



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

Educating for a Socially Responsible Fashion Industry
Contextual/ Cultural Studies and Cross-cutting Learning Activities

**To encourage independent research through examining a contentious
issues within a discipline**

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Abstract

As educationalists and interested parties in exploring the ethical debate in all areas of design we have co-developed this module and brief 'Contentious Issues' to deliver as a multidisciplinary tool to fit into any design programme or into any school within the university. The brief invites students to highlight a contentious issue and conduct independent research. Through a series of set tasks they produce a fully referenced and educated argument, giving a holistic view of the issue through a visual presentation, supported by a written document that highlights their assigned role/characters opinion on the subject. Students are encouraged to develop their understanding of professional practice in the design industries, within the context of social, cultural, political, economic and technological change.

This module and brief were written to help first year students to make the transition of learning in school, with increasingly set outcomes, to research and learning at university where they would be required to question, challenge, hypothesise and synthesise their findings and become confident, independent, life long learners. It has been observed that student intake from schools and further education establishments were often unprepared for the task of carrying out independent in-depth research in their chosen fields. That there was increasingly a reliance on web based research for school projects that has left many of these students without the knowledge to access other sources of information and research. As well as aiding students understanding of contentious issues, this module also aims to help prepare students to understand and partake in research for their academic studies at University.

This brief has been run with first year university students studying Product Design Technology and Fashion Communication. The Contentious Issues addressed by students

have been wide ranging from current political, environmental, sustainability, and social issues impacting on different design disciplines.

Issues that relate to fashion and clothing that have been discussed have included:

Fast Fashion

Size 0

Politics of Fake

Ethics of Labour

Trade Tariffs

Authenticity of Brand

Reporting and News

Sustainable Fashion

Ecology of Fashion Textiles

Students have responded well to the issues and have felt confident and enthusiastic in discussions. The framework of choosing a role whether it is of their own ethical standpoint or not helps them explore the issues in safety without feeling exposed or under personal criticism for their beliefs. We have developed this model for University students but the concepts and structure could be translated and used in Secondary Schools or Further Education.

An outline of the brief, the supporting lectures, work required and assessment criteria follow.

Further information and more support can be found in both the Tutor Manual and Student Work Book that can be viewed online.

Brief

The brief is designed to develop student's independence in research and research methodologies through examining contentious issues within a discipline.

The brief involves the student in the following process activities:

- Active research from a variety of sources
- Debate and discussion
- Analysis and synthesis
- Presentation and effective communication
- Use of Microsoft PowerPoint and Word
- Encourage a deep learning approach
- To Apply University referencing

Materials provided to teachers and students

This module and brief have been designed to be taught across disciplines' such as Law, Medicine, Psychology as well as Design as all areas of learning and information expose their own issues that are contentious within their fields. Therefore a teachers' manual explaining how educators can deliver the module of study has been developed alongside a student work book outlining the brief and activities required to complete the module.

Outline of Student Assignment:

The assignment will take the form of a 15 minute group presentation, including a 5 minute question and answer session. Working in a team with between 4 and 6 members, you are asked to investigate any **contentious issue**, contemporary, political, environmental, social, ethical, technological or economic, of interest to the group. You should formulate a well-researched and supported argument to justify individual or shared opinions on the issue. Be prepared to answer questions and accept debate. Presentation should be based on both theoretical, literature, factual information such as statistics, current news and events and your own informed opinions. The more controversial the subject the more interesting the debate may be.

Each presentation will be developed and presented in your team, with each member presenting an argument from one of the following standpoints

Role.....Designer

Role.....Environmentalist – Eco Warrior

Role.....Investor

Role.....Managing Director – Responsible to Shareholders

Role.....Jo(e) Public, the Man or Woman in the Street

Role.....Wild Card

Supportive Lectures

The learning schedule takes 8 and 12 weeks to run depending on student numbers and supportive lectures chosen by the tutor such as contextual lectures on Globalisation and ethical issues within the professional discipline. Students are divided or self select into teams of 5 or 6 that encourages project management, task delegation and team building.

The Lecture series.....

Week 1 Introduction and overview of the whole assignment

Week 2 PowerPoint presentation on a contentious issue

Week 3 Curriculum library representative presentation on resources

Week 4 Lecture and discussion on validity of research

Week 5 Presentation techniques

Submission: on CD

Group Submission.....Presentation

Individual Submission.....Student contribution to the group PowerPoint and detailed evidence of their research and analysis, used to construct their argument, a full bibliography of all relevant information used, all information used fully referenced.

Group and individual name along with student reference number and date to be written on the CD

Assessment Criteria:

The qualities looked for in students work is based on their ability:

- To carry out a thorough information search on your chosen topic.
- To select, organise and present information effectively.
- To understand and discuss relevant issues.
- To structure an argument leading to a conclusion.
- Answer questions intelligently
- Professionalism
- Quality of visual presentation style
- Clear and verbal delivery
- Basic understanding of relevant software

Both formative and Summative assessment are given to students as a group and individually as per university guidelines

Reading List

Ednay, Andrew. PowerPoint 2007 in Easy Steps. 2007. Computer Step

Law, John. After Method. 2004. Routledge an imprint of Taylor & Francis Books Ltd