

[unique]

From Latin unicus, equivalent to (unus) one + -icus -ic

adjective

Being the only one of its kind.  
Without an equal or equivalent;  
unparalleled.  
Unusual; extraordinary

# human*ecology*

## **Social Impact Through Discovery, Scholarship & Innovation**

In the current climate of unforeseen, severe budget cuts to Alberta's post-secondary institutions, there has been much discussion about how to maximize use of resources while at the same striving to "deliver social impact through discovery, scholarship and innovation" (Colloquy@ualbert.ca, May 24, 2013).

We believe that the Department of Human Ecology is uniquely situated in Alberta and in Canada, to deliver on the promise of discovery, scholarship and innovation in applied, and varied, social science, science, arts and humanities contexts. We consider complex, multi-level relationships and integrate many types of data within and across disciplines. In this year's annual report we would like to alert readers to the accomplishments of Human Ecology faculty, staff and students to provide evidence of our significant contributions, and the need to support and appreciate these efforts.

Something that makes this Department unique and relevant is the 'human' in Human Ecology. Our scholarship examines the links between people and their environments. It focuses on questions that have social impact, such as how do we treat aging adults; care for families; clothe ourselves; work safely; create inclusively designed spaces; and understand our material desires? We welcome you to learn more about faculty research interests, graduate student projects and Department-sponsored events. These activities attest to our success in achieving impactful research programs, and in creating meaningful and relevant educational experiences for our students, within the broad context of creating healthy human environments.

## 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. Undergraduates today select from 2 majors, **Family Ecology** or **Clothing, Textiles and Material Culture** to complete a BSc. in Human Ecology. Course-based and thesis-based Masters graduate study programs are available. Did you know our Department offers **the only PhD program in Human Ecology** in Canada? We prepare individuals for service, research, teaching, or for roles in government and industry.

### 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...

### applied how? across a range of 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

AGING

## Connecting the world on global issues of aging

While on sabbatical in 2012, **Dr. Norah Keating** continued to build the Global Social Initiative on Ageing (GSIA). Two symposia at the International Association of Gerontology & Geriatrics World Congress in Seoul Korea are focused on the GSIA themes of families and liveability.

**Drs. Keating and Fast** also are involved in university efforts to build a Tsinghua University -U of A partnership. In November visiting Chinese faculty members Xiaomei Pei and Hao Luo, met with graduate students and faculty members in Human Ecology to discuss their experiences in establishing an aging program at Tsinghua and working with Chinese policy makers around aging issues. Planning for an ongoing research collaboration continued during a return visit to Tsinghua University in June.



*Drs. Keating and Fast visit Tsinghua University June 2013*

## Social Impact through contributions to policy making

The Compassionate Care Leave Bill was passed in the Alberta legislature May 20, 2013. Bill 203 amends the province's employment standards code so as to provide job-protected leave to family caregivers who take time off work to look after a dying family member. **Dr. Janet Fast** consulted with provincial MLA Matt Jeneroux, to get Bill 203 passed in the provincial legislature.



*Lieutenant Governor Donald S. Ethell giving Royal Assent to bill passed by the Legislative Assembly*

She is also supporting the Human Rights Commission of Canada's efforts to gain recognition for employers' duty to accommodate family care responsibilities in the workplace. Dr. Fast received funding from the World University Network (WUN) to host an international workshop on Older Workers and Caregiving. This team of researchers from Canada, Australia, UK and New Zealand are doing something unique in terms of comparing national data across countries, situating findings within the social, economic and policy environments of the respective countries.



*WUN team members meet in Human Ecology Spring 2013*

## Child Care Experiences of Alberta Moms with Pre-schoolers

*'There are fewer than 20% of regulated child care spaces available for the total number of pre-school children in Alberta. Who is caring for these children?'*



With funding from the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research, **Dr. Rhonda Breitreuz** is working with a team of researchers to conduct focus groups with mothers of pre-school children to learn about their child care experiences in Alberta. The impetus for

this research was the statistic which showed that there are fewer than 20% of regulated child care spaces available for the total number of pre-school children in Alberta, yet over half of them are in some form of non-parental child care. The gap between the number of children requiring non-parental child care and the number of regulated child care spaces available suggests that the majority of employed mothers with young children are dependent upon non-regulated child care. This raises an important question: who is caring for these children? The purpose of this study was to ask mothers in Alberta what kinds of care arrangements they were using for their pre-school children, and how they perceived that these arrangements impacted their family wellbeing.

The pilot study showed that mothers experienced a lack of access to high-quality, regulated child care spaces and often felt that they had to 'settle' for available low quality care. Mothers also reported considerable stress when they were unsure of the quality of their child care and were concerned about negative impacts of this care for their child. Importantly,

however, the experience of using high-quality, regulated child care was a qualitatively different experience than that of using low-quality care: mothers of children in high-quality, regulated child care felt a sense of trust that their children were having daily care experiences that would enhance their well-being and development. This trust, in turn, enhanced parental well-being and supported successful work-family integration. Study findings suggest that child care policy could be further developed to enhance work-family integration and subsequent family wellbeing for families of young children. Phase 2 of this study, which entails approximately 20 more focus groups with 120 participants throughout the province, is underway.

### Profile: new faculty member Dr. Matt Johnson

*"My work is innovative because I conceptualize patient wellbeing as strongly influenced by his or her environment, with the intimate relationship constituting one very powerful part of one's context".*



I joined the Department of Human Ecology at the U of A in July 2012 as an assistant professor, family science. I completed my doctoral work at Kansas State University in Human Ecology with an emphasis in

marriage and family therapy. My area of research is focused on intimate relationship formation, development, and

maintenance over time, and understanding the key couple processes that contribute to relational and individual health. One area in my program of research I have been excited about this past year has involved understanding how couples successfully manage chronic illness, particularly type 2 diabetes. Working with data gathered from 117 married couples where one partner is diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, I have been examining how the coping efforts of the patient and healthy spouse impact important type 2 diabetes outcomes, such as adhering to a healthful diet or engaging in regular exercise. The findings have been exciting. For example, when couples tend to handle stress collaboratively by problem solving jointly and helping each other relax, both patient and spouse tend to feel more confident to follow the necessary diabetes care regimen. This confidence, in turn, predicts greater dietary and exercise adherence in patients. The most interesting piece of this study, for me, is that the spouse's perspective was actually more informative than the patient's for understanding the patient's exercise behaviors!

The human ecology perspective offers a valuable lens through which to understand successful illness management. Much of the available research on chronic illness adjustment comes from an individualistic perspective, focusing exclusively on experiences of the patient. My work is innovative because I conceptualize patient wellbeing as strongly influenced by his or her environment, with the intimate relationship constituting one very powerful part of one's context.

## Giving a voice to the homeless in Fort McMurray

**Dr. Pushpanjali Dashora**, in collaboration with Alberta Homelessness Research Consortium North Region Co-Facilitators, investigated the needs and challenges of homeless individuals living in Fort McMurray. Funded by the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness and supported by the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, the primary goal of this project was to empower homeless individuals by using media technology as a tool to bridge the gap between research and policy. This project involved development of a participatory video with homeless individuals and screening the video to policy makers in Fort McMurray. The video will also be featured at various local/national conferences to raise awareness about the unique challenges and service needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in Fort McMurray region.



*Dr. Pushpanjali Dashora*

## Muliti-year SSHRC Grant Awarded - Dr. Deanna Williamson to guide 5 year study on family functioning

**Dr. Deanna Williamson** and colleagues in Human Ecology (**Dr. Berna Skrypnek**) and Nursing (**Dr. Kaysi Kushner and Dr. Nicole Pitre**) were awarded \$489,000 from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada to conduct a five-year study on family functioning of families with young children and diverse compositions and ethno-cultural origins. They will use methods such as individual and family group interviews, as well as anecdotes, drawings, and photos produced by families to examine processes that are used by families to meet needs, achieve goals, address challenges, and enhance individual member well-being. The research team will attend to the ways that family functioning processes are influenced by gender, socioeconomic circumstances, social ideals, and social and economic conditions and policies. The research team hopes to also address limitations posed by the fact that researchers and practitioners continue to rely on models and measures of family functioning that were developed three or four decades ago when families in North America were much less diverse than contemporary families in terms of composition and ethno-cultural origins. Importantly, the study will begin to transform the way in which family functioning is understood by shifting attention away from out-dated and deficient measures and models and by generating new knowledge that more accurately reflects contemporary family-level processes. More accurate knowledge has the potential to increase the effectiveness of services, programs, and policies that aim to enhance family well-being.



**‘Science without Borders’ A program in Brazil where “the best students and researchers will undertake research in the best and most relevant Universities around the World”.**

**PROFILE: DAVI LOPES VISITING STUDENT**

In 2011, the Brazilian government launched a scholarship program called Science without Borders (SwB), which aims to increase the presence of Brazilian researchers and students in well-respected universities around the world. More than 100,000 scholarships are expected to be granted during the first four years of the program, and 12,000 of them for students and researchers coming to Canada. I am one of the students who have had their international studies sponsored by this program. My name is Davi Lopes, and I have been a Science without Borders student at the University of Alberta since September 2012. It has been an unforgettable year, a journey that has been both academically and personally full of learning. My struggles to adapt to the different language and academic environment were lessened by the kindness of the staff and professors in the Department of Human Ecology and the University of Alberta International Office. The assistance that was given to me by all of them is much appreciated.

My experience in Canada has been further enhanced by the opportunity to work with Dr. Jane Batcheller, the PI of the Protective Clothing and Equipment Research Facility, on a research project investigating the potential toxicity of gases evolved from the combustion of flame resistant textiles. Working at the Flash Fire Facility, garments will be exposed to simulated flash fire conditions on an instrumented manikin, and their combustion products will be sampled for analysis. Under Dr. Batcheller’s supervision, I have learned about a very relevant textile science field that is not well-developed in my country. Therefore, I feel that I have fulfilled the main goal of the SwB program, which is to return home with abilities that may help my country’s scientific development. I am very grateful for all the support that I have received. To finish, I must say that I will return home full of good memories of kind people and friends that I have met during my year in Canada. I shall never forget you all.

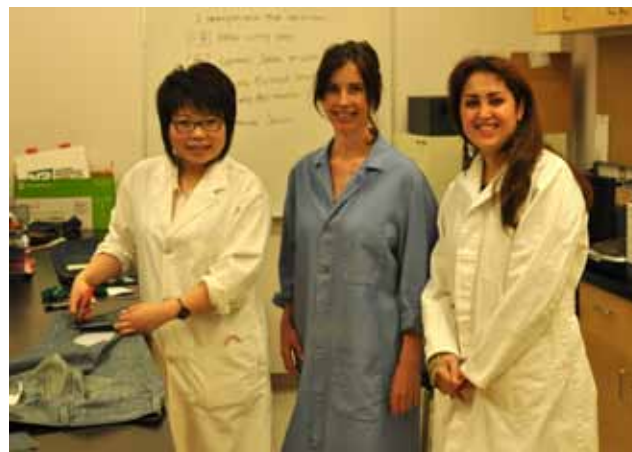
*Dr. McQueen (c) with grad. students Han Zhang (l) Masha Kalantari*



*Davi Lopes with research mannequin.*

**Jeans Study – Less washing reduces wear and saves the environment**

**Dr. Rachel McQueen’s** research group has been knee deep in blue jeans over the last ten months. This is because of a field trial, sponsored by Cotton Incorporated, examining the effects of washing on the durability of denim jeans. Over 70 male and female participants volunteered to wear denim jeans for 60 days of wear over a 6-month period. Each participant has been assigned two pairs of jeans to wear and they have been asked to wash them either frequently (i.e., after a couple of days of use) or less frequently (i.e., after approximately 20 days of use). Preliminary results are showing that jeans washed frequently are degrading more rapidly (e.g., colour fading, weight loss) than jeans washed less often. Therefore, if consumers want to extend the life of their



jeans then they can do this by thinking twice before throwing their jeans in the washing machine. By saving their jeans they are also benefiting the environment by using less water and energy in the washing and drying processes.

## Pioneer Ladies [of the evening]: Remembering women on the margins in Western Canada, 1878-1916



Visiting curator **Dr. Laurie Bertram** created the fall 2012 exhibition which combined unique 20thC photographs and selected objects from the Department's Clothing and Textile Collection, to illustrate the challenges faced by criminalized women in the West. She notes that *"the fixation with noble settler-pioneers in Canadian heritage campaigns contributes to the amnesia surrounding violence against women on the margins in the past century"*. Dr. Bertram was the Grant Notley Memorial Postdoctoral Fellow in the Dept. of History and Classics at the University of Alberta.

Link to CTV coverage of the exhibition:  
<http://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=763073&playlistId=1960402&binId=1.817883>

## Design entry for International Textile & Apparel Association

**Dr. Anne Bissonnette** has prepared an entry for the ITAA annual design competition to create a minimalist wardrobe that works for travel, business and evening. The design is based on the use of just 3 main garment pieces, to create a versatile winter travel wardrobe that is comfortable, easily maintained, beautiful and can be worn indoors and outdoors and from day to evening. The inspiration comes from the eighteenth-century informal "brunswick," a three-quarter length long-sleeved hooded jacket worn with a matching petticoat. To increase versatility, each item is reversible (black or navy) and the ensemble is layered into four essential components: skirt, bodice, sleeved bolero and collared vest with detachable hood.



## New Advances in Protective Clothing for Oil Industry Workers

**Dr. Megan Strickfaden**, and master's student **Sihong Yu**, collected focus group data from workers in oil refineries and in the field to explore ideas about how to improve safety wear to protect against steam and water burns. This was a unique approach as protection against these particular hazards has not been previously addressed in the design of safety work wear, an oversight of particular interest to Alberta oil industry workers. As testament to a successful design prototype created by Ms. Yu, Dr. Strickfaden noted that workers elected to keep on wearing the new workwear even after the wear trials were completed. Funding was provided by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Imperial Oil Resources Ltd., Nexen Inc., Total E & P Canada, DuPont Canada Inc., Devon Canada Corporation, Davey Textile Solutions and Apparel Solutions International.



Master's Graduate Sihong Yu with Workwear Prototype

## Profile: Sumit Mandal International PhD Student

I am Sumit Mandal from India, a PhD student in Human Ecology. I received my Bachelor Degree in Textile Technology from Calcutta University, India; Masters Degree in Textiles and Clothing Technology from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and a Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education from Nottingham Trent University, UK. During 2 years of managerial experience in the clothing industry I observed many injuries due to running fabric cutters, sewing needles, steam presses, etc. These phenomena motivated me to work for the well-being of industrial workers. I recognized that clothing is the only barrier between these workers and their workplace hazards. With this motivation, I started my PhD in January 2011 with two major



PhD Student  
Sumit Mandal

scholarships: the FS Chia Doctoral Scholarship and the Provost Doctoral Entrance Award. The transition from a hot climate of India to the bone-chilling weather of Alberta was a lifelong memorable experience on its own. The warm welcome and support from the Department colleagues helped me a lot to settle in this foreign country, which my wife (Indu) and I call home now.

In the first two years of my PhD, the knowledge provided by Dr. Guowen Song (my supervisor) and Dr. Rachel McQueen has been really valuable. Dr. Rhonda Breitreuz also helped me to get an insight into my research from a broad human ecology perspective. While studying here, I have had the opportunity to attend international conferences in Hong Kong, Japan, and USA and have been the recipient of the the following awards: Alberta Innovates Doctoral Graduate Student Scholarship, the Joanne A. Vincenten Injury Control Student Scholarship, and the Pansy and George Strange Graduate Scholarship. In the remaining years of my PhD study, I will focus on developing innovative thermal protective clothing material to improve the occupational safety and health of firefighters/industrial-workers. Along with my studies, I do love fusion cooking, travelling to historical places, and nature photography.

## Awards and Scholarships 2012-13

*Dianne Kieren Graduate Award in Human Ecology:*

**Sharon Anderson**

*Alberta Innovates Doctoral Graduate Student Award; Pansy & George Strange Graduate Scholarship; The Joanne A. Vincenten Injury Control Student Scholarship; Herman and Myrtle Goldstein Student Paper Competition (American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists) Award: **Sumit Mandal***

*Engberg Graduate Scholarship in International Home Economics:*

**Zhaowen Mei**

*Doris Badir Graduate Research Fellowship in Human Ecology:*

**Linh Nguyen**

*Dr. William A.Fuller Memorial Scholarship: **Sandra Tullio-Pow***

*Betty Crown Graduate Scholarship in Textile & Apparel Science:*

**Myles Van Keulen**

*J. Gordin Kaplan Graduate Student Award; David & Marion Duggan Memorial Scholarship; John and Patricia Schlosser Environment Scholarship: **Scott Varga***

*Queen Elizabeth II Scholarshi; Louise Davies Memorial Graduate Scholarship: **Natasha Weber***

*Helen Desilva Buchanan Memorial Scholarship in Clothing & Textiles:*

**Loretta Yau**

## 2012-2013 Graduates

November 2012 Convocation

**Jacqueline Csek, MSc.**

**Elaf Kutby, MSc.**

**Ghulam Murtaza, MSc.**

**Sara Olsen, MSc.**

**Yin Xu, MSC.**

June 2013 Convocation

**Cecilia Reyes Uribe, PhD**

**Indu Sunder, MA**

**Melissa Daniels, MSc.**

**Mayeso Lazaro, MSc.**

**Sarah Lucas, MSc.**





Dr. Tara Fenwick,  
Stirling University

## 2013 Empey Lecture and 40th Anniversary Celebration of the Human Ecology Practicum Program

Education expert, **Dr. Tara Fenwick**, University of Stirling, UK, invited as the 2013 Empey Lecturer, addressed the idea of “*Breaking Waves: Rethinking Experiential Learning for Community Engagement*”. It was a timely topic as the Department celebrated the 40th anniversary of our Practicum program. We see evidence of growing interest in practice-based learning throughout campuses around the world, and we can take pride in the long-standing commitment Human Ecology has made to having students experience ‘real world’ practices as part of their undergraduate experience. Remarkably, 30-40% of Practicum placements result in offers of full-time employment for our students. This year’s event was co-sponsored by the University’s Festival of Teaching and attracted more than 130 guests.

## Material Culture Symposium Spring 2013

This year’s Material Culture Symposium, ‘*Object Lessons, Exploration in Culture, Practice & Material Forms*’, included a series of workshops held in a mix of venues across campus, and focused on the broad theme of the significance of object analysis. Attendees were welcomed by **Dr. Beverly Lemire** (History & Classics), and then moved on to selected workshops featuring an examination of a very diverse set of objects including such things as album covers, quilts and early modern European prints. A multi-disciplinary group of material culture scholars led the workshops including **Dr. Natalie Loveless**, **Dr. Lianne McTavish**, **Dr. Lisa Claypool** and **Dr. Joanne Greer** from the Dept. of Art & Design; **Dr. Arlene Oak**, Dept. of Human Ecology; **Dr. Susan Berry**, Royal Alberta Museum; and **Dr. Adrienne Hood**, Dept. of History, U. of Toronto



## Current Gallery Exhibition (Until March 2, 2014, main floor Human Ecology Building)

The latest exhibition, *The Re-Birth of Venus: Fashion & the Venus Kallipygos*, explores the influence of art on fashion through



the study of Venus Kallipygos, a statue from the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, Italy, and its pervasive influence on dress. Unlike other statues, this goddess exposes herself without a hint of modesty. The research investigates the artifact in terms of genre, production and cultural significance. In addition to artifacts from the Department’s Clothing and Textile Collection, other highlights include a Fortuny “Delphos” gown and a bias-cut evening dress by designer and Edmonton native **Michael Kaye**. Co-curated by **Dr. Anne Bissonnette**, and graduate students **Sarah Nash**, and **Loretta Yau**.

Gallery Hours: Monday to Friday: 8:30am-7pm.  
Saturday and Sunday: Noon-4pm

## Chair's message



*Deanna Williamson, chair*

The past year was once again busy and productive in the Department of Human Ecology. Indeed, one of the biggest challenges associated with the preparation of our Annual Report is having to select only a small portion of activities and successes to share with you from the multitude that occurred. The process of preparing the Annual Report was also a good reminder to me about the high calibre of faculty members and support staff in Human Ecology. I am continuously inspired by my colleagues' commitment to unique and rigorous scholarship that really does make a positive impact in people's everyday lives at home, at work, and in the community. And, importantly, our successes wouldn't be possible without the behind the scenes work of our support staff.

While many achievements marked the past year, a significant and disheartening challenge was introduced: the Government of Alberta's failure to uphold their promise of a 2 percent funding increase and their imposition of a 7 percent funding cutback. Since the budget announcement, central administration, faculties, and departments have made decisions about strategies to deal with a small portion (20%) of the cut; however, decisions about how the majority of the cut will be dealt with will be made over the next several months. I am hopeful that the unique nature of education and research programs in Human Ecology along with the positive social impact of our scholarship will position us favourably in the eyes of key decision makers. The Department remains committed to high quality scholarship in our research and teaching activities. Nevertheless, the unanticipated nature and size of the cut, which follows on the heels of 10 percent cutbacks at the University over the past four years (due in large part to Government of Alberta grants that have not met cost of living increases) will unfortunately necessitate some fundamental changes to our core businesses – teaching and research. Although some changes will pose difficulties for staff and students as we adjust to the new reality, faculty members and support staff in Human Ecology will endeavour to limit as much as possible, the negative consequences of changes on the quality of our education and research programs.

## Upcoming Events, Mark your Calendar!



- **September 27, 2013 Alumni Weekend Tours of the Human Ecology Clothing and Textiles Collection 1:30-3:00 p.m. Register for free tours, beginning each half hour, starting at 1:30 p.m.**
- **September 28, 2013 ALES Alumni Brunch – reconnect with your Home Economics and Human Ecology classmates. Sutton Place Hotel, 9:00 a.m.**
- **October 29, 2013 Fashion Culture Network Lecture Series. Next talk entitled “The Re-Birth of Venus: Fashion & the Venus Kallipygos” by Dr. Anne Bissonette.**



*Collections Manager,  
Vlada Blinova*



**Keep up with  
Department news  
by viewing our  
website at:**

<http://www.hecol.ualberta.ca/>