

Textiles

How fibers and fabric changed the world

Course #	21FTEX
Format:	Seminar
Moderators:	Jessie Tropp Suzette Jones
Date and Time:	Tuesday, 9:30-11:30 AM 10 weeks, starting 9/28/2021
Format:	Online
Maximum number of participants:	16
Auditors accepted:	Yes, up to 2

Purpose: We will explore textiles in the context of history, science, agriculture, ecology, economics, industry, technology, culture, and arts from prehistory to the space age.

Description: The development of textiles in human history changed the way we live. Fabric provides warmth, comfort and decoration. Cloth is part of our daily life, but what do we really know about it other than what's on the laundry tag?

Traditional textiles begin with fibers from plants and animals. Many modern textiles are manufactured from wood pulp or petroleum products. What makes wool warm and cotton cool? What is the environmental impact of cotton farming? Why are primitive fiber hand crafts still so popular? How did local silk mills impact the economic growth of Western Massachusetts? From the earliest days of twisting a clump of wool around a stick, to the industrial revolution of mechanized weaving, to synthetic textiles with unusual properties, there is much to explore.

Role of participants: Each participant will choose from a list of selected topics or propose their own, and provide a 30-40-minute presentation. Potential topics include: the properties and production of wool; trade along the Silk Road; fabrics of transport: sails and wings; the history of cotton farming in the US South; traditional textile arts around the world; spinning and other fiber arts in fairytales, myths, and nursery rhymes; the Bread and Roses textile workers strike in Lawrence, and many more.

Resources: Recommended but not required:

The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History by Kassia St. Clair, 2018. *The Fabric of Civilization: How Textiles Made the World*, by Virginia Postrel, 2020. Additional resources will be provided by the moderator.

About the Moderators: Jessie Tropp is new to LIR but has run many courses. She is an avid knitter who is endlessly fascinated by what you can do with two sticks and string, and by the amazing properties of wool. Suzette Jones is a painter, knitter and weaver and has taken many LIR seminars.