The Fashion Studies Book
Dr Sharon Peoples, Convenor of the Liberal Arts Program and Museum Education and Heritage Interpretation Program, Research School of Humanities and the Arts

Convenors: Alastair MacLachlan & Ken Taylor

This is a presentation of the work so far completed for the Fashion Studies Book (Routledge). The Fashion Studies Book is an inter-disciplinary introduction to current theories, debates, methodologies and case studies not only in fashion studies, but also a wide range of courses that incorporate a minor or major component about fashion offered within art history, cultural sociology, cultural anthropology, cultural history, cultural studies, communication, film and media studies, public relations and marketing.

The seminar will cover some of the global case studies from one chapter: Fashion and Politics. It will briefly look at the case studies: the APEC photo, possum skin cloaks and political recognition, Evo Morales, President of Bolivia, the safari suit and colonialism, the politics of subcultural style.

The seminar will canvas the dynamics of how social change drives the twists and turns of style and taste. To date, there has been insufficient attention paid to factors of broad social trends and specific interventions or upheavals. Usually, these are regarded as exogenous, but, in fact, they have often shaped trends in fashion. Factors like war, nationalism, religion and politics often has major ramifications for legitimating or regulating dress codes, moral conventions and fashion behaviour in general. Transgressions of regulated and self-regulated codes are often severely punished by governance mechanisms with the aim of protecting the social fabric.

While fashion is often regarded as a frivolous and arbitrary activity – and often associated with women – in fact fashion is a highly charged political tool which visually conveys all kinds of messages about who we are and how we behave. This work chart some of the ways in which fashion has been a decisive political weapon or social practice. This chapter begins by looking at how political, religious/spiritual and social ideologies are fashioned through dress, starting with the curious photographic tradition of gathering world leaders together dressed in some version of national dress for a group photo at the end of each international summit.

Sharon's bio can be read at: https://researchers.anu.edu.au/researchers/peoples-sm