on a Just Transition (5 pages) Read these texts on climate policy developments that impact fashion: New York: Read the bill text of the New York Fashion Act in full (A4333). Find and pay close attention to the climate provisions, try to deduce which companies are and are not covered, and how the state plans to enforce it (8 pages) California: Read this short article on California's new climate disclosure laws (there are two!) and concerns over the feasibility of reporting on carbon emissions. Singapore: Read this short article on Singapore's new climate disclosure rules	Complete required readings/ viewings. Attend class
Week 5	Session 5: Policy Tools: Labeling & Transparency - The history and evolution, potential and limitations of mandatory disclosure laws - Early modern slavery laws: - CA Transparency in Supply Chains Act, UK and Australia Modern Slavery Act, NY Fashion Act (v1) - NY Fashion Act V1	Required: For broader context: - Read Chapters 1 to 2 of Full Disclosure: The Perils and Promises of Transparency (33 pages) - Read concluding chapter to Sarosh Kuruvilla's Private Regulation: From Opacity to Transparency (33 pages) To understand emerging policies on transparency and labeling and fashion: - Video: The EU's newly enacted Ecodesign for Sustainable Products (ESPR): The EU's new regulation on sustainable products explained (5 minutes) - Read this article on what the new EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) means for fashion.	Complete required readings / viewings, etc. Attend class.

		- Read this article on France's currently unfolding consultation process to develop an ecolabel for clothing. - Read this stakeholder letter of concern arguing that the new labeling scheme favors synthetic materials. Recommended: - Journal Article: The Failure of Mandated Disclosure, U. Of Chicago Law School by Omri Ben-Shahar and Carl E. Schneider, intro and conclusions	
Week 6	Session 6: Waste & Overproduction (Stakeholder engagement & policy impact) - Emerging policy solutions: Taxes, mandates on design and durability, incentives for circular businesses, etc. - France's Extended Producer Law; EU Circular Economy Action Plan, UK Fast Fashion Tax. - Depoliticization of waste. Who benefits/loses from waste in the Global North and South? - Justice-centered circularity. Designing policy with the Global South and impacted stakeholders involved.	Required: - Read this article on Indonesia's struggles to regulate an influx of secondhand clothes (Al Jazeera): Indonesia's war on secondhand clothes riles local sellers - Read this overview on the EU's newly proposed and enacted textile waste rules: Will Europe Take Responsibility for Its Waste? (Atmos) - Read the following 5 sections of this Gov. document: <i>EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles</i>, European Parliament, 2.1; 2.2; 2.6; 3.2; 4.2 (4 pgs) - Article: EU proposal must hold fashion brands accountable for global textile waste, advocates say (Vogue) - Article: <i>This is not your gold mine. This is our mess</i>, Liz Ricketts, Atmos magazine (12 pages) Recommend: - Article: Will the Circular Economy Save the Planet? Sierra Magazine, Elizabeth Cline (12 pages) - If you want to continue to get your feet wet on reading bills, here's the text for Senate Bill 707	Complete required readings and viewings, etc. Attend class.