

# Women's & Gender Studies

Spring 2001 at Rutgers-New Brunswick

## From the Director

*Looking Backwards*, the 1887 novel by Edward Bellamy, begins in a dystopic 19<sup>th</sup> century America of greed, corruption and filth. The hero is transported through an incredible series of events involving hypnosis, fire and chance to a utopian future in which the beauty of the surroundings is matched by the harmony of a society organized around decidedly anti-capitalist ideas. At one point the hero believes he has been taken back to the earlier state only to awake and realize in relief that it was just a bad dream.

While I do not want to mirror Bellamy's damning portrait of the past, I have been thinking of this novel and its hero's disgust, delight, and disorientation, while reflecting on the immense change over my years in Women's Studies. When I began this job six years ago, Women's Studies was in the dank and crowded basement of Voorhees Chapel. In my very first official meeting as the incoming Director of Women's Studies I appeared before the university CSPAD committee to defend Women's Studies to a large and decidedly suspicious group.

These memories often seem a bad dream compared to what I see today. Beautiful buildings now comprise the IWL units—whose spaces have had an immeasurable effect on our work together—and our achievements as a faculty have created a corner of the world that seems utopian by comparison. Through the good work of FAS, we now have a faculty of 26 with formal connections to Women's Studies. We will be a department by July 1, according to Vice President Seneca, who has sent our proposal forward to the Board of Governors. The Graduate Faculty of New Brunswick, supported by Dean Ziva Galili, voted for our Ph.D. program without dissent. We have hired an extraordinary junior faculty, seen our first hire successfully through the tenure process, and will, if all goes well, be completing a major senior hire before summer.

The leadership scholars program of the IWL has brought a new group of committed undergraduate scholars and activists into Women's Studies. We have an active

group of faculty and graduate students exploring issues around the topic of sexual geographies. We have a real chance for dialogue across the river with science and engineering faculty through an NSF grant. We have a good start on a global program with stronger connection to Charlotte Bunch's Center for Women's Global Leadership and with faculty working in Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe. And the strength of gender studies has been heightened by recent hiring throughout the university of talented scholars interested in women and gender issues.

Seen as a whole, these six, sometimes grueling years have been extraordinarily productive. As important is the work we have done together as a faculty to learn to talk with each other across often large disciplinary divides, and to think as a group about what the interdisciplinary is and could be. This thinking together should bear greatest fruit in a new Ph.D. program, which will take continued effort to succeed. Maybe we will finally figure out what feminism is: not only the important work on a diversity of women, and the understanding of gender and sexuality (which seems undeniably crucial knowledge for our world today), but also this stepping across boundaries between different ways of knowing, different cultures, different people, which is the only way to a future of greater justice, greater freedom.

There are still many things I wish I had worked on: mobilizing our alumnae and community friends for fund-raising, especially for fellowships and prizes to reward our students; reaching out to high schools (perhaps through partnership with the Graduate School of Education) where women's studies needs to begin; developing a sexuality track; developing and encouraging more courses with focus on race and ethnicity; working more on art, culture, and media; developing more global courses; developing a course on public health issues; and listening more to the plaintive cry from many of our undergraduate students: reach more men! Well, the work will go on. I leave the program in excellent hands as Joanna Regulska comes in

(See next page)



## New Course Hones Research Skills

Among the Women's Studies courses offered next year will be a new 400-level seminar entitled, "Women, Work, and Social Change" (988:406). Taught by Dr. Mary Gatta, Director of Research and Analysis at the Center for Women and Work, the course will hone students' research skills and allow them to contribute to the Rutgers Databank on Working Women.

While humanities and social science students frequently evaluate the research of other scholars in courses, they rarely have the opportunity to conduct their own research. Once students have completed a research methods course, they often possess the tools of research, but do not have an environment in which to apply them. This project will build on research methods courses in social science and women's studies curriculum by providing students the opportunity to conduct original research and by introducing students to available data resources. Students will learn every aspect involved in the production of a research paper. Specifically, they will concentrate on the initial conceptualization of the problem, the collection and evaluation of data, and the presentation of results.

In addition, students will conduct an extensive review of gender studies, workplace studies, and cultural diversity literature, using both electronic and print sources. As students collect and evaluate secondary data, these data will then be posted to the databank (once appropriate permission is obtained). In accomplishing this task, students will be assisting in the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission's and the Center for Women and Work's goal of collecting data on women and work in New Jersey.

The databank is online at [www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cww](http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cww), and is very much a work in progress. There are six major divisions within the database: descriptive data on working women in New Jersey and the U.S., data on professional women, data on service sector women, data on industrial women, bibliographic sources in working women, and links to other web sites. This databank is the only source of centralized data on working women in New Jersey.

While the overall area of inquiry is the experience of women in the workplace, students will be able to choose a specific aspect of this topic to investigate, such as comparing women in particular professions, occupations, and industries; exploring the structural barriers that women face; and work-family integration. In doing so, students will be encouraged to explore power relationships and sources of inequality in the workplace. They will accom-

plish this by engaging in comparative analyses of women across different races, ethnicities, ages, cultures, and sexualities.

Possible sources of data include the U.S. Census Bureau, the Economic Policy Institute, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. For example, the Current Population Survey (CPS) is a monthly survey of about 50,000 households conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The survey has been conducted for more than 50 years. CPS data are used by policymakers and legislators as important indicators of the nation's economic situation and for planning and evaluating many government programs. By contrast, the General Social Survey (GSS) measures not the economy, but social attitudes. The GSS is an almost annual survey of U.S. households conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). Since 1972, more than 35,000 respondents have answered over 2,500 different questions. Some of these questions may relate to women and work, women and family, or the workplace more generally.

Dr. Gatta notes that the course will be offered again periodically, and the databank will be updated continually. By its nature, a project of this kind is never finished.

### From the Director (cont.)

as director in July.

My thanks to everyone in this wonderful community for the experience of a lifetime, and for teaching me how much institutions matter. Thanks especially to Dean Barry Qualls, whose support from the dean's office was crucial at every step, to the dedicated graduate directors who helped move this program forward, and to my everyday co-workers and friends, Barbara Balliet and Joanne Givand. I will miss them more than I can say, a pair whose creativity, compassion, and dedication are incomparable.

"Not fare well/ but fare forward."

Harriet Davidson



## Brooks Lands on the Banks of the Raritan

From New Hampshire to New Jersey is not far as the seagull flies, but Women's Studies' newest faculty member, Ethel Brooks, took a longer journey with detours through Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Bangladesh.

Ethel Brooks grew up in the working-class town of Rochester, New Hampshire, near the sea coast. Neither of her parents had finished high school, and no one in her family had ever attended college, but her mother encouraged her to read, to take ballet lessons, and when the time came, to go to college. That early encouragement resulted in a full scholarship to Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

When Brooks arrived at Williams in 1986, she didn't think of herself as working-class, disadvantaged, poor, or feminist. But all of that quickly changed. She describes Williams as an elite, small liberal arts school, "scarily upper-class, very white, heteronormative, and very sexist." This environment heightened her awareness of all kinds of difference and the power relations surrounding them.

She had always known that her family had an identity not shared by all of their neighbors. They are Romani, commonly known as gypsies. According to historical accounts, the gypsies migrated from India to Europe 1,000 years ago, and their language is derived from Sanskrit. The dialect of Romani that Brooks grew up speaking is a combination of English and Sanskrit-derived words similar to Hindi. She grew up in a close-knit community, speaking Romani at home and English at school. Even today, her family is guarded about revealing their ethnicity to strangers.

In 1987, Brooks became concerned with the effects of low-intensity warfare in Nicaragua, and obtained funding from Williams to travel there. She learned Spanish while volunteering with the Sandi-nista Youth Organization and the Association of Cultural Workers in Managua. This was a revolutionary area in which everything was being contested; there was anti-imperialist work, literacy work, as well as organizing around women's issues. Next, she traveled to Spain, where she studied Spanish-Latin American relations. She became critical of development models that marginalized the very people—especially women—they were supposed to help. She graduated from Williams in 1990 with a degree in Political Science, and had planned to return to Nicaragua, but her father died, and she returned home to be with her mother.

From 1991 to 1994, she worked at the Alan Guttmacher Institute in New York, doing research and policy analysis on women's reproductive health and family



planning in Latin America. In 1992, she entered the graduate program in Politics at New York University. Between 1996 and 1999, she carried out field research for her dissertation in Bangladesh, El Salvador, and New York City, examining working conditions and organizing practices of women working in the garment industry, as well as cross-border organizing, centered on the garment industry. In 2000, she completed the Ph.D., and this spring she has been in residence at Rutgers on a fellowship from CAWP and the IRW. In the fall, she will join the Rutgers faculty in Women's Studies and Sociology.

Professor Brooks is teaching "Research Methods in Women's Studies" this spring, and will teach "Dynamics of Race/Class/Sex" next fall. At the graduate level, she will teach "Gender and Globalization" in the fall. That course will examine women and work, women and development in the global arena, and will critique the political economy of globalization. Next spring, she will teach a sociology course on consumption. That course will look at how race, class, and gender inform consumption, as well as the roles of advertising, media, food, clothing, and tourism. Brooks is also interested in teaching comparative women's movements, and plans to develop a course on South Asia with her colleagues, Jasbir Puar and Leela Fernandes.

Of her long, roundabout journey and her arrival at Rutgers, Brooks says, "It's a necessary path. This is a place where I can carry out all of my commitments—academic, political, feminist, activist—in both teaching and scholarship, with all the messiness that that implies. Rutgers is a place that respects that."



## NSF Seminar to Bring Together Scientists, Engineers and Women's Studies Scholars

Last fall, as part of a National Science Foundation grant awarded to Women's Studies, the School of Engineering, and the Douglass Project for Women in Math, Science and Engineering, I lectured to a large class of freshman engineering majors—a daunting prospect for me. These were honors students, with a good number of women—around 20%—sprinkled among the men. These students are in a hard and competitive program. It requires more hours than most majors, and approximately 50% of the incoming students leave the major by graduation, including many of these women. Engineering has a tremendous pipeline problem for women. At each stage from undergraduate to graduate and beyond, the number of women diminishes, so that even fields with large numbers of women students—like biochemical engineering—end up with few women at the top; here at Rutgers only two women sit on the faculty in biochemical engineering.

I presented gender issues to these smart engineering students in two ways: first, as a social problem which we need to fix (much as engineering looks at problems and tries to find practical ways to fix them) and second, as a problem of a culture which discourages not only women but many kinds of men. The students were open to thinking of ways to encourage more women in the field through programs similar to those of the award-winning Douglass Project: mentoring, encouragement, support groups, outreach to high school age girls. In other words, trying to make women fit into the culture of engineering.

When I broached the possibility of trying to change the culture of engineering to include a greater diversity of people, the resistance was strong, even here among first year students. Too much is at stake, they said, to change engineering. It has to be tough and competitive and discouraging in order to produce the best engineers—the most accurate, the most hard-working, the least prone to mistakes. It's hard to disagree. I would not want to trust my airplanes, my bridges, my cellular material to sloppy engineers. But feminist science studies leads us to ask what methods produce the best science, the best technology? Can we change the way we train scientists and ask scientific questions, and produce even better science? There remain unanswered questions, ones that will best be answered by scientists and engineers in conversation with scholars who study society, culture and history. How did the present methods come to be put in place? How can recent studies give us new methodologies for working?

What might our shared goals be?

Next year, we will be convening a faculty/graduate student seminar sponsored by NSF to provide regular conversations along these lines. A group of scientists, engineers, and Women's Studies scholars will come together to discuss gender equity issues in the science fields—similar to those being discussed at MIT and elsewhere. This will be tied to thinking about changes in the way institutions give credentials, disciplines are created, and knowledge is organized and taught. The end goal of this grant is a modest one: to create new curricular modules for engineering, for Women's Studies, and for the Douglass Project research course, which will explore issues of women and gender in science. But the gulf is wide between the two cultures of science and the humanities/social science base of Women's Studies. How can we create another way? We will have public lectures associated with this seminar, and invite anyone with interest in these problems to join the conversation.

Harriet Davidson

### Women's and Gender Studies Department and Ph.D. Proposals Advance

In December, the Graduate Faculty of New Brunswick approved a proposal for a new Ph.D. in Women's and Gender Studies. With the support of Dean Ziva Galili and Executive Dean Richard Falk, the proposal was sent up to the office of Vice President Joseph Seneca, where it is undergoing further review. This proposal reflects extensive work on the part of faculty throughout last spring and summer, and many ideas in it were developed during the IRW-sponsored retreat last spring on feminist theory and methodology. The goal is to admit the first class for fall, 2002.

The proposal to become the Department of Women's and Gender Studies has been approved at the Presidential level and will be voted on by the Board of Governors in June.

## Seniors Complete Internships and Honors Theses

In our fall newsletter, we highlighted some of the reasons for doing an internship: following a specific policy interest, gaining work experience, or learning a specific skill. Taught by instructor Rose Corrigan, the Women's Studies internship is a six-credit course that involves a weekly seminar and 10-15 hours at a community placement each week. This spring, five students completed the internship.

**Tara Garvin** did her placement at the American Cancer Society.

**Laurelei McLoof** completed the internship at Oxygen Television.

**Amanda Smith** interned at the Labor Education Center and the Center for Women and Work at Rutgers.

**Wadee'ah Terry** did her placement at the Eric B. Chandler Health Center in New Brunswick.

**Nancy Wynn**'s community placement was at DNR/Fairchild Publications.

Six more students finished the year-long honors research seminar in Women's Studies. The seminar helps students develop both their analytical skills and their writing skills. By reading each other's chapters, they learn how to give and receive critiques of their work. Each student has two faculty advisors: Professor Jennifer Nelson, who teaches the seminar, and another professor with expertise in the student's specific area of interest.

**Patty Banghart** wrote her thesis, "Christian Feminist Theology: a Tool for Dismantling Fundamentalist Thinking," under the direction of Professor Mary Hawkesworth, Director of the Center for American Women and Politics.

**Melissa McTiernan**'s thesis is entitled, "Lou Andreas-Salome and Her Contemporary Critics from 1900 until the New French Feminism." Her faculty advisors were Professor William Donahue, German, and Professor Belinda Davis, History.

**Jan Oosting** wrote her thesis, "A Usable Past: Unearthing Rutgers University Queer Women's Voices 1969-2001," under the direction of Professor Jasbir Puar, Women's Studies and Geography.

**Tovah Ornstein**'s thesis is entitled, "Examining the Hidden Agenda in Elementary Schools: Teacher Expectations and Its Influence on Racial and Gender Discrimination Against Our Youth." Her faculty advisors were Professor Maurice Elias and Ms. Karen Clay-Rhines, both of Psychology.

**Mary Simonson** wrote her thesis, "Delicate Divergences: Music in the Lives of New York Women, 1840-1865," under the direction of Professor Nancy Rao, Music, and Professor Nancy Hewitt, History and Women's Studies.

**Abigail Skillman** wrote her thesis, "He said, She said: Citations as Practice of Unintentional Discrimination in Academia," under the direction of Professor Arlene Walker Andrews, Psychology.

## Students Win Awards

**Jan Oosting** was chosen as one of the student award winners in The New Jersey Project's Twelfth Annual Student Achievement Awards for Excellence in Feminist/Multicultural Scholarship competition. Jan's \$300 prize and award certificate will be presented at a special ceremony during the Project's Awards Dinner on Tuesday, May 8, at Drew University, and the essay she wrote will be published in a volume of award-winning essays to be distributed at the dinner. Jan was also awarded the Douglass College Alumnae Prize in Women's Studies for 2001.

**Elizabeth Spohr** received a Human Dignity Award for her leadership and activism at the University. Spohr founded the Women's Defense Coalition to bring a women's center back to the University after it was displaced by an organization whose own building had been destroyed by fire in January, 2000. Spohr was one of three members of the University community honored at a ceremony on Wednesday, April 4, in Winants Hall on the Old Queens campus.



## Putting Lessons to Work in Ecuador

Dahlia Goldenberg

Last week I met with indigenous leaders of women's groups at a protest amidst tear gas. Where am I? Quito, Ecuador. Why do we protest? Because the government has cut subsidies for cooking gas, and we need to cook!

After graduating from Rutgers College last spring I came to Ecuador as a Fulbright Fellow to research grassroots women's community development organizations for a year. I graduated with a B.A. in Philosophy and minors in Women's Studies and Spanish. Participating in the Institute for Women's Leadership Scholar's Program also helped to form me in my final year at Rutgers. In my research here, I am learning a great deal about the lives of women in poverty as well as applying some of the theory that I learned at Rutgers to my experiences and observations.

Working mostly in the capital, Quito, I visit with various urban "popular" women's organizations from marginalized neighborhoods. Women who have been organizing since the 1980s when most of their neighborhoods lacked basic services such as water electricity or health care centers, most of the groups now work on income-generating projects or day care centers. My entry point is through a women's institution, the Ecuadorian Center of Promotion and Action for Women (CEPAM) who provides organizational support and skills to the groups. Contrary to my preoccupations about being held at a distance as an outsider and an American feminist, the women have all welcomed me with open arms and a readiness to share their experiences.

As part of my general studies, I am researching the leadership tendencies within the organizations. The research gives me the chance to spend time in several organizations and conduct interviews with some powerful women that have transformed their lives through their community participation. In addition to benefiting from the experience of meeting these women and learning about life in some of the poorest communities in Quito, the research puts to use much of what I learned as a Women's Studies minor and an IWL scholar. Analyzing organizations and women's leadership and studying women's issues on a global level have prepared me with the theory to understand women's organizing work here. I also benefited from exploring grassroots women's issues on a practical level through my experiences in the IWL program.

Outside of Quito, I have visited two indigenous communities where women are organizing. Visiting with these rural women's organizations helps me to better understand

the life of women in a developing country and their participation in community development. For example, I found that convincing a woman to share a few words within her own women's group can be like extracting teeth, so how likely is it that she will stand up at the next community meeting to tell the men that the community needs a day care center rather than a new bridge?

The activist women and feminists of Ecuador are teaching me much about women and development, as well as about life. Hopefully by the time I leave, they will feel they have gained something from me as well. Although it sometimes feels like a world away from New Jersey, I have discovered that discussions with other women on gender equality—whether it be in a remote jungle community, a poor neighborhood in Quito, or a classroom in Hickman Hall—don't really differ all that much!

### Professor to Visit

Patricia Williams, Professor of Law at Columbia University, will hold the Wynona Lipman Chair at the Center for American Women and Politics for the calendar year 2002. This visiting chair was established by the legislature of New Jersey last year to honor Wynona Lipman, who was the first African American woman to serve in the state legislature. Professor Williams' tentative schedule includes doing research, giving a public lecture, and participating in CAWP events during the spring term. She will teach a Women's Studies course in the fall term.

Professor Williams, who was awarded a McArthur fellowship last year, has been on the faculty of the University of Wisconsin School of Law, City University of New York Law School, and Golden Gate University School of Law. She was visiting professor of Women's Studies at Harvard University, visiting professor of law at Stanford University, and a visiting scholar at Duke University and at Stanford's Institute for Research on Women and Gender. She was also a fellow at the School of Criticism and Theory, Dartmouth College, and a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. Professor Williams has published widely in the areas of race, gender, and law, and on other issues of legal theory and legal writing. Her books include *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, *The Rooster's Egg*, and *Seeing a Colorblind Future: The Paradox of Race*. She is also a regular columnist for *The Nation*.



## M.A. Students Graduate

We've discovered an oversight in our coverage of the M.A. program. Previous issues of this newsletter have welcomed new students each fall, but haven't acknowledged them as they complete their final projects and graduate. Listed below are the 16 students who have graduated this year, along with their projects.

### May, 2000

**Wen-lung Hung** completed a practicum at New York Men Against Sexism.

### October, 2000

**Jennifer Burke** wrote a thesis entitled, "Representing Girl Zines: The Politics of Culture."

**Patricia Di Tillio** completed a practicum at the College of New Jersey on feminist pedagogy in a high school setting.

**Amal About Halika** did her practicum at UNIFEM (United Nations). Her final paper was entitled, "Women's Human Rights at UNIFEM."

**Yoshiko Konishi** wrote a thesis on contemporary Japanese girl culture (Gangura Gal).

**Anastasia Ordenez** completed a practicum at the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, a United Nations body located in the Dominican Republic.

**Joanna Willems** did her practicum at the National Council for Women during the Beijing +5 Review, the Special Session of the UN General Assembly to review the progress of the Beijing Platform for Action.

### January, 2001

**Shana Fried** wrote a thesis entitled, "Feminists Publishing/Feminist Poetry."

**Mohini Mukherjee** did a practicum at the Socio-Economic Educational Development Society. Her final paper was entitled, "NGOs and Their Capacity to Facilitate Social Change: The Empowerment of Women in Musabani, India."

**Lea Popielinski** wrote a thesis entitled, "Queer Theory and Activism: Forging a Postmodern Identity Politic."

**Seunghye Ryu** wrote a thesis entitled, "Women and Childcare Policy in South Korea."

**Mayumi Yamasaki** completed a practicum at the Center for Women and Work. Her final paper was entitled, "Mentoring for Corporate Women."

### May, 2001

**Tracy Budd** wrote a thesis entitled, "Homo-glossia: Do Queers and Their Theorists Speak the Same Language?"

**Karen Herman** did a practicum at the Graduate School of Social Work. Her final paper was entitled, "Feminist Teaching in the Social Work Classroom: One Path for Educating Extraordinary Social Workers."

**Sara Radjenovic** completed a practicum at the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

**Ellen (Piccolo) Yeagle** wrote a thesis entitled, "Feminist Constructions of Subjectivity."

## Writing Pays Off for Wisniewski

Tara Wisniewski is one of seven M.A. students currently writing a thesis or engaged in a practicum. Most of them wait until after graduation to start a full-time job, but not Tara! She is already working as Foundation Relations Associate at the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy in New York. Founded in 1992, the Center is a non-profit legal advocacy organization dedicated to promoting women's reproductive rights in the U.S. and around the world. Tara's work is in the area of development and grant writing, skills she says she learned at Rutgers. The writing-intensive M.A. program in Women's Studies served her well, since a writing sample was part of the application process. She submitted a paper she had written for Charlotte Bunch's

"Human Rights, Health and Violence" class.

Tara also credits Lisa Hetfield and Beth Hutchinson for their roles as mentors. Hetfield is Senior Development Officer for the Institute for Women's Leadership (IWL), and Hutchinson is Assistant Director of the Institute for Research on Women (IRW). By working at the IRW last year, Tara learned how programs get funded.

The content of her writing comes directly from her work in Women's Studies. Tara has a long-standing interest in reproductive rights, and made that the focus of her graduate work. In fact, she is writing her thesis on debates surrounding sex-selected abortion in India and the U.S.

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