Welcome Week 2018
Micro-Seminars

Fashion, Revolution, & the Politics of Embodiment

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We are living in a moment that is ripe with contestations over the role and meanings of nudity, dress, and the body in relation to oppositional politics. This course will explore the gendered, sexual, racial, ethnic, nationalist and religious politics of fashion, fantasy, and embodiment from interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives.

We will explore how and why fashion/dress/undress comes to have revolutionary or reactionary implications for embodied experience at varied historical moments. We will examine the “battle of the veil” that played out during the Algerian anti-colonial revolution as a foundation for thinking about how nationalist and neo-Orientalist fantasies about gender, national identity, and liberation collide in the contemporary tidal wave of bans on the hijab, the niqab, and the burkini. We will contextualize these bans relative to heightened Islamophobia throughout the EU and the US, especially following 9/11, the Charlie Hebdo attack, and the election of US President Trump.

We will also examine attempts to deploy the body and fashion as means of political resistance, whether to oppose state-enforced Muslim codes of dress and behavior in Iran, as with the “Girls of Revolution Street” (January 2018); to critique occupation in Israel/ Palestine (e.g. Palestinian Ahed Tamimi); or as feminist punk aesthetic in the US (riot grrrls) and Russia (Pussy Riot). Paying special attention to the “Arab Spring”, we will explore the role and efficacy of nude protest (e.g. Femen and Egyptian nude blogger Aliaa el-Mahdy) in local and transnational feminist movements of civil disobedience and digital citizenship on the streets and in social media. Finally, we will consider the contemporary “modest fashion revolution” centered in Istanbul. By examining nudity and “X-rated fashion” alongside modest fashion, we will situate fashion and the body as the most provocative sites of political protest within contemporary transnational feminist and queer movements in the digital age, especially in response to the objectifying “male gaze”; the #MeToo movement; and global expressions of Islamophobia, homophobia, and xenophobia.