

2nd year
Proposal for a Personal Blog; Blog Posts

NOTE: Your proposal for a blog will determine the topic for your assignments for the rest of the term. The blog entries, social media “posts,” shooting script, and video will all be connected to the topic you choose for your blog.

Write a proposal for a personal, non-commercial blog on a topic of your choice. You must include the title of your proposed blog, a brief description of its proposed topic or content, how that topic/content is unique, why the topic is sustainable over time, who your audience will be (in detail, drawing on what you have learned about reading audience earlier in the course), and why your proposed topic is culturally or socially significant. Write in an engaging, non-academic, non-argumentative style. Make sure you cite any sources in-text. You must also include them in a reference list at the end of your proposal.

You will be creating a WordPress account and posting blog entries there. WordPress is PUBLIC, so you need to be comfortable writing posts for public viewing.

Your job is to convince us that:

- Your topic is engaging and interesting. (What is your topic? Why is it interesting?)
- Your topic or perspective or approach has an aspect, quality, or twist that is unique (What is unique or different from what’s out there now? Show that you’ve done research into popular blogs on similar topics. This research is necessary to convince us that your topic, perspective, or approach will be unique.)
- Your topic is sustainable over time. (What examples of future posts can you give us to show its sustainability? What is the scope of your topic?)
- You know your expected audience. (Who do you expect will read your blog posts? What is your audience’s profile? Draw on what you’ve learned about audience profiles in earlier modules. I am looking for more than “Anyone who likes chocolate” for a blog about cooking with chocolate, for instance.)
- You have thought about the cultural or social significance of your topic and can describe that significance.

Make us interested and enthusiastic about your blog.

Maximum length: 3 double-spaced pages in 12-point Times New Roman (or a similar font) with 1 inch margins, plus a References section. The maximum length does not include the References section.

References section: Use MLA, Chicago, or APA style guidelines. All are available online. At a minimum, you must include the author/corporation name, title of specific blog entry or page, title of blog or page, and URL for online entries. For offline entries, see the specific style guidelines. You will lose marks if you merely include the URL without other identifying information.

Blog Posts Assignment

Create a WordPress blog account on the topic you proposed earlier this term, and post three blog entries during Weeks 5, 6, and 7. (See the schedule in the syllabus for the exact dates)

Each entry should:

- Be titled engagingly
- Contain an idea that you develop in an interesting way
- Be written in a style appropriate for the subject and the expected audience
- Be illustrated with a relevant, captioned photograph. If you did not take the photo yourself, you must credit the photographer or site where you found it
- Contain reflection or analysis
- Include a link and a reference to another blog or article that's related to your topic
- Include credits or acknowledgements of any sources you used for research or ideas
- Be posted to WordPress on or before the due date unless you have the instructor's approval to not publish.

NOTES:

1. Because your work will be published, you need to choose a topic that you're comfortable sharing with the public. If you have a valid reason for not wanting to publish online, then please contact your instructor as soon as possible to explain your rationale.

2. Your entries must meet York University's non-discrimination policies and guidelines for student behaviour.

3. Your work must be new and previously unpublished.

Proposal

Homme Improvement

You must be thinking, “Oh, great, another damn beauty blog!” I agree that the last thing we need is yet another amateur reviewer giving us a list of her “top ten lip glosses for summer.” But before you roll your perfectly lined eyes at me, hear me out: a man who wears makeup in broad daylight, with three years of experience working in the beauty industry, exploring the cultural shifts that brought him to this moment. And, I’ll throw in another twist: I’m not even trying to sell you products! In fact, you’ll never see me reviewing a product or telling you what to buy the way other male beauty bloggers like Bart Kaczanowicz or Andrew James do (Top 20 Male Beauty Bloggers on the Web), because I have more important things to say.

Forgive my crudeness, but let’s agree that it takes major balls for a suburban guy to rock a full beat to class and work everyday (not to mention hours spent in front of mirrors). While my contemporaries are out there hustling to get chicks, I’m carefully selecting my perfect shade of MAC Studio Sculpt foundation (NC25, in case you’re wondering). And no, I’m not a drag queen. Just your average, run of the mill criminology major with a deep appreciation of all things cosmetic.

To be clear, men wearing makeup is not a newsworthy idea, historically or now. In 2017 and 2016 we saw a boom of dudes getting sweet sponsorship gigs with major corporations like Maybelline (Reimel) and Covergirl (Puglise), and even back in 2014 there were guys making millions launching makeup businesses with their likeliness on all the ads (Hitt). It might feel like the looking glass separating the testosterone-advantaged from concealer and lipliner has been shattered, but it only takes a good look at a metropolitan like Toronto to see that the concept

hasn't disseminated as widely as it seems. Most blue- and white-collar guys are barely comfortable buying a facewash, let alone a tube of mascara. And with the number of stares I receive on the daily, you'd think I've grown a horn.

In fact, in my years working at a popular higher-end cosmetics retailer I've only assisted a handful of men. I guess what I find most interesting is they're always excusing their purchases, trying to justify them in their eyes and mine. One guy shopping for CC cream straight up told me he's been red and puffy because he's cried so much since his girlfriend left him – oh, the humanity! Oh, the fragile masculinity!

So with Homme Improvement I am on a mission to dig up the truth about why men aren't buying into the hype. I'm not convinced with the other bloggers' explanations that makeup is a female biological evolutionary secret (Lincoln), that there's "wiggle room" in the gendered double standards (Jankowski) or that it's too small a market (Thomas). The companies are obviously willing (driven by greed, no doubt), the beauty editors are buzzing (again, let's say it together: greed!), and now what's missing is the client. A simple survey of trends won't do, because a deeper investigation is warranted. I'm planning to write about the influence of commercialism on the beauty industry and its role in alienating men, how makeup came to be associated with women (and why society says that's bad), how ever-evolving queer culture plays into all of it and how they all tie into a neoliberal western society. That's right, we're pulling out the big guns. The beauty of this blog is that it is evergreen, because so long as men in makeup remain in contrast to the mainstream, I'll never stop writing. *Viva la revolution!*

"But Gil," you ask. "If this topic is so entirely new as you say, who's going to read about it?" Excellent question, hypothetical you! To limit my blog strictly to makeup makes it too generic, a drop in a beauty blogger ocean. But, with the unique spin of critical analysis of the

specific issue of makeup as it relates to the male consumer, we find my prospective audience: women who are fans of male beauty icons, men who are currently interested in or curious about makeup, social justice warriors looking for a new movement to back, marketers of the beauty business and their ancillary beauty press looking to gain insight, those interested in queer culture and feminist studies and even total conservative pariahs who need something to be mad about. Yes, I'll even accept their clicks towards my page hits.

This blog promises to ask big questions and seek meaningful, significant answers. I'm looking to open people's minds and eyes to see what's going on around them, and to be aware of the prejudices and ideas they carry subconsciously. I want to move mountains of stigma and uncover treasure chests of tropes. By covering this emerging topic I will be on the cutting edge of cultural change, and people will undoubtedly look to my blog as a resource. In my small way I will change the world that my children will grow into, where the powerful CEO of an investment firm and the lowly fry-cook can both confidently walk around with a fierce contour and be accepted for it.

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Homme Improvement

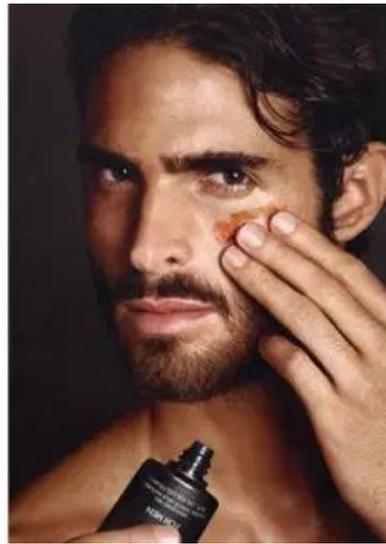
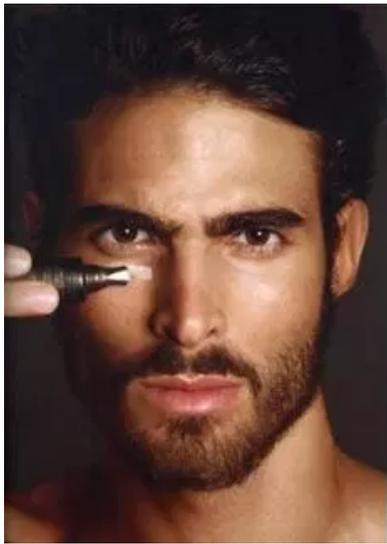
School project exploring why men do or don't wear makeup

Of Kings and Chanel: Addressing Consumerism's Role in the Downfall of Men's Makeup



The entire Jean Paul Gaultier makeup range for men had less SKUs than a single Dior spring makeup range for women does. The photo seems as though under a sepia filter, but sadly that is the actual spectrum of shades available. (Photo credit: https://www.thecut.com/2008/04/jean-paul-gaultiers-new-line_o.html)

Ask a fashionista what designers Tom Ford, Gabriel Chanel and Jean Paul Gaultier have in common and he'll likely have a stroke, but I can think of something that the very different brands share. The three are a selection of giant cosmetic companies traditionally geared towards women that have launched makeup lines advertised to men in the past few decades. In fact, Chanel's "Boy de Chanel" range doesn't even launch in North America until next year ([Leigh](#)). To an outsider this seems like a revolution à la [my last post](#), but to an insider who knows, this represents a disaster.



These images from Tom Ford's male makeup range campaign are perplexing. The bearded, shirtless model glares at the camera while applying product with his bare fingers. Compare his defensive expression with the openness and joy of female ads in my last post. (Photo credit: <http://sieve.co.in/know-more-about-mens-makeup/>)

Gaultier actually folded up his cosmetics range as early as the eighties (Thomas), and Tom Ford has barely expanded the line beyond its original offering in 2013 (while simultaneously quadrupling his women's products collection) (Cowles). Other companies like YSL who tried marketing makeup to men in the 2000s similarly failed at the box office, with launches that disappeared from the world as quick as BlackBerry smartphones (Walker). What they all have in common is a similar set of actual products; namely repackaged women's complexion and brow products. Notably missing from catalogues is the category known as "colour," or simply anything outside the beige and brown spectrum. I'm talking mostly lipsticks and eye shadows, the types of products women buy on a whim to "change things up," adjust to the season or express uniqueness and creativity. Another similarity is their ads, scattered throughout this post. Can you say, lackluster? Blogger Daniel Tehrani put it perfectly in his post about why men's makeup lines have failed. In describing a commercial for Gaultier's line, he writes:

Something just doesn't sit right about how the model seems to struggle to perform his overt masculinity, while also applying makeup. There's something so obviously self-conscious about it. It's not natural, it comes off forced, it isn't ... authentic.

What does this mean for men in makeup? Not only are they shamed for displaying femininity, they are further reduced to an uninspired range of products better suited for corpses. Marketing for men's makeup has utterly failed to inspire men to adopt

makeup as more than a compliance mechanism. Conformity, rather than originality, is the message. Even in the sphere of makeup toxic masculinity rears its ugly head.



Charlotte Tilbury's ad for her Unisex Healthy Glow is seemingly less disturbing, but is in line with other ads for men's makeup. The men don't wear a stitch of clothing, look like any Abercrombie model, and importantly don't look like they're wearing any makeup or like they know what's going on. None of these inspire consumers in the least. (Photo credit: <http://www.charlottetilbury.com/ca/unisex-healthy-glow-tinted-moisturiser.html>)

This depressing reality is situated within the bigger problem facing makeup in the age of consumerism. Companies driven by greed constantly launch new products into an oversaturated market to make a quick buck. People shop because it's all they know to do, and when they're done they feel worse, not better. There's too much makeup and most of it is in your bathroom shelf, gathering dust. Products are paired with "tutorials," instructional videos by self-appointed "influencers" to help consumers achieve whatever look Kim Kardashian West is rocking that decade. It's become a nightmarish cycle of repetition and imitation, and men's makeup is a great example of

not rocking the boat to limit risk. It's no wonder these lines keep flopping because men just can't (and shouldn't) be bothered to buy products that don't inspire them. For the record, I am not against "gendered" makeup – I think separate products and stores are a fine marketing strategy. I am only critiquing how that's manifested to date.



Even the Korean actor chosen to model the new Boy de Chanel range seems over it. For being from a country known for its makeup-loving men, he sure doesn't show it. He looks practically bare-skinned and utterly bored (we are, too). (Photo credit: <http://clarewiththehair.com/chanel-mens-make-line-boy-de-chanel-launches/>)

With the aforementioned Chanel launch, the world is getting another chance. As one of the biggest brands in makeup, Chanel has the money to turn advertising on its head. We desperately need a campaign that shows real men using makeup to do more than hide a blemish. I want to see an editorial cut-crease, smoky eye and ombre lip on models wearing ridiculously expensive clothes doing outlandish things. I want to see images that not only shun hypermasculinity and embrace femininity, but downright transcend the mundane into a world of possibility; individuality over capitalism, artistry over globalization and subculture over mainstream, all within the constraints of an ad. Tall order, eh?

Despite these hopes I am painfully aware of Chanel's conservative nature. Their initial three-product lineup is tired before it even launches. They don't believe in the commercial potential of men's makeup, so they put out a tepid range and called it a day. Their PR says the makeup will be "undetectable," and calls it "grooming" instead of what it really is (Leigh). They found "rugged" and "relatable" TV stars to be their spokesmen, and flaunt the "science" behind the products instead of their function and the statement they make. I fear they will use their influence to further repress men's makeup to the clearance rack.



Now-defunct Obsession Compulsive Cosmetics was a pioneer in advertising makeup on men. Pictured is drag superstar Willam Belli as "Robo Hoochie." Hard to imagine Chanel pulling off something like this. (Photo credit: <http://www.dragnearyou.com/blog/willam-is-a-gorgeous-roboghoochie-for-occ-makeup/>)

So if even Chanel can't do it, it remains up to consumers to wave their freak flags in the face of impassive corporations, to let their imaginations and makeup brushes run wild. When men and women work together to break gender boundaries, they can tackle these larger issues. The day will come when neon lipliners and glittery setting sprays in a rainbow of hues are standard offerings to all, and we hold hands in solidarity against the establishment. When ethics meet radical activism it won't matter what Ford or Chanel are launching, or what KKW wore to a red carpet. Every individual will have products that address their personal fantasy, and men's lines can finally flourish. It's time to put our money where our mouth is and start buying some damn good men's makeup from alternative brands like Obsessive Compulsive Cosmetics, Milk Cosmetics and Jeffree Star Cosmetics. Representation will drive demand, and one day we *will* see change in how Wall Street handles makeup.



New brands move far quicker than those with shareholders and boards. Jeffree Star Cosmetics grew rapidly in a multi-million dollar business by featuring men, drag queens and trans people in their ads. The ads focus on the fantasy of makeup, not the products themselves or the reality they are situated within. (Photo credit: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/jeffree-star-accused-of-putting-nikita-dragun-in-blackface>)

Next on the blog, a micro-level analysis of queer culture and men's makeup. Make sure you're caught up on [last week's macro-level look at gender norms](#). Stay tuned and stay woke!

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 October 20, 2018  Gil

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The Gay Agenda: Calling Out Makeup-Shaming in the Queer Community

“Men in makeup? That’s so *gay*.”

Actually, it’s not. This dated perspective feeds off the notions that makeup is feminine and women are bad, and that makeup for men is useless unless it fits a corporate agenda. It reeks of sexism, homophobia and transphobia. Worse, it is often repeated by gay men themselves! It’s therefore an excellent perspective to perform a micro-level analysis on in this my final post about why more western men don’t wear makeup.



Compare this photo, captured in NYC Pride this year, with the ads in my last post. Does the representation of men in makeup match the reality? Why is the femininity played down so heavily? (Photo credit: <https://www.allure.com/gallery/nyc-pride-parade-rainbow-makeup>)

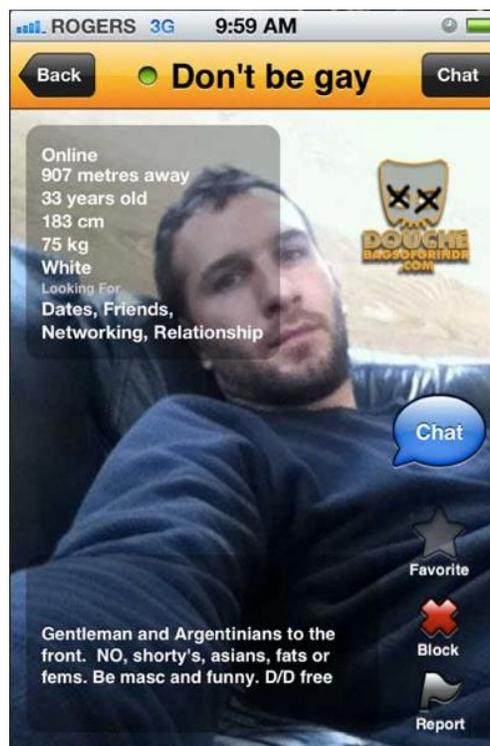
Let’s start with an acknowledgement that not all men who wear makeup are gay, but for this post I will be discussing those who are.

Gay men in the west struggle to this day with their collective identity; are they cultural revolutionaries united by a common purpose or just individuals trying to fit it? The question seems to be, what’s the point of being “queer” if you just want to be like everyone else in a society that has historically shunned you? I will acknowledge that both sides of this tug of war are tempting.

As blogger Michael Waters writes, it’s important to remember that “over the last century, men who wear makeup have often found themselves subject to unwanted attention, if not outright violence.” This is because they were often suspected of being gay, and in post-Victorian society makeup was considered bad and homosexuality even worse – in fact, it was the first time the term was used in describing a person, not an act (Newson). The latter somehow became

associated with femininity (again: bad) and a connection between the three was established. Suddenly all men in makeup were assumed to be gay. Presenting outside gender conventions by using makeup automatically singled out gay people, often to unfortunate outcomes. Historically it made sense from a self-preservation stance for gay men to avoid makeup. However, as the times and the political culture have changed for the better, that trend has persisted. While straight men can now try makeup more readily, sadly, today other gay men oppress each other.

As examined in my last post, makeup brands marketing to men today are still careful to distance themselves from gay men, who are arguably their biggest clients anyways. In ignoring this market, the brands are helping to build a toxic environment of unhealthy, prescriptive masculinity and internalized homophobia. They're constructing an artificial hierarchy of validity within the community of men who wear makeup based on sexual orientation, as though there are "degrees of gayness" ranging from "metrosexual dude using concealer" to "full blown faggot." This relies on an age-old idea that gay men, especially those who present more feminine, actually want to be women (often a false assumption laden with its own set of prejudices).



This screenshot from the popular gay dating app Grindr captures the irony of asking gay men to present more straight. (Photo credit: <http://critical-discipleship.blogspot.com/2012/12/fats-fems-asians-and-why-i-hate-sex.html>)

This toxic environment doesn't end with advertising or sales. It permeates into gay culture itself, evident for example by the abundant "anti-femme" biases within dating apps like the popular Grindr platform ([Santiago](#)). Gay men seeking to "blend in" distance themselves from other men who use makeup because the association is negative, as if femininity is a contagious disease. This "othering" within the community is dangerous because it works against a radical

agenda to create equality. It's evident by how gay men delight in watching drag queens, yet won't date them (Alvear).

This pattern of labeling within the gay community is indicative of a larger cultural problem of pursuing dominance as a form of validation. In the same way that men seek dominance over women, gay "masculine" men assert dominance over their more effeminate counterparts. This is expressed both sexually and culturally, and frankly it's gross. It would help if gay men instead embraced makeup as a symbol of resistance to the status quo.

Some would make the argument that we need to formally separate gender from sex, orientation and presentation, but that type of rhetoric further compartmentalizes us. I instead advocate for a kinder world, where we look beyond the material manifestations of people and see their true character instead. Gay men have a ways to go in this regards, and it would help to begin by checking their biases. *Why* do you think a man in makeup is lesser than you? *What* is holding you back from trying some eyeliner? *Who* benefits from splitting the community apart?

To conclude this series, I would like to summarize my analysis of why more western men don't wear makeup. It is not an exhaustive list, but it is a start.

- Makeup is linked to femininity, and femininity is perceived to be lesser than masculinity.
- Toxic images of masculinity have infiltrated mainstream culture and hold men back from exploring their identities.
- Makeup brands have failed to create inspiring, inclusive and accessible products for men.
- Further, they have failed to market these products effectively in a way that downplays toxic masculinity.
- Gay culture continues to be associated with makeup, while at the same time rejecting this association internally due to internalizing aforementioned toxic images of masculinity.

I call myself an idealist because I believe that one single person has the power to bring change to this crooked, flawed world we live in. For instance, one openly queer student at York University, wearing makeup on campus not to impress others but to interrupt their day, can influence others to listen and take a stance. Already I see a new generation emerging where ideologies are questioned and an atmosphere of kindness is being fostered. Like a flame, this momentum must be encouraged and fostered. At the end of the day it's not about selling makeup to a bigger market, but finally addressing massive issues within our culture.

I finish with a call to men and women alike, gay or straight or anything in between, to be brave, be true to themselves, be kind to each other and stay woke!

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