

Fashion Apparel Law Blog

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[Fashion in the Classroom: The World's First Fashion Law Institute Opens Its Doors](#)

Fordham Law School has founded the world's first Fashion Law Institute, marking a critical effort to advance the study and application of fashion law. The Institute, which officially launched September 8, 2010 during New York City's renowned Fashion Week, will be the "primary nerve center" for all things fashion, ranging from the academic study of fashion-related legal issues to offering pro-bono legal counseling for designers in need.

Professor Susan Scafidi, who is acclaimed for her role in developing the fashion law field and credited for creating the first U.S. law school course in fashion law, is the Fashion Law Institute's Director. The Fashion Law Institute has strategically partnered with the Council of Fashion Designers for America (CFDA), which is under the guidance of President designer Diane von Furstenberg (who matched the CFDA's donation with a \$50,000 personal donation to the Institute). The Institute plans to be a key resource for the industry, which produces over a trillion dollars per year globally and employs approximately 200,000 people and 800 companies in New York alone.

Fordham's Fashion Law Institute will cover key legal principles surrounding fashion, including intellectual property, licensing and trademark, and employment and labor relation issues. Real estate, customs, and safety and sustainability are also central principles greatly impacting the fashion industry that will too be explored through the Institute. One of the Fashion Law Institute's goals is to address all legal issues surrounding "the life of the garment," from garment production to consumer protection.

Fashion law, although newly emerging, is a greatly needed field. Despite some existing legislative protection to defend original designs, many fashion companies, have been involved in litigation regarding copyright design or trademark infringement. The Internet age has magnified the problem, as original designs which premiere at fashion weeks around the globe are instantaneously made available online, consequently allowing the original designs to easily be copied and reproduced. Fordham's Fashion Law Institute thereby marks a timely response to the growing necessity for fashion-specific legal aid and protection.

Further illustrating its timely relevance, Fordham's Fashion Institute complements the recent efforts in the legislature to protect designer's works. In August 2010, New York Senator Charles Schumer introduced the [Innovative Design Protection and Piracy Protection Act](#) which protects designers from having their work reproduced or stolen. The Act is aimed to protect designs deemed to be "unique" and "original", and, if passed, will apply to apparel, footwear, and accessories.

In addition to hosting fashion law seminars and offering coursework for law students which will include courses in Fashion Law and Finance, Fashion Ethics, and Fashion Retail Law, the Fashion Law Institute is also geared for non-lawyer designers to learn the necessary law and seek pro-bono consultations when they are in need of fashion-related legal advice. Although large fashion houses and designers typically have in-house counsel, the large population of emerging designers or smaller fashion houses often lack this resource. Fordham's Fashion

Institute's goal is to fill the void and provide a voice for fashion law issues while educating students, practicing lawyers, designers, and the fashion community at large.