Two Research Assistantships, 2022-23
SSHRC Project: “Fashioning Empire: Race, Gender and Material Culture, c. 1660-1820.”
PI: Beverly Lemire, Department of History, Classics, and Religion, University of Alberta, lemire@ualberta.ca

Seeking two energetic and committed research assistants to work on a SSHRC-funded project over the coming academic year, fall 2022-winter 2023.

Summary of project:
“Fashioning Empire: Race, Gender and Material Culture, c. 1660-1820.”

How was race entangled in material systems, like dress? Who were key Black and White actors? What form did these material contests take? These are the major questions driving this project.

Material culture is a central focus of this project, theoretically and through object analysis.

European empires worked to shape the 17th and 18th century Atlantic region with economic, intellectual, and cultural forms whose deep-rooted effects continue to this day. European powers shared common colonial aims, including colonization, the mass enslavement of African peoples and the normalization of "the slavery business and the making of 'race'" (Hall 2020). Textiles were a source of vast profit for western powers, entangled in the business of slavery; dress, the 'social skin', defined race, rank, and gender. Material habits and fashions carried political values. These will be analyzed and addressed for different social categories of people.

How did the colonial fashion system function within the Atlantic world? What roles were performed or resisted by Black women? In what ways did dress reflect or reshape racialized hierarchies, including in the Caribbean and Western Europe? Attention to Caribbean sources (and their extended influence) is key to this history, in addition to other colonial and European modes. Clothing is central to this history. So, too, are the charged practices of laundry and white/washing. Entertainment and festivities will also be assessed, vehicles for colonial and racial ‘play.’ Masquerades became a craze from the 1760s a cultural prop that needs deep analysis, as performed in colonial and metropolitan venues. The distinctive material practice of seamen is another vital theme, multi-ethnic men whose mobile lives tied together empires.

The outcomes of this project will reveal previously opaque histories, including the promotion of normative patterns of White beauty and fashion. Jamaican-born cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, advocated change through a critical engagement that we anticipate will come from this project: to "turn the stereotypes in a sense against themselves...in such a way that they become uninhabitable" (Hall 1997, 21). Publications and presentations will reach a wide interdisciplinary audience with urgently needed new histories.
**Required skills/background of the applicants**

- Doctoral candidates are preferred, but an MA student may be considered.

- Excellent written and spoken English and capacity to engage in critical reading of secondary and primary materials. You will be reading and summarizing focused secondary literature, and reading and assessing online primary documents.

- Curiosity is key, plus a positive attitude, attention to deadlines, and a problem-solving focus are all indispensable. Collaborative experience is also useful.

- Knowledge of relevant historical topics include 17th-19th century history of empire, race, colonial trade, or material culture is desirable. Knowledge of European, Atlantic World, or Indian empire are helpful. Or, candidates will be considered who demonstrate outstanding related experience and a commitment to learn quickly and carefully.

Some valued skills include:

- Excellent writing skills and examples of effective academic work.
- Experience with Excel and other spreadsheets, with data entry and analysis valuable assets (or a very quick learner with relevant experience).
- Experience with historic handwriting from the 17th-19th centuries also very welcome.
- Experience with websites and with visual analysis very welcome.

This will be a collaborative project, with goals set and regular meetings, leading to the development of measurable outcomes and ground-breaking findings.

**Available funding:**

- Doctoral RA, 12hrs/week for two terms (including benefits) @ $10,500 per term.
- Masters RA, 12hrs/week for two terms (including benefits) @ $8,000 per term.

For further information or for expressions of interest contact Professor Beverly Lemire, Department of History, Classics, and Religion. lemire@ualberta.ca

**To apply:**

Please send your resume (four pages maximum), a sample of written work (max 10 pages) and references (in English or French) along with your cover letter to duss@ualberta.ca. Applications will be reviewed weekly beginning August 15, 2022.

We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only those individuals selected for an interview will be contacted.

The University of Alberta is committed to an equitable, diverse, and inclusive workforce. We welcome applications from all qualified persons. We welcome women; members of visible minority groups; persons with disabilities; persons of any sexual orientation or gender identity and expression; and all those who may contribute to further diversification of ideas at the University to apply.