“Fashioning History: Clothing and Society”

This 8 week lecture series looks at the effect of textiles and clothing on the development of western society. Beginning in the late medieval period, Joseph Hisey will lead us through a 500 year survey of the socio-economic and political aspects of cloth and its expression through personal identity and dress.

Week 1: It’s a Small World: Commerce and Dress in the Middle Ages
The importance of textiles and trade on the development of national identity and economies will result in explorations, wars and exploitations on a new global scale.

Week 2: Stuff and Nonsense: Conspicuous Consumption during the Renaissance
Power as expressed through dress is explored in the symbolism and meaning of the renaissance silhouette.

Week 3: Fashion Rules: Authority and Dress
Power and dress in the 17th century define clothing along political and religious ideologies.

Week 4: Through the Looking Glass: The Importance of Being Female
The impact of women on defining fashionable society in the 17th & 18th century leads to a new aesthetic sensibility for men as well.

Week 5: Fashion Victims: A Revolution in Fashion
Politics and fashion at the court of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. How fashion was used to fuel two revolutions.

Week 6: Victorian Industrialism, the Nouveau Riche and the Birth of Couture
The rise of a new ruling elite based on commerce, not birth, threatens the old guard. Through the use of elaborate fashions they assert their dominance in an age old struggle for acceptance.

Week 7: Simply Shocking: The Roaring Twenties & Those Bright Young Things
The influences of Pop culture are explored as we look at the halcyon days of Fitzgerald. See how the motion picture industry and the cult of celebrity were just as relevant to a generation of 100 years ago, as they are today.

Week 8: Aftermath: Youth and the Next Generation
We begin our session with Dior’s “New Look” of 1947 and its eventual demise as the baby boomer generation becomes a marketable force to be reckoned with.