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LC 308: Digital Fashion Show

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Description and Rationale for a New Project

A. Description of the project

I am applying for the IGS Small Grants to propose a new project for the existing course LC 308 (IT, G) Japanese Way of Life: Fashion and Lifestyle in Japan. I would like to incorporate a "Digital Fashion Show" that will be held in week 11 of the spring semester in 2022. The course explores how clothing practice represented a pivotal historic moment of Japanese society. For instance, clothing practices from traditional kimono to Western clothing visually represented the modernization coming into place on Japanese soil.

The project requires students to look into a case where certain clothing practice represents the identity of a group, nation, and/or culture (e.g. Punk). The choice has to be something other than Japanese culture. Students are required to present (a) historical background, (b) design and its symbolic meaning (c) changes/alterations that were made over years, and (d) current states of the clothing practice. During the course, students will explore those four points in different clothing styles within Japanese society. For instance, how military uniforms were adopted during war times: starting with the adaptation of French uniforms then changed its design to the ones similar to the United Kingdom. The militaristic uniforms were not present in Japan anymore. However, the concept of uniform has succeeded in educational institutions and corporate culture representing conformity or loyalty to one's affiliation to this day.

Students will present information (a), (b) (c) and (d) mentioned above along with a picture on a slide. Students will be asked to record their oral presentation using a record function in Microsoft Powerpoint, preferably they could do so on the slide they have the picture of clothing that they will present. If that is not possible, I will ask students to record their presentations with any voice recording device. The reason for the pre-recording is for archiving purposes. As I mentioned, this will be a digital fashion show - I will compile slides with pictures and make a video file so that it is ready to present in the class, and to the eBoard at different buildings on campus or any appropriate presentation venue to promote diversity and inclusion on campus (e.g. Digital Commons).

On week 11, the group discussion forum will be held after watching the fashion show video together: we will focus on finding the similarity in different clothing practices or differences in similarity through the lens of historical background, material or designs, and current status of the clothing practice.

If a clothing practice had ceased or endangered its presence, we will discuss the way to promote its practice in contemporary society: be it at the level of the local community or on the global platform. For instance, in the case of Japan, the kimono, the traditional clothing, was retired as daily clothing. However, it is revived as a special day experience by appealing to foreign tourists. The local tourism associations in Japan actively offered kimono-wearing experiences in the hope that the visitors wearing kimonos would enact local people's attention. In addition, there was a hope to enact foreigners' propagation of traditional clothing through social media.

The timing of this fashion show is designed later in the semester as students need to go through different clothing styles while acquiring analytical perspectives and skills. They will encounter

different connections of clothing and society (feudal society and clothing, military uniform and social change, new identity formation through street fashion in current Japan, etc.). The students will also familiarize themselves with methods of analysis (e.g. historic, anthropological, and sociological approaches). By week 11, students are armored with those analytic methods and tactics to work on this project.

B. Rationale

The project I presented above specifically incorporates issues of identity and belonging. Depending on the student's choice, it will also discuss social marginalization. Although the course theme is Japanese clothing, understanding clothing culture requires an understanding of the relationship between Japan and other countries. In addition, clothing culture is inevitably an interdisciplinary field. The students must embrace transnational and international aspects that clothing culture can unfold. Students will see how clothing practice is closely related to group identity and cultural identity through various cases within Japan. However, to gain a sense of interconnectedness or global perspectives, it is important to apply what they have learned to the cases beyond Japan. Thus, there is an urgent need to incorporate an activity that lets students identify a case where clothing represents one's identity beyond Japanese contexts. The critical component in this project is the connection between past and present: how clothing shaped one's identity in the past and what the current states of that. Students need to consider synchronic and longitudinal impacts of a clothing practice and the identity associated with it. Those approaches will encourage students to consider how time and place will impact perceptions of one's identity.

In summary, the project can offer students to comprehend and appreciate transnational and international aspects of identity through clothing. Moreover, looking into the current state of existing clothing practice invites reflective discussion as to how it has been maintained that practice. The discussion session immediately after the fashion show will offer a venue to consider similarities and differences of lived experiences of people who are in different parts of the world. This will be done through the lens of historic development and/or power relations that entailed the clothing practice. I hope students will find some cases where a clothing tradition/practice is a symbol of empowerment. However, when students find some clothing practice for resilience to the underrepresented /oppressed, the class will discuss how people dealt with those pressures or deliberate possible solutions to the problem. I truly believe that this project will open up an opportunity to appreciate and acknowledge the diverse representations of a group/society/culture. In addition, it also opens up a dialogue of how to see differences and similarities in a global society.

Appendix

Rubric for Project Grading
5% for the course grade

	Points
Visual Presentation	3
Historical Background	4
Design / Symbolic Aspect	2.5
Symbolic Aspect	2.5
Changes / Adjustment of Practice	4
Current Status	4
Total	20 points

*1 Poor / Unclear Deliberation, Highest point in the section indicates Excellent Presentation