

Garment Patterning, Construction, *Experimentation* MW 10-11:50am, HL A4

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Instructor's Office Hours: TBD

TA Office Hours: TBD

Course Website: <https://courses.ideate.cmu.edu/99-361/s2025c/>

Required Outside of Class Commitment Per Week: 6-10 hours

Course Description

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of practical garment design and construction, emphasizing pattern making and fitting for individuals with fullness in the bust area, often associated with the female figure. Students will learn to draft and create simple garments tailored to their own bodies or those of someone they choose to work with. The course also includes working with commercially available patterns.

The primary goal of this course is to provide a holistic, beginner-friendly foundation in garment making, rather than preparing students for a career in the fashion industry. By adopting a “bird’s-eye view” of the craft, students will gain the confidence and tools necessary to embark on a lifelong journey of sewing and garment design as a fulfilling and rewarding hobby. By the end of the class, participants will feel comfortable navigating both professional and hobbyist resources, understanding essential terminology, and utilizing the tools and materials of the trade. This course aims to demystify garment construction, fostering a deep and enduring appreciation for the art of making clothing.

A distinctive feature of this class is its integration of theoretical principles of flat garment patterning and technical sewing skills within the unique context of the student body. Students are encouraged not only to follow instructions precisely but also to think critically and problem-solve—adapting and applying newly acquired knowledge to the challenges they encounter during the course.

This class also emphasizes the development of non-tangible skills that complement technical garment knowledge. Attention to detail, diligent note-taking, a desire for precision, deliberate attempt to achieve mastery of sewing techniques, the ability to follow directions, and the capacity to manage layered tasks are integral to success. Students are expected to approach failure as a natural and essential part of the learning process—an opportunity to strengthen their problem-solving abilities and improve their craft.

While the instructor will provide guidance, students should not expect every challenge to be resolved for them. Instead, they will be encouraged to rely on their growing toolbox of skills and knowledge to independently address and overcome obstacles. This approach fosters self-reliance, confidence, and creativity, empowering students to tackle future sewing projects with resourcefulness and enthusiasm.

Because of the breadth of information and skills covered in this class, the history of fashion and contemporary developments will not be addressed. Instead, our focus will be on mastering the foundational principles of patterning and garment construction. The course emphasizes understanding core techniques and applying them to create practical, functional, and straightforward clothing. While innovation and design exploration are valuable, this class prioritizes building a strong technical base that students can expand upon in their future endeavors.

THIS CLASS REQUIRES A MINIMUM OF 6-10 HOURS OF WORK OUTSIDE OF CLASS PER WEEK.

COURSE LIMITATIONS

Woven Fabric Only: This course exclusively focuses on woven fabrics, which means knit fabrics and their unique properties will not be addressed

Limits on Creative Exploration: The structured nature of the course, with its emphasis on learning foundational principles and techniques, may limit opportunities for freeform creativity. Students will need to process and apply a significant amount of technical information.

Focus on Bodies with Breasts: The course specifically addresses garment design and fitting for individuals with fullness in the bust area, which may not be applicable to all body types.

Restricted Scope of Garments: The course concentrates primarily on bodices, with only a brief exploration of pants. Skirts and dresses are not included in the curriculum.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Diligence: Students must demonstrate a consistent and focused approach to their work, staying committed to completing each step thoroughly.

Attention to Detail: Precision is essential for both drafting patterns and constructing garments, requiring close attention to measurements, techniques, and finishes.

Commitment to Improvement Through Adjustment to Failure: Students are encouraged to view mistakes as valuable learning opportunities and to refine their skills through problem-solving and perseverance.

Ability to Focus and Follow Directions: The course demands concentration and the ability to accurately follow multi-step instructions to build technical skills effectively. **Note-taking is required.**

Collaboration with Fellow Students: Students will work together on fitting and design challenges, fostering a supportive learning environment. Respectful communication and teamwork are essential.

Respect for Time and Resources: Students must be mindful of everyone's time and the limited studio resources, ensuring efficient and considerate use of shared tools and materials.

EMBRACING ALL BODY TYPES

Maintaining a positive body image is essential for fostering self-confidence and a healthy relationship with oneself. This includes embracing and respecting all body types, avoiding derogatory terms when referring to body parts, and cultivating a supportive environment that uplifts everyone. Negative language can reinforce harmful stereotypes and contribute to feelings of inadequacy, whereas using positive, neutral, or affirming language promotes inclusivity and self-acceptance. It's important to recognize the unique beauty and functionality of every body, focusing on what our bodies allow us to do rather than adhering to narrow standards of appearance. By nurturing a positive attitude toward our own bodies and those of others, we will create a culture of respect, empowerment, and kindness.

FITTINGS

All fittings will be done in groups of 3 students, minimum.

Learning to fit clothing requires developing a unique way of observing and analyzing the body in relation to fabric and design. It involves looking beyond general measurements to assess how a garment interacts with the wearer's individual shape, posture, and movement. This process requires keen attention to detail, as small adjustments can make a significant difference in both comfort and appearance. A successful fitting involves understanding not only the technical aspects of pattern alteration but also how fabric behaves on different body types, how seams align, and how ease or tension affects fit. By honing this analytical approach, students develop a refined eye for identifying areas that need adjustment, leading to garments that fit and flatter in a more personalized and accurate way.

Fittings are a collaborative and hands-on process essential for achieving well-fitted garments. During fittings, it may be necessary to adjust fabric or patterns on the body, pin areas for refinement, open up seams on the body in uncomfortable places, pin or tape extra fabric, or take additional measurements. It is vital to approach this process with respect and clear communication. Always ask for consent before touching another person, ensuring they are comfortable with any adjustments or physical interactions required. Be mindful of personal boundaries and treat each participant's comfort and autonomy as a priority. By fostering a respectful and consent-based environment, fittings can become a positive and productive experience for everyone involved.

Grading Breakdown

1. Blocks: Bodice Moulage, Sloper, Sleeves

- **Grading:** Pass/Fail (20 Points)
- **Requirement:** Up to three attempts necessary for a pass.
- **Importance:** These foundational exercises set the stage for the rest of the class. Failure to complete these tasks will affect performance in subsequent assignments.

2. Sewing Samples

- **Grading:** Pass/Fail (20 Points)
- **Requirement:** Up to three attempts necessary for a pass.
- **Importance:** These samples are critical to skill building for garment construction. Failure to complete them will hinder future projects.

3. Pattern Sleuths: Woven Tops

- **Grading:** Based on craft (20 Points)
- **Criteria:** Graded on the neatness, fit, and accuracy of the final shirt in fashion fabric.
- **Submission Requirement:** Pattern drafts and muslin toile must be presented before proceeding to final construction.

4. Barrel Pants (Sloper, Muslin Toile, Fashion Fabric)

- **Grading:** Based on craft (20 Points)
- **Criteria:** Graded on the neatness, fit, and accuracy of the final pants.
- **Submission Requirement:** Tagboard sloper and barrel muslin toile must be completed; failure will result in point deductions from participation.

5. Participation, Quizzes, Attendance, Organization, Pinterest, Attitude

- **Grading:** (20 Points)
- **Initial Points:** All students start with 20 points.
- **Point Loss:** Points may be deducted at the instructor's discretion for missing or not completing quizzes, poor attendance, tardiness, poor attitude, failing to post on Pinterest, and/or failing to maintain organization and respect for classroom resources. **Students may inquire at any point in the semester in regards to their standing in this category.**

On Craft

This class places a strong emphasis on craftsmanship and the ability to absorb and process the information presented. Students are expected to show consistent improvement in their sewing skills, especially if their initial work lacks precision or neatness. The overarching goal is to learn how to create garments worth keeping—pieces that reflect care, effort, and skill. Embracing the process of making and remaking is essential, as failure is seen not as a setback but as an invaluable opportunity to improve and develop problem-solving skills. Perfect results are not expected on the first try; instead, students should anticipate multiple attempts—sometimes twice, sometimes thrice—to achieve their best work. This iterative approach is fundamental to mastering the craft and fostering a sense of pride in what they create.

Quizzes

Quizzes will be conducted weekly, with some weeks featuring two quizzes. These assessments are designed to reinforce understanding and improve recall of the material presented in class and assigned homework. Quizzes will be self-graded by students and will be retaken until the material is mastered. Participation in quizzes is mandatory, based on participation rather than the quiz outcomes; quizzes are not graded. The goal of these quizzes is not to penalize but to ensure comprehension and retention, supporting students in building a strong foundation of knowledge.

If You Have Fallen Behind

Please communicate with your instructor promptly if you have fallen behind or anticipate falling behind; do not wait to communicate that you need help or ask for an extension. Students can redo any assignment and resubmit for grading before the final class.

Attendance to all classes and class-related activities is expected. You are responsible for what happens in class whether you're here or not. Check the website to find out what you missed. Organize with your classmates to get class information and materials you have missed. Students are allowed 2 unexcused missed classes before points start melting away.

Late Arrivals

Please work hard to **NOT** be late. As is, our classes are already really short for hands on type of learning: 1 hour and 50 minutes.

Expected absences

Within the first week of our course, please look ahead and see if you need to miss class for any excusable reason (religious holidays, CMU-sponsored events, medical or family plans you cannot change etc.) and email me.

Illness

Let me know before class if you are ill and must miss class. I am understanding and accommodating about medical issues when you inform me in a timely and professional manner.

If students choose to attend class while displaying symptoms of a respiratory ailment, they are asked to wear an N95 mask to ensure the health and comfort of their peers and the instructor. This practice helps maintain a safe and respectful learning environment for everyone.

Mental presence and social media

Physical and virtual presence means nothing if you're "checked out"; your mental presence is paramount.

During the instructor's lectures or guest presentations, open laptops and social media are prohibited. You can exist for a few hours without tweeting, facebooking, chatting, texting, and emailing. Any laptop or phone for social media, texting, etc. is banned during lectures, critiques and group discussion, unless specifically allowed/requested by the instructor.

Class Materials

All essential materials and tools for completing this class will be provided. Students are only required to purchase a new notebook of their choice and a preferred writing utensil for note-taking and organization. If students are dissatisfied with the provided fashion fabrics or the quality of selected tools, they may choose to purchase their own supplies.

Respect for shared classroom materials, tools, and space is mandatory to maintain a productive learning environment. Students are responsible for maintaining the designated class shelves in a neat and orderly manner. Materials and tools stored in deep storage must be borrowed with foresight and according to class instructions. Proper labeling and storage of paper flat patterns are mandatory, following the detailed guidelines provided in class.

This course will predominantly utilize Suzy Furrer's Craftsy video courses and book [Building Patterns: The Architecture of Women's Clothing](#) for drafting the bodice moulage, sloper, sleeves and tops. Suzy Furrer's DVDs and the book will be available in the classroom but may not be removed at any time. Students will be able to view the assigned videos in the classroom through an external DVD drive for laptops. Additionally, students may access the videos independently through public library apps such as Hoopla and Libby, or by subscribing to Craftsy.com promotional membership for one year. Please note: **Craftsy.com will charge the full membership amount after the promotional year ends unless canceled in time.** Please exercise timely diligence if choosing this option.

Required Class Clothing Attire

Students must bring a designated change of clothes to each class that meets the following requirements: leggings that are close-fitting but not constricting, a fitted sports top with exposed arms, and socks (see image below). Students should wear undergarments that align with the type they plan to wear with the garments created during the course, as this ensures a more accurate fit. This outfit is vital for fittings, as it allows the body's contours and proportions to be assessed accurately. For convenience, students may store this outfit in a small, labeled bag in the classroom. Maintaining this designated fitting attire contributes to consistency, accuracy, and efficiency in garment adjustments and pattern evaluations.

SUMMARY OF CMU ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICIES

[Carnegie Mellon University prohibits academic dishonesty](#). This includes plagiarism, and may consist of: submitting the work of someone else as one's own; failing to cite assistance you received; or the failure to properly cite materials or ideas from other sources. Many of these problems can be circumvented if you're clear and generous in giving credit where credit is due. Please read the University Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism (link above) carefully to understand the penalties associated with academic dishonesty at Carnegie Mellon University. I reserve the right to determine an appropriate penalty based on the violation of academic dishonesty that occurs. The penalty for plagiarizing may range from failure on the specific plagiarized assignment to failure in the class. Repeat offenses can result in severe penalties including, potentially, expulsion from the university. If you have any questions about this policy and any work you are doing in the course, please feel free to contact the professor(s) for help.

How Does This Affect This Class?

Fashion operates in a unique space where past cultural styles, a shared repository of knowledge, inspiration, trends, and reinterpretation are integral to its evolution. While it's true that designers often draw on shared cultural, historical, and aesthetic influences, there is a delicate balance between drawing inspiration, reworking ideas, and outright copying while presenting something as entirely your creation. Unlike many creative fields, the foundation of fashion rests on the collective act of replicating, adapting, and altering patterns, making it a shared and iterative process.

Because of this, fashion design has historically lacked robust copyright protections, particularly for fundamental garment shapes and construction methods, which are considered functional rather than artistic. Much of fashion's knowledge is considered a shared human inheritance due to its pluralistic historical evolution. However, unique elements such as logos, proprietary prints, or highly distinctive design details and innovations may still be trademarked or copyrighted to prevent direct replication.

In this course, you will engage with the very basics of patterning, replicating functional and widely recognized styles to build your foundational skills. Even though copying or cloning clothes is an accepted practice in learning and development, students will be adding their unique touch, no matter how small, to the garments they create. This practice helps foster creativity while respecting the collective heritage of fashion. For this reason, plagiarism is not a primary concern in this course, as the emphasis is on skill acquisition and personal interpretation rather than original innovation.

It is hoped that students will gain an appreciation for the labor and expertise involved in drafting basic garments, recognizing the skill and effort that small independent pattern designers invest in their work.