Cultivating Professionalism for the Next Generation of Human Ecologists
Human Ecology Program Overview

The areas of study in the undergraduate and graduate programs in the Department of Human Ecology have evolved since the first Bachelor of Science in Household Economics degrees were awarded in 1918 at the University of Alberta. In addition to our two undergraduate majors in Family Ecology and Clothing, Textiles & Material Culture, graduate students pursue course-based or thesis-based master's degrees, or doctoral programs in the following areas: Aging; Children, Youth & Families; Material Culture; and Textile & Apparel Science. Did you know our Department offers the only PhD program in Human Ecology in Canada?

What is it?
Human Ecology is an interdisciplinary applied field that uses a holistic systems approach to examine the many contexts of people’s lives. In particular, we focus on the dynamic relationships people have with their near environments: clothing, family, home and community.

What do we do?
We prepare students with core skills in: science, social science, arts & humanities, critical analysis, global awareness...

What research areas?
Family & child relationships
Youth at risk
Families in later life
Caregiving
Rural aging
Material culture & disability studies
Work-life balance
Intimate relationships
History & social meaning of objects
Costume history
Protective clothing
Clothing comfort
Social psychology of design
Collections and exhibitions
Apparel design
Innovative materials
Global textile trade

Enhanced through experiential learning, practicums, international study opportunities

Next Generation
Leadership and Professionalism

Starting September 2015, the Peter Lougheed Leadership College will be commencing its inaugural two-year leadership program at the University of Alberta. The key purpose of the college is to provide students with opportunities to develop their knowledge, attributes, and skills in leadership. In addition to scholarly classroom teaching, the program will include the opportunity for in-depth immersive leadership experiences and the development of values to promote global and community responsibility. Dr. Rhonda Breitkreuz, Human Ecology Associate Professor, will be the lead instructor for the interdisciplinary Topics in Leadership course offered this fall. Working with the Principal of the College, The Right Honourable Kim Campbell, Dr. Breitkreuz will design, coordinate, and deliver the course content with the assistance of graduate student Teaching Fellows, including Human Ecology PhD student, Shanika Donalds. Third year undergraduate students from a wide range of faculties across the University of Alberta will be selected to attend the two year program at the College.

Path to Professionalism in Human Ecology

“Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself”
- George Bernard Shaw

‘Professionalism’ describes the qualities, skills, and competence expected of people in any given profession. As an applied discipline, Human Ecology incorporates a unique blend of learning in scientific, humanistic, and interpersonal areas which provides students with excellent opportunities for personal and professional development.

In addition to providing core subject matter content within each of our majors, Family Ecology and Clothing, Textiles & Material Culture, the Human Ecology program strives to cultivate the attitudes, skills, and behaviour consistent with dimensions of public and intra-personal professionalism. Public professionalism looks at the demands society places on the practice of one’s job and includes dimensions such as competence, accountability, using explicit standards, and enhancing the welfare of the community. Intra-personal professionalism relates to personal characteristics that enhance how individuals function in their careers including self-awareness, integrity and respect for others, ability to deal with uncertainty, and enthusiasm for lifelong learning (Van Kamp, et.al, 2004).

Graduates of the program are eligible to qualify as Professional Human Ecologists, a protected title under Alberta’s Professional and Occupations Associations Registration Act.
All Human Ecology students complete a 200-hour practicum during their last year of study.

A practicum provides hands-on experience you can’t get in the classroom and it helps launch careers. Through our practicum program students are placed with organizations that link with their career goals and provide connections that are relevant to professional and career development. Students benefit from a focus on problem-solving, teamwork skills, and leadership development. Mentored by industry and organization leaders, students build their professional network during their practicum and some are recruited into jobs straight out of its completion!

As the professional association for Human Ecologists, AHEA serves Albertans by promoting excellence in the practice of Human Ecology and by providing leadership to its members. Students benefit from becoming AHEA members during their formal education in Human Ecology by meeting professionals and seeing how they apply the key skills and knowledge of Human Ecology in practice. AHEA membership also gives students the opportunity to form professional connections prior to entering practice, assisting them in defining their career goals, and building a professional network that can lead to job opportunities. Graduates who become PHecs experience the career advantage of being a recognized professional in the world of work.

AHEA and the Department of Human Ecology are committed to working together to encourage students in developing the skills and knowledge necessary to become a professional. The Department provides office space for AHEA to meet students and faculty on a regular basis. The Registrar, Sandra Woodhead Lyons, keeps weekly office hours in the Department during the fall and winter terms. Come by and say hello!
One of the single most important means of fostering professionalism in our graduates is through excellent teaching. Though we may sometimes take for granted the role of professor as teacher, university teaching is a professional activity underpinned by specialist knowledge, research, and expertise. It embodies too, particular kinds of values and goals associated with furthering individual, social, and scientific development. These dimensions help develop professionalism in our students.

Who was your favourite professor?
Think of favourite professors who made an impression during your university days. What made them so impactful? Pedagogy, the study of the teaching and learning process, might help describe these positive experiences. Developing pedagogic expertise is what also contributes to teaching as a professional practice. While our faculty members are passionate about their research activities, they also strive to share their expertise, grounded in ethical teaching principles, in a way that is reflective of the creative elements of teaching. Pedagogic expertise has been depicted as a combination of science, art, and craft, identifying the complementary needs for collectively created knowledge, professional skills, and personal abilities.

Human Ecology Teaching Awards

Of twenty-five ALES faculty members recognized for their mastery of the science, art, and craft of teaching last December, three were from Human Ecology and will be named to the ALES Teaching Wall of Fame: Dr. Jane Batcheller and professors Vlada Blinova and Kathryn Chandler. Vlada also received an Outstanding Service Award for her role as Collections Manager of the Clothing & Textiles Collection at the U of A Museums Celebration in March 2015.

This past year’s recognition of Kathryn Chandler’s teaching professionalism marks the 14th time she has been named to the ALES Teaching Wall of Fame in the 16 year history of the award. Kathryn has also been the recipient of the ALES Faculty Teaching Award (2005) and the University’s William Hardy Alexander Award for undergraduate teaching (2007).
Dementia Care By Design: de Hogeweyk Village (Netherlands)

Dementia Care by Design is a project that explores the study of human-object relationships with a focus on the specialized needs of a diversity of people, in this case the design of care facilities for people who have dementia. Granted unusual access, Dr. Megan Strickfaden, Dr. Janet Fast, masters student Nicole Gaudet, and Alberta film maker Steven Hope collaboratively researched, produced, and directed a film with people from the Vivium Group in the Netherlands who designed, built, and now run de Hogeweyk village – an innovative design environment for people with dementia in the Netherlands. The village is a 4-acre development consisting of 23 attached houses, and has received international attention for its distinctive alternative care model - a predominantly social model that supports people’s choices to engage in various activities inside their home, inside the village, and in the community beyond. The film, based on research conducted in February 2015, offers a glimpse into the intricacies of people’s relationships with things, offering rich descriptions of how people relate to objects and/or spaces. The film features comprehensive observations of residents, family, friends and workers within the public and private spaces of de Hogeweyk, focusing on the design of spaces and objects that have never been documented before. In North America, dementia’s disease progression is typically marked with the need for a person to move from their home to an institutional environment. This research highlights the importance of understanding how material culture can make a difference in supporting the wellbeing and enhancing the quality of life of residents with dementia. It may mark the beginning of reimagining innovative ways to respond to dementia care by design in the Alberta context.

Environmental Design for Older Adults: Chinese Architects Explore Western Canada

Hui Ren, a Human Ecology PhD student, in cooperation with a professional architectural magazine Community Design, organized tours for fourteen Chinese architects visiting western Canada in April 2015. Their goal was to study environmental design for older adults in Canada, and to apply their learning to architectural practice in China. The tours provided insight into specific architectural styles, providing an inspiration for their designs for housing China’s vast aging population.

This international project involved three universities: The University of Alberta, Simon Fraser University, and Tsinghua University. Visitors experienced senior living environments in Edmonton and Vancouver. Drs. Janet Fast and Norah Keating, (Human Ecology) welcomed the group at an Edmonton dinner, and virtual greetings were extended by Dr. Habib Chaudbury, (Simon Fraser University), and Professor Yanmin Zhou (School of Architecture, Tsinghua University). The dinner guests included researchers, government representatives, and practitioners from Edmonton.
Preparing New Researchers

The Families in Everyday Life research study, being led by Dr. Deanna Williamson with colleagues Dr. Berna Skrypnek and Drs. Kaysi Kushner and Nicole Pitre (Nursing), is examining family functioning processes of families with young children. Beginning the project in 2011, the research team has now completed data collection with a diverse group of 64 families including dual and single parent families, heterosexual and same gender parent families, as well as families of Aboriginal, Chinese, and South Asian ethnic origin. Providing students with an opportunity to develop high quality research skills is an important aspect of this project. These skills facilitate students’ success in their own graduate work and future professional careers. Honing their interviewing skills, students have learned how to develop rapport and help people feel comfortable sharing their personal and sometimes very intimate stories of everyday family life. In preparation for Phase II of the project, graduate students are involved in coding the data and the early stages of analysis, which provides the opportunity to learn how to organize and manage large amounts of information and how to make sense of complex phenomena such as family functioning of contemporary families.

Skip the dishes? Not so fast! Sex and the division of labour revisited

Assistant Professor Dr. Matt Johnson, along with research colleagues Dr. Jared Anderson (Kansas State U.) and Dr. Nancy Galambos (U. of Alberta), were the recipients of the ‘Best Presentation Award’ at a recent international conference based on discussion of a project entitled Skip the dishes? Not so fast! Sex and the division of labour revisited. The award recognizes excellent scientific works on the basis of data analysis using the German Family Panel data set. Revisiting a previous research finding suggesting that men who do more housework have less sex, the authors found no association between male share of housework and 3 indicators of couple sexual functioning. Rather, making a fair contribution to housework was associated with more frequent and satisfying sex for both partners, leading to the recommendation that couples might strive to articulate what they perceive to be fair, and be less concerned with an equal split of labour.

Best Presentation Award – Pairfam International User Conference, May 2015 Dr. Matthew D. Johnson (University of Alberta).
Working in two vastly different contexts, but with a shared interest in exploring how students respond to others’ needs in creating new designs, Dr. Arlene Oak is involved with two major projects – one in a healthcare context and the other related to architecture. Working with post-doctoral fellow Dr. Claire Nicholas and graduate students, funded by a Killam Cornerstones grant, the first project, **Innovation in Design Education**, is in the data collection stage, using ethnographic audio and visual recordings of students undertaking design in the context of healthcare. The research team will be analyzing this data inspired by fifteen years of working with people with disabilities towards the design of inclusive spaces and growing up with a grandmother who was blind, doctoral student Janice Rieger’s research focuses on the complex story of how disability is mediated through built spaces and objects in museums in Canada. Her research will be carried out at Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame (Calgary), the Canadian War Museum (Ottawa), and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (Winnipeg) under the supervision of Dr. Megan Strickfaden. Janice has received over ten awards, some of which are: the SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, President’s Doctoral Prize of Distinction, Canadian Federation of University Women Graduate Fellowship; Queen Elizabeth II Doctoral Scholarship and the Dianne Kieren Graduate Award in Human Ecology.

**Graduate Student Janice Rieger - Rethinking disAbility in Museum Environments**

Inspired by fifteen years of working with people with disabilities towards the design of inclusive spaces and growing up with a grandmother who was blind, doctoral student Janice Rieger’s research focuses on the complex story of how disability is mediated through built spaces and objects in museums in Canada. Her research will be carried out at Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame (Calgary), the Canadian War Museum (Ottawa), and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (Winnipeg) under the supervision of Dr. Megan Strickfaden. Janice has received over ten awards, some of which are: the SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, President’s Doctoral Prize of Distinction, Canadian Federation of University Women Graduate Fellowship; Queen Elizabeth II Doctoral Scholarship and the Dianne Kieren Graduate Award in Human Ecology.

As a co-applicant on a SSHRC Partnership Grant, Dr. Oak is collaborating on a project entitled **Thinking While Doing**. It looks at how architecture students learn to collaborate with local communities as the students design and build new structures that contribute to improving the economic, aesthetic, and social conditions of these communities. The students themselves are learning to be experts in architecture, and the research explores how they gain the knowledge and skills they require to practice as effective professionals.

**Material Culture Scholarship Consider the Social Meaning of Objects in Terms of Their Creation, Use, and Circulation with an Emphasis Within the Department of Human Ecology, on Textiles and Clothing.**

**Studying the Design Process From Healthcare to Architecture**

Material Culture & Design Studies

Our artifact in the exhibition at the Norton Museum in Florida. Ivory brocaded robe à la française and matching petticoat, 1775–mid 1780s, France, silk brocade with stripes and floral motifs. Clothing and Textiles Collection, Department of Human Ecology, University of Alberta (2014.1.1.a, b) Mount, photograph and paper hair by Anne Bissonnette ©

Expanding her role as Curator of the Human Ecology Department’s Clothing and Textile Collection, Dr. Anne Bissonnette served as curator for western textiles for the exhibition **High Tea: Glorious Manifestations - East and West** at The Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach, Florida. Two garments borrowed from the Department’s Clothing and Textiles Collections were featured in the exhibition, as prime examples of this type of gown. In the first three months of the exhibition, these artifacts were seen by 24,748 visitors! Dr. Bissonnette also wrote a chapter for the exhibition catalogue entitled **The Tea Gown: Origin, Use and Evolution.**

Visitors to an exhibit at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Human Ecology’s Unique Testing Facilities: PCERF and the Textile Analysis Service

In addition to advancing research through testing, textile science students in Human Ecology benefit from exposure to how real-life research problems are tackled in the department’s unique testing facilities.

The Protective Clothing & Equipment Research Facility (PCERF) specializes in the evaluation and development of protective clothing for workers exposed to hazards such as fire, heat and steam. The dual requirements for safety and comfort in protective clothing often conflict with one another, but both are of paramount concern to researchers. Textile science expertise combined with advanced knowledge of human comfort factors have created a world class reputation for this test facility in Human Ecology. Developments in this field are highly relevant for groups such as the province’s oil industry workers and the military in Canada and the United States.

The Textile Analysis Service focuses on textile testing in response to diverse requests from a wide range of clients. These may include entrepreneurs who are contemplating new product development, damage caused to a garment, dry cleaners who need to understand the reason for a problem, or manufacturers who need to determine if their goods meet required government standards. Exposure to the work of the Textile Analysis Service provides real-life examples of the application of textile science knowledge and testing methods.

A Collaborative Research Project

Doctoral student Nicole Furtak who is supervised by Drs. Rachel McQueen and John Nychka, Department of Chemical and Materials Engineering, is evaluating moisture transport and related comfort of socks for her thesis research. As part of her research she is developing a method for assessing transport of liquid within sock materials to better predict wearer comfort. Nicole is passionate about socks and even knits her own in her spare time. But her research is also important and of interest to industry, in particular for the large Canadian retailer Mark’s. This year Dr. McQueen and Nicole were successful in receiving a Mitacs Accelerate PhD Fellowship award with Mark’s as an industry partner. Mitacs, a national organization that designs and delivers research programs, works with universities, thousands of companies, and both federal and provincial governments to support industrial and social innovation in Canada.

Over the next three years Nicole will spend 25% of her research time working alongside the Product Innovation Department at Mark’s head office in Calgary.
Exploring Couples’ Relationships Following Stroke – Sharon Anderson

“My interest in gerontology and family ecology developed through my graduate school training. After my husband had a stroke in 1997, I wondered why some people seemed to manage well and continue their recovery years after a stroke, but others quickly lost the functional abilities they regained in rehab. I started my doctoral program in 2011 and am now completing my research on what happens to couples’ relationships after stroke. Three quarters of stroke survivors return home to live with their spouse. A robust predictor of wellbeing is a satisfying marital relationship in health and in illness, yet after a stroke, the discourse quickly moves to care and caregiving. Contrary to the belief that caregiver/receiver are the salient roles after transition to disability, most couples characterized their roles foremost as husbands and wives in a marriage relationship. Marriages were reconfigured around a partnered or a care relationship, but those that thrived depended on both survivors and spouses supporting their partner to develop as a person. After my doctorate, I want to continue to examine how environmental contexts, including the couple’s relationship, influence older adults’ wellbeing. I have been inspired by the exceptional quality of the teaching, graduate supervision, and support for students in the Human Ecology program.”

Sharon is the recipient of many awards: the Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship, Diane Kieren Graduate Award, SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, President’s Doctoral Prize of Distinction, Andrew Stewart Memorial Graduate Prize, Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarship and the Alberta Association on Gerontology Award.
In a first of its kind collaboration, Southgate Centre Mall called on Human Ecology and Art & Design students to redesign the future in their Eco Design Fashion Challenge contest. Working in teams, students were asked to create an apparel item from recycled materials such as shopping bags, paper or even plastic credit cards! Students demonstrated a great deal of imagination and innovation in their choice of materials. Lydia Stewart, a student in Hecol 241 and her teammate, Anna Campbell, were the contest prize winners of a $5000 bursary, for their hand sewn entry using autumn leaves preserved in glycerin. The gown was an exploration of the use of biological materials in place of traditional textiles.

Telio Fabrics Design Competition, Montreal, celebrated its 10th anniversary as a national forum for emerging designers. Zachary Ward, a Human Ecology apparel design student and a finalist in the highly competitive contest, was awarded a Technical Mention Scholarship for his entry. He worked under the guidance of instructor Vlada Blinova.

The Empey Lecture is delivered annually in honour of Dr. Eliza-beth Empey, Dean of Home Economics from 1960 to 1976. The March 2015 Empey Lecture, entitled The Most Intellectual and Moral Quilt that was Ever Made - An Exploration of Quilt Scholarship, proved that the subject of quilts always draws a large audience. The lecture which focused on an exploration of the history of a particular album quilt, was presented by Carolyn Ducey, Curator of Collections, International Quilt Study Center Museum, University of Nebraska. A selection of quilts from Human Ecology’s Clothing & Textiles Collection and the Edmonton Quilters’ Guild were on display and helped to set the stage for the talk.
Plan to explore Human Ecology’s hidden gem on campus – the Clothing and Textiles Collection. Tours are offered by appointment every last Thursday of the month from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (two weeks’ notice is required - maximum of eight individuals per tour). The collection can be accessed by students, faculty, researchers, and members of the public. Groups are welcome. Please contact the Collections Manager for bookings or information.

Contact: Vlada Blinova, Collections Manager
Phone: (780) 492-2528  1-03 Human Ecology
Location: Human Ecology Building, first floor, east entrance

Tour the Clothing & Textile Collection

Keep up with Department news by viewing our website:
http://www.hecol.ualberta.ca/