

— Academic Regalia —

Academic regalia are a visible reminder that the process of intellectual pursuits has historic and honorable antecedents. The dignity of scholarship in the past remains vital in the present.

Originally, academic gowns were priestly robes. In part they were worn for warmth and protection and their style and colors were rigidly prescribed by the church. Gowns were an adaptation of the priestly toga and were fur-lined. The hood was worn to protect the tonsured head of the priest.

In the early American universities, no gowns were worn. It was not until the late nineteenth century that this medieval tradition was revived to lend color to academic functions. At about the same time, an effort was made to establish a code so that academic regalia would be somewhat standard. All gowns of masters and doctors are generally ankle-length and closed in front. The master's gown has pointed sleeves. The doctor's gown has wide lapels of velvet, either black or the color of the scholar's specialization. The sleeves are full and bell-shaped; there are three velvet chevrons, either black or colored like the lapels. In the past, gowns have been black silk, but increasingly, gowns are the color of the school granting the degree. (In our case, the color of both the MA and Doctoral rental gowns is black. Only the custom-made Doctoral gowns reflect our school color and must be purchased.)

The Master's hood is pointed; the Doctor's hood is bell-shaped. The border of the hood indicates the scholar's department; the lining emblazons his or her school's colors. Hoods were originally trimmed in fur, but in later usage they have borders of satin for masters and velvet for doctors.

Medieval universities were much concerned with rank and privilege; academic robes made visible the social and academic distinctions of the wearers. Certain colors and certain furs were restricted to nobles. In the leveling process that has characterized the American university, these distinctions have largely disappeared.

Hoods now indicate specialization. One can read specialization in the color of the border:

arts and letters are white;

economics is copper;

fine arts is brown;

humanities is crimson;

law is purple;

medicine is green;

music is pink;

pedagogy is light blue;

philosophy is dark blue;

physical education is sage green;

science is golden yellow;

theology is scarlet.

(Colors pertaining to our specializations are in **bold**.)

Academic regalia, then, are a recollection of the continuum of intellectual pursuits and a reminder that the process in which we all are engaged has historic and honorable antecedents connecting us with dignity and traditions of the past which are alive and sacred in the present.