# Opinion

## Photo of the Day | It's so warm



**Students walk outside of the UConn Recreation Center in Storrs, Conn., on Thursday, Nov. 5, 2026. Although the weather was cloudy, campus life was active in the warm air.** PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

# GIRL, UNINTERRUPTED:

## GET OVER CONSUMPTION (TUBERCULOSIS CHIC IS SO 1800S)



FILE LOGO/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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***Content Warning:*** *The following article discusses weight loss drugs, eating disorders, illness and death. Those struggling with disordered eating can reach out to the free National Eating Disorder helpline at 1-866-662-1235.*

At the risk of sounding like the professor of a 1000-level poetry class, this week's article will start with a visualization exercise. I'm going to describe a woman, and you're going to come up with a picture of her in your head.

This is a young woman. She has pale skin, bright eyes, flushed cheeks and a thin physique. Maybe you're picturing a favorite actress or model, or someone who looks ready to roam the streets of LA.

The woman I'm describing is not a celebrity figure. She isn't ready to roam the streets of LA or New York or anywhere else, for that matter, because she's on her deathbed succumbing to tuberculosis in the year 1882.

Tuberculosis, aka consumption, is a contagious, infectious disease that has plagued humanity for over 70,000 years. In 12th century England and France, it was known as "the king's evil." In 18th century England, tuberculosis earned the moniker of "the white plague," a reference to the sickly pallor of its victims. During Europe's Romantic period, though, tuberculosis chic became an ideal.

Suffering from tuberculosis was seen as a beautifully tragic way for a young, upper-class woman to die. Many influential Romantic artists, from the Brontë family to Frederick Chopin, died of tuberculosis; it was used in literature as a metaphor for artistic endeavors paralleling the Industrial Revolution. Tuberculosis victims in media exemplified beauty in ephemerality — essentially, they were the predecessors to today's tragic manic pixie dream girls.

To emulate the state of tuberculosis victims, Romantic women donned tightly laced, pointed corsets to mimic wasting away and caked their faces with (often poisonous) makeup to mimic a pale complexion and flushed lips and cheeks. In the great year 2026, we're still seeing the ramifications of tuberculosis-induced beauty standards. Instead of corsets and poisonous makeup, women are now encouraged to take up weight-loss drugs and subscribe to the startling normalization of eating disorder culture.

I've referred to the "Ozempic epidemic" in previous editions of this column, and I mean that quite literally. The glorification of extreme thinness to the point of disfunction is not only descended from an epidemic, it's also perpetuating a new epidemic. By promoting extreme thinness, we are idealizing and manufacturing an impression of illness. The prevalence of young women ascribing to look like literal corpses should be a wake-up call.

Tuberculosis, like most diseases, kills regardless of gender. So, why (putting the feminist theme of this column aside), have we focused primarily on women?

The draw of tuberculosis-chic is closely associated with feminine beauty in particular. Tuberculosis only became fashionable when it struck young women of the upper class, who could afford to lie in bed and take visitors who'd comment on how tragic they looked. Consumption wasn't romanticized in men, who were expected to be strong, or women of the lower class who needed strength to work. Tuberculosis is only a fitting ideal for people who aren't expected to take up space or do much of anything at all.

Sound familiar?

Flash forward to today, with the beauty standard spectrum existing somewhere between hulking looksmaxxer and Ozempic-chic. Masculine beauty standards tend towards athleticism, building men up, while feminine beauty standards are minimizing. Women aren't merely expected to take up less physical space; we're also encouraged to emulate a state of near-death and physical weakness. Although most women aren't going out of their way to contract tuberculosis for looks, the path to imitating a near-death state still kills. Anorexia affects 15% of women and has the highest case mortality rate of any mental illness. Even for those who don't die from eating disorders, symptoms include fainting, brain fog and potential long-term organ failure.

In addition to impacting Western beauty standards, millions of women still suffer from tuberculosis directly. TB remains the leading cause of infection-related death globally, killing 1.3 million people in 2024 according to the World Health Organization. Why is it so common to slowly self-destruct in mimesis of a disease that kills thousands of women every year?

I love the Romantic era for its literature as much as the next insufferable English major, but there should be no excuse for societal encouragement of slow self-destruction in accordance with unrealistic, outdated beauty standards. Next time you feel yourself succumbing to the incessant pressure to look perfect, take a step back and be grateful you're not succumbing to consumption instead.



**Photo of scale. Anorexia affects 15% of women and has the highest case mortality rate of any illness, according to ANAD.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF PUBLIC DOMAIN PICTURES

# THE WEST CAMPUS "PLAYGROUND": WHO ASKED FOR THIS?

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When it comes to making poor financial decisions, the University of Connecticut has been on a roll.

Just over a month ago, the quad of West Campus was enclosed by tall chain-link fences with green tarps hung over them for privacy. Heavy construction machinery could be heard laboring inside at all hours while the sun was up. When the tarps came down less than a week later, the area inside was gutted — the grass pulled up, the sand replaced with fresh dirt and, most significantly, the volleyball court erased. Rumors began to circulate about what could possibly be filling the spot; consistently, the prevailing rumor hinted at a playground. Sure enough, despite all doubts, the area — still under construction — now contains several pieces of equipment reminiscent of a children's playground.

It isn't actually a playground. The online description for West Campus vaguely calls it a new recreation installation, and more specifically, it's an outdoor calisthenics gym — a park with equipment for a form of strength training that is all the rage as of late. Looking beyond the shiny UConn-blue metal swings and closer at the other apparatuses, you'll realize they look suspiciously gymnastic. The "monkey bars" and rings are designed for dead hangs; there are bench press machines and padding on the metal pillars for wall push-ups. It looks like the perfect workout area... a mere twenty feet away from the four-story Recreation Center.



**The outdoor calisthenics park building progression in the West Campus dorm quad in Storrs, Conn., on Thursday, Nov. 5, 2026. The online description deemed it as a "new recreation installation."**

PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Why install an outdoor gym when the all-encompassing Rec Center is only a few steps away? If UConn's administration has any reason for this, they have yet to share it; it's practically impossible to find information about this renovation online. What's worse is that it's horribly ugly. The equipment is a sterile blue-gray and oddly spaced apart. What used to be a flourishing, grassy quad full of life is now a concrete jungle (gym) devoid of anything natural.

It may seem like not much was lost — the gazebo was inexplicably removed before the fall semester even began, anyway — but green space is something UConn sorely lacks, even with the nearby park, when it comes to residential housing areas. West Campus now feels unwelcoming, sacrificed to the same corporate interests that recently victimized our dear Gampel Pavilion. I used to see groups of over twenty students playing volleyball well past sunset, lighting up the quad with music and laughter, when returning to my dorm from class. Last year, when the gazebo was still there, I'd spot people gathered in its warm wooden embrace, chatting away into the night. Now, the quad is quiet and lonely.

Working out is mainly a solitary activity. Peek for even a moment into the Rec and you'll mostly see students lifting weights alone with their AirPods in, with the occasional duo spotting each other... with their AirPods in. This outdoor gym is likely to befall the same fate. The socialization opportunities cultivated by the West Campus quad of years previous will no longer exist; rather, students will once again be encouraged to focus their hobbies and social interactions on their athleticism.

This is just another instance of UConn misunderstanding the student body's wants. Who asked for this? West Campus residents did not get any say in what should replace the historical gazebo and volleyball court; if they had, perhaps we wouldn't be waking up to the belligerent sounds of construction well before our alarms. Part of the allure of West Campus when I was selecting my dorm was its beautiful courtyard — small, but cozy — and its two signature outdoor amenities. Now, these key features have been taken away without warning.

I'm sure some students will enjoy the new recreation installment — UConn has an athletics-focused culture, after all. But many students will be excluded because they lack the athletic interest required, and they'll be pushed out of a space once meant for all. Public spaces, especially those right outside of residential buildings, should be inclusive of all types of students with a wide range of interests, not suited toward a niche form of body training.

It's unlikely that construction on the renovation will cease, and the outdoor gym will live in the quad for years to come. But when insatiable UConn decides to renovate it again, I hope they'll consider the broader student body and the value in simpler installations: gazebos, gardens or even just benches. The center of a dorm quad is no place for an outdoor gym — I would have even preferred a playground.