

the decorated body:

EXPLORING anthropology & FASHION

Alexandra Johnston
Fashion Columnist

Since the dawn of time, human beings have expressed themselves through the clothes they wear. Although styles and trends change each season, the role of clothing as a representation of one's self and one's beliefs will always lie underneath.



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Anne Bolin, professor of anthropology at Elon, has dedicated a portion of her studies to this topic.

"The most important point to consider is the idea of the decorated body," Bolin said. "Clothing is part of (a) cultural system of embodiment that is used to demonstrate who we are and is a vehicle to perform our identities."

Bolin's personal style is a favorite of Elon students. Many female students often comment on how unusually creative her pairings are. Bolin likes to add a twist to her outfit every day in order to push the boundaries of clothing in the workplace and express her identity as an anthropologist and feminist.

"For example, on some days I might like to dress in a professional and conventional suit," Bolin said. "But it's not going to be traditional grey or navy. It'll be purple."

In addition to a colorful collection of slacks, suits and skirts, Bolin frequently wears ethnic jewelry. She uses it as a representation of her anthropological identity and the cultures she has researched and admired. She is particularly fond of her Pacific adornments, such as her Samoan shell necklace.

Through her research on women's embodiment spanning the historical and cross-cultural, Bolin has explored how clothing modifies women's shape. A classic example is the corset, an extreme alteration with negative medical consequences to meet ideals of feminine beauty.

Clothing is also a representation of a particular time period and political era. Bolin fondly remembers growing up in Boulder, Colo., amid the women's liberation movement and the sexual revolution of the late 1960s. Clothing at that time was used as a catalyst for change in traditional women's gender roles.

"Women didn't wear pants," she said. "We went into the men's stores and started buying their jeans and wearing them. There were no women's jeans."

By refusing to conform to the skirted, coifed women's appearance of the time, a simple act such as buying men's pants turned into a serious advocacy and political effort for change, Bolin said.

Today, clothing still holds a sense of identity for many. On a recent trip to Taiwan, Bolin requested to be shown the youth shopping area in Taipei by a few young Taiwanese female students. Between storefronts and shops, the young women expressed their opinions of the high-heeled shoe.

"I'll never forget these young women who were just so marvelously political," Bolin said. "As one of the students sat there with me, she took off her high heeled pointed shoe and said, 'This is not an insignia of my submission. It makes me taller. I'm as tall as the men and I can look them eye-to-eye and I can take this off and use it as a weapon.' She was fabulous. I love how she co-opted meaning and expressed her agency."

It is interesting to see how much meaning clothing has in cultures around the world by observing clothing as an important element in understanding material culture.

"Clothing means something to people," Bolin said. "It has a strong personal and cultural symbolic load. An article of clothing may be kept for its memories as a sensory reminder. For example, wedding dresses or prom dresses are kept for their purely emotional valence."

Bolin still has the outfit she wore when she received her Ph.D. because of the deep meaning and sense of accomplishment the outfit holds for her.

Clothing has been a representation of human culture and means for political change since the beginning of time. Remember this and take it to heart when getting dressed.

Webcam speakers bring outside voices to Elon

Jack Dodson
Senior Reporter

A faculty member at the Poynter Institute, a school for journalism in Florida. Award-winning college photojournalists talking from their hotel room at a convention in Alabama. A Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist and a freelance photographer who interned at the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times who video chatted from a Starbucks in New York City.

These are just a few of the people who have spoken to communications professor Randy Piland's classes via the Internet. Skype and iChat have given technology a new role in the classroom as professors at Elon have begun using webcams to bring speakers to their classes.

Piland teaches photojournalism classes and has used this technique for almost four years.

"It's just a way to bring some professionals to the classroom without having to pay the expenses to bring them here," he said.

Professors can showcase a lecture from anywhere in the world using this tactic, assuming the other end has an Internet connection and the timing works out, eliminating travel and lodging costs.

The speakers and subjects can be anyone and anything because the set-up is so simple and free of charge — that is, if you have a computer with a camera attached. It is possible to connect with a college student somewhere else in the world that may have an interesting story to share, or a world-renowned author or politician someone who wouldn't typically have time to drop by Elon's campus.

"It's a way to broaden their experience in the classroom," Piland said.

In the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings, Piland had one of the photographers from the Roanoke Times in Virginia who had covered the story video chat with the class.

Because the photographer was talking from his office, the class ended up talking to the director of photography at the newspaper as well as the Web manager and the managing editor about their coverage of the tragedy.

Associate Professor of Communications Anthony Hatcher has also used this concept, but said that using a webcam to bring a speaker to class loses the personal



PHOTO COURTESY OF MCT CAMPUS
Yan Chow, a doctor at the Kaiser Permanente Sidney Garfield Health Care Innovation Center in San Leandro, Calif., communicates with another employee through a Web camera.

touch of an in-person speech.

"However, having a live chat is the next best thing," he said. "The students were a bit awed by seeing (the speaker) — and themselves — projected up on a giant screen during the question and answer. There was a novelty factor."

Hatcher said bringing speakers to class via Webcam is like any teaching tool — not to be overused. Piland, meanwhile, capitalizes on the uses of this concept by saving all of the speeches that occur in his class through video chat and then posting them as a video file later on for his students and other classes to view.

"Teaching's changed a lot," Piland said. "Probably more in recent years than in past years because of technology. We like to think of it as collaborative learning. I like to present the students with a lot of content and let them gather what they can with it."

He elaborated that some universities take the idea a step further and record lectures to be kept on an iPod or iPhone. He said this can be useful for summer courses when students are not in classrooms but all over the country or the world.

While the idea is not new, it is beginning only now to work its way into the classroom as a typical medium for learning. Piland said that it's not a difficult concept, and it's not anything that is revolutionary. It only depends on the faculty's willingness to use technology that's already available.

GETTING THE MOST BANG PER BUCK:

Financial aid tips for college students

Lauren Ramsdell
Reporter

As all Elon students know, tuition, room and board can add up. What many don't know is that financial aid is not only available for high school seniors. There is a multitude of scholarship opportunities through the university and other organizations geared toward students that are already in college, and Elon can help with the search for some college "green."

Contact the financial aid office

The people working in the financial aid office don't assist with non-need-based aid, but they can help find information about other scholarships.

Financial Aid Director M. Patrick Murphy estimates that of all Elon students, only about 55 percent apply for financial aid. Of the 55 percent, between 38 and 40 percent are awarded some kind of aid.

"Don't make the assumption that you're not eligible," Murphy said. "You won't get any if you don't apply."

The financial aid office can help uncover scholarships that no one would ever think of — from Daughters of the American Revolution to Blondes Only.

Check your campus box often

Many on-campus organizations offer scholarships for women, minorities, men and specific majors. Some scholarships cover the cost of books and some are just a little extra to help take the bite out of a \$25,000 tuition check. Every little bit helps, so keep on top of the scholarship deadlines.

Currently, Sigma Phi Epsilon is holding interviews for its Balanced Women Scholarship. The deadline was weeks ago, and information was distributed through campus boxes. The ladies still in the running are there they checked their mail. There are also departmental scholarships that may become available depending on the classes one takes.

Log on

Found under the "Admissions" tab on the Elon Web site, the financial aid site breaks down

the types of scholarships into the following categories: endowed scholarships, merit-based programs, talent-based programs, ROTC, engineering and scholarships for high school juniors. The merit-based programs are only awarded to incoming freshmen, but the talent-based programs are renewable each year and can be an invaluable opportunity.

It is never too late to apply for need-based aid. Completing the FAFSA and CSS Profile was a requirement for first-time freshmen, and those applications can be updated and resubmitted for a chance at earning government loans or grants. Elon also offers an application for need-based financial aid specifically for returning students.

There are dozens of Web sites devoted specifically to finding non-need based scholarships. These scholarship search engines match applicants with scholarships best tailored to their interests, backgrounds and needs to help students find scholarships that are both unique and carry a great payout.

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