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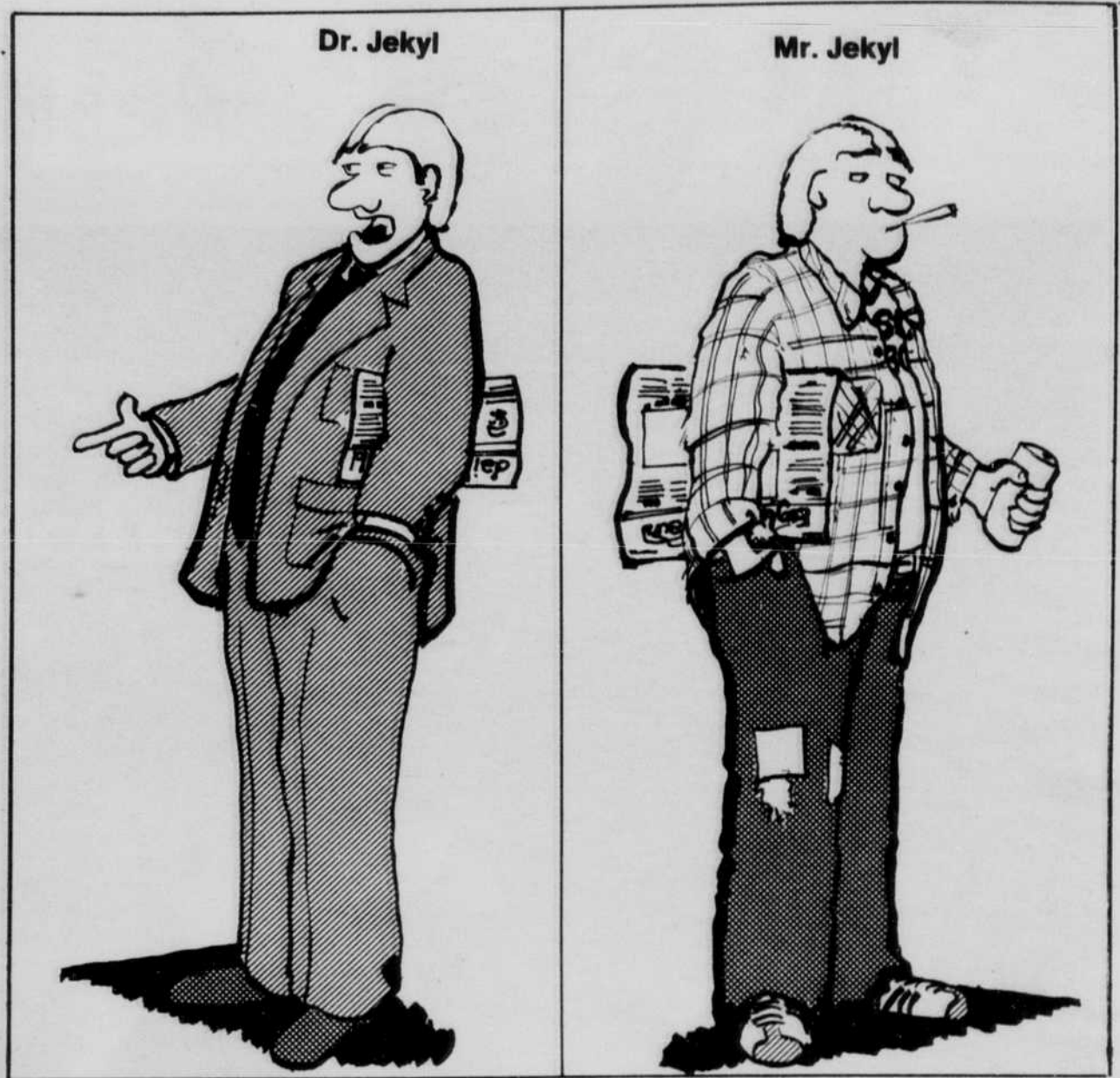
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Graphic by Max DeRungs

Teachers' dress creates respectable authoritarians

We've all been so bored in some classes that we begin analyzing the professor's attire. Either their style makes a real impression or it bores you more. How does a professor's dress affect students?

From the far corners of campus, the rumors drifted in to The Elegant Duck.

Puzzled faculty spotted a professor clad in classic jacket and beret riding a PLC elevator. And across the quad, journalism students eyed a young assistant professor lecturing in suit and tie.

"I am trying to make a statement as to who I am," says political science prof. Harmon Zeigler, jacket and beret enthusiast.

"I think it helps the conduct of the class," says journalism prof. Mark Abrams.

Yet out-of-class days reveal the two professors dressed in the unremarkable uniform of most University faculty—jeans.

Schizophrenic fashion sense?

No, more like applied psychology.

Zeigler says he discovered a

couple of years ago that students respond differently to a dressed-up professor. The outfit allows him to "maintain some distance" while retaining his "informal presentation style," he says.

Students seem less likely to argue minute points when the clothes present some impression of authority, Zeigler says.

Classy clothes also may help present an image of age.

Consider the case of Mark Abrams, who at age 24 professes to be the youngest assistant professor on campus—the same age as many of his journalism students and only a year or two older than others.

Abrams says he relies on his "never-quite-in-style, never-quite-out-of-style" suits to bolster his academic image.

"There's nothing about my body that's going to give me a great image of authority," he says.

He admits his conservative clothes migrated with him from Michigan where he graduated from law school last spring. Dressing as an Ivy-league grad

at a maple-leaf university, Abrams says he sheds his suits on non-class days.

No reason to throttle yourself with a tie, he says.

Abrams says he started wearing the suits while working as a graduate assistant last year. When he taught class in jeans, students began thinking of him as a peer—and then they began taking advantage of him, he says.

Students subconsciously thought what he was saying was less important, just because of the jeans, Abrams says.

"I think it's important to present an image that I'm putting some effort into the class," he says.

Both Abrams and Zeigler say other faculty remark on their attire. Colleagues always notice, but men comment more than women, Zeigler says.

Yet Abrams says he doesn't think journalism faculty are intimidated by his appearance.

"My being well-dressed just impresses them with what a masochist I must be."

By ANN PORTAL

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