

# SOLEcial Studies- Rubber x Leather = Luxury

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**Visiting Professor:** SeanWilliams

[solecialstudies.edu@gmail.com](mailto:solecialstudies.edu@gmail.com)

## OVERVIEW

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SOLEcial Studies - *Rubber x Leather = Luxury* is an 18 hour intensive course that will provide historical context and insight into the evolution of sneakers from their aspirational origins to their current day standing internationally.

Sneakers have served as a material bridge to many segments of fashion, art and culture. Each having their own perceived definition of what luxury is (and isn't).

Beginning with the definition of the word "luxury" itself we will take an educational journey through the sneaker and luxury fashion industries at the very points where they started separately and have merged together and are now inseparable.

We will also explore how NFTs, the Metaverse and Web3 are now changing the way brands are positioned, and the way "virtual" products have achieved "luxury" status.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Students will learn:

- About sneakers as a "luxury item"
- Evolution of the sneaker- into mass "common" acceptance (not so luxurious)
- How luxury in sneakers is perceived in different parts of the world
- Methods and tactics Brands use to sell elevated status or luxury in the sneaker industry
- How society and social media affect the luxury status of sneakers
- History of sustainability in the sneaker industry.
- The way brands use technology to usher in a new era in luxury.

## KEY TOPICS

- How sneakers became “sneakers” (**Origins in Luxury**)
- Enough sneakers for “Everyone” (**Mass production changes EVERYTHING**)
- Geography, Lifestyle, Sports and Music determine/define luxury status (**Defining Moments**)
- What does luxury really mean in different parts of the world? (**Luxury Redefined**)
- Will **sustainability** redefine luxury? (**Does the consumer actually care?**)
- Can the use of technology elevate the status of a brand? (**Apps, NFTs, and the Metaverse**)

Before each session, participants have to explore the topic and anticipate comments and questions

## COURSE MATERIALS

### (Day 1)

#### Origins of Vulcanized Rubber (Sneaker Freaker)

<https://www.sneakerfreaker.com/features/material-matters/material-matters-vulcanised-rubber-sole-construction#:~:text=Vulcanised%20rubber%20was%20an%20obvious,began%20making%20plimsolls%20for%20croquet.>

#### A Revolutionary Invention Changes the Industry Forever

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/jan-matzeliger>

#### Sneakers begin Mass Production with the Keds “Champion” model

<https://www.keds.com/en/champion/>

#### History of the Chuck Taylor- World’s Most Popular Sneaker

<https://www.chucksconnection.com/history1.html>

#### History of the Adidas Superstar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYjH1oU3Kys>



## (Day 2)

### **Run DMC Ushers in a New Era in the Sneaker Industry (1986)**

<https://solecollector.com/news/2014/03/this-history-of-run-d-m-c-and-adidas-as-told-by-d-m-c>

### **Missy Elliott Signs a Historic Deal with Adidas (2004)**

<https://www.the-spin-off.com/news/stories/ADIDAS-SIGNS-ENDORSEMENT-DEAL-WITH-HIP-HOP-ARTIST-88#:~:text=Adidas%20announced%20today%20that%20it,Europe%20and%20Asia%20in%20November>

### **Chanel and Reebok Collaboration Makes History (2000)**

<https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/chanel-reebok-insta-pump-fury/>

### **Louis Vuitton Kanye West will release the “Don” Sneaker Collection (2009)**

<https://sneakernews.com/2009/07/01/kanye-west-x-louis-vuitton-complete-sneaker-collection-release-info/>

### **Adidas and Gucci Announce Partnership (2022)**

<https://sneakernews.com/2022/02/25/adidas-gucci-collaboration-info/>

### **Balenciaga’s New Sneakers DESTROY the idea of “Luxury” (2022)**

<https://www.cnn.com/style/article/balenciaga-destroyed-sneakers-intl-scli/index.html>

### **A History of the Common Sneaker Evolution into Luxury Brand Sneakers**

<https://qz.com/1475992/how-sports-sneakers-evolved-into-luxury-shoes/>

## (Day 3)

### **Nike Pulls the Air Stab from the UK**

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1036032/Nike-pulls-new-Air-Stab-trainers-shelf-wake-knife-attacks.html>

### **Australian Bar Bans Nike Air Max Sneakers**

<https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/banter/aussie-bar-bans-nike-air-max-runners-because-drug-dealers-wear-them-34285311.html>

### **Sneakers Worn by the Ruling Taliban**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/28/world/asia/taliban-sneakers-cheetahs.html>

### **Football Casual & Hooligan Style**

<https://www.footballcasuals.net/en/>



## 10 Best Sneakers French Girls Wear

<https://leoncechenal.com/french-girls-sneakers/>

### (Day 4)

#### Nike Ushers in the Era of Sustainability In Sneaker Culture

<https://solecollector.com/news/2015/04/the-history-of-nike-considered#:~:text=The%20Nike%20Considered%20line%20initially,dash%20of%20granola%2Dinfused%20ideals.>

#### Are Sneakers REALLY Sustainable?

<https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/how-sustainable-is-a-sneaker/>

#### An Ultimate Guide to Sustainable Sneakers

<https://goodonyou.eco/the-ultimate-guide-to-sustainable-sneakers/>

#### 20 Best Sustainable Sneakers

<https://thevou.com/fashion/sustainable-sneakers/>

### (Day 5)

#### Introducing NFT Collections for Sneakerheads

<https://venturebeat.com/2021/04/05/aglet-launches-nft-collections-for-sneakerheads/>

#### Gucci Test the Waters in the World of “Virtual Kicks”

<https://www.inputmag.com/style/gucci-virtual-sneakers-nft-wanna-fashion-augmented-reality>

#### Adidas partners with the Bored Ape Yacht Club

<https://www.voguebusiness.com/technology/adidas-reveals-new-nft-project-with-bored-ape-yacht-club>

#### Nike Partners with Roblox, jumps into the Metaverse

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/18/nike-teams-up-with-roblox-to-create-a-virtual-world-called-nikeland-.html>

#### Nike Buys “RTFKT” Jumps FEET FIRST into NFT Sneakers

<https://hypebeast.com/2021/12/nike-acquires-rtfkt-sneakers-nfts-digital-collectibles>

#### Nike Sues StockX over their NFTs Sales

<https://www.businessoffashion.com/news/technology/nike-sues-stockx-for-selling-sneaker-nfts/>



## TEACHING METHODS

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Lectures, student participation, breakout sessions, and home assignments - will be combined. Student driven discussion, sharing personal testimony of experiences to support various perspectives is encouraged and highly valued. Group created solutions for an assigned challenge will also be highly valued.

There will also be a pop-up in class exhibition that showcases sneakers designed made or indirectly related to Paris and/or France.

## PREREQUISITES

### **Viewing:**

BBC's "Killer Kicks: The Secret In Your Sneakers"

 Killer Kicks: The Secret in Your Sneakers | BBC Stories

History of the Adidas Superstar by Nacho Average

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYjH1oU3Kys>

## GRADING

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Grades are based on

- **Class Participation and contribution: 60%**
- **Group Exercises: (In Class Breakout Sessions) 30%**  
Total number of students in the class will determine how the breakout sessions will be divided. All groups will be asked to provide their perspective and approach to an assigned task.
- **Individual Assignment: (Take Home) 10%**  
Written assignments. Assigned at the end of each class. Due within 24 hours. Each will be no longer than 500- 750 words in length (max).

## ESTIMATED WORKLOAD

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Estimated time required to prepare for each session: **20-45 minutes Reading / Online Research**





## **BIOGRAPHY**

*Sean Williams* is a born and raised Brooklynite who fell in love with sneakers at the age of 13. By age 15, with a few years of work experience under his belt he began buying sneakers with his own money (no longer asking mom for the latest and freshest kicks). **Sean has owned thousands of pairs of sneakers over 37 years.** His love of sneakers has transformed over that time span in some very noteworthy ways.

In 2007, OSD (Obsessive Sneaker Disorder) was founded by long time friend Dee Wells and Sean was asked to become a part of the historical movement. As a business partner in OSD, LLC Sean's love of sneakers has transformed into a mission for the company that has 3 words "**Appreciate, Educate, Elevate**". These days, those 3 words are a part of everything Sean does in regard to the world of sneakers. He has accepted the personal mission of making sure that the younger generations know the potential that exists for them in the athletic footwear business as not only consumers, but as the future professionals in the industry. Sean has been featured in various noteworthy TV shows, publications and web sites such as **NBC's "The Today Show"**, Maxim magazine, The New York Times, and Sneaker Freaker just to name a few. Sean was also recently featured in the short form documentary titled "**Killer Kicks**" which aired on the United Kingdom's BBC network.

In 2018, Sean became a Rankin Scholar at Drexel University in Philadelphia, PA. The first such honor ever bestowed upon someone in sneaker culture. In 2019, Sean made history as Co-curator of the first Hip-Hop apparel and sneaker exhibition at the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City. In 88 days of residency the exhibition amassed foot traffic and exposure to **9.8 million people**. In 2020, Business Insider added Sean to the "**Power List: 28 Most Outstanding People of Color Transforming the Sneaker Industry**".

Now in 2023, Sean and his long time friend and Co-Founder Dee Wells recently opened the SOLEcial Studies CommUNITY Academy (SSCA) in Brooklyn, New York. The SSCA is America's first sneaker business and culture academy. There are plans to expand in the US and abroad.