British Studies Program 2016

Fashion Merchandising & Design Course

Faculty: Phyllis Bell Miller, PhD., Professor
Fashion Design & Merchandising, Mississippi State University

Course Title:
Shop the World: Designing Products, Retail Environments, Communications, and Services for Global Consumers.

Course Description:

In today’s global business environment, designers, retailers, and others must be aware of the preferences and needs of increasingly diverse consumers. Other cultures also offer inspiration for the design of products, communications, displays, and environments.

This course explores the significance of numbers, colors, symbolism, belief systems, proxemics, and other variables as they relate to consumer groups throughout the world. It also examines the effect of religious, social, political, and economic systems; physical appearance; demographics; geography; trade; and other factors as they relate to the development of apparel and other products, displays, communications, and retail spaces. Students will visit businesses, museums, markets, and other venues as they identify and decipher cultural codes. They will also participate in exclusive, hands-on workshops that explore creative-design techniques, which will be led by internationally renowned, local experts. Projects will relate to participants’ individual interests, including design, retailing, buying, visual merchandising, and marketing.

Course activities planned:
- Visits to world-renowned fashion exhibitions in such locations as the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Museum of London, the Fashion Museum, the British Museum, and the Barbican Center
- Visits to department stores, designer boutiques, kiosks, markets, and other venues to experience retailing in its many forms
- Visits to ethnic stores, markets, and restaurants to savor the sights, sounds, symbols, aromas, and flavors of other cultures
- Exclusive sessions with museum curators and the opportunity to view and examine ethnic and ethnically-inspired, historic costumes and other artifacts
- Hands-on, creative workshops on embroidery, dyeing techniques, or other arts, which will be led by the world’s best practitioners
- An optional excursion to Paris to explore its many design-related venues, such as the Paris Opera House—the red carpet” of the past—the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, famous art-nouveau department stores, and flagship designer boutiques, such as the Louis Vuitton store.
- Visits to castles and other sites, such as Hampton Court Palace, Buckingham Palace, and Versailles (on optional tour) to glimpse the lifestyles of various classes and cultures
- Visits with designers and other entrepreneurs to learn about their businesses
• Visits to the international bureaus of major retailers to learn how they attract and serve international consumers
• The opportunity to design a term project that relates exclusively to your interests and career goals
• An exploration of multinational companies, such as McDonald’s, Subway, Walmart, KFC, the Body Shop, and H & M, to determine how they customize their merchandise, service, and retail spaces for different countries
• Trips to Bath Spa and other English cities to visit fashion-related sites
• Afternoon tea in a palace or other grand setting to experience the lifestyle and environment
• An examination of how retailers use Feng Shui, Vaastu, and other practices to attract and stimulate business

Brochure Description:

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Meet the Professor

Dr. Phyllis Bell Miller is professor of Fashion Design and Merchandising (FDM) and the FDM Option Leader in the School of Human Sciences at Mississippi State University. She teaches computer applications for FDM, visual design, creative design techniques, portfolio development, and fashion design. She is author of the book, AutoCAD for the Apparel Industry (1994), which is the world’s first book on applying generic CAD (computer-aided design) software to the fashion industry. Miller also holds more than 30 copyrights for the three design-related software packages that she developed, which are used throughout the world.


Miller has taught CAD for fabric and fashion design in Bulgaria (2005-2006) and Mauritius (2012) as a Fulbright scholar, which is a highly prestigious, national award competition. She also studied the apparel and textiles industry in India as a Fulbright-Hayes scholar (2006-2007). Miller has offered study tours to Europe for MSU students through the Cooperative Center for Study Abroad (CCSA) for 15 years. She has visited 50 countries and territories, from which she has collected books, traditional costumes, and artifacts.
Miller regularly teaches and gives presentations at institutions and conferences throughout the world and holds more than 30 software copyrights. She is a professional writer who has published numerous articles in national magazines, for many of which she did the photography. She has also won several photography awards.

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