



WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM NEWS

The Women's Studies Program
Rutgers, New Brunswick
Fall, 1997 Newsletter

FROM THE DIRECTOR

One of the big surprises of my last two years in Women's Studies has been to discover that women's studies in the US is in a period of intense growth and change. I, like many, have wondered quite what the future of Women's Studies would be, given its self-definition—as well as imposed position—as marginal to the disciplinary organization of the university. Even among feminist scholars, great debate still surrounds the issue of whether study in an interdiscipline is as valuable as that in a discipline, especially at the graduate level. That question seems to be moving out of a theoretical arena into the material one, as more and more programs change into departments, hire Women's Studies faculty, and open graduate programs. There are now six Ph.D. programs in Women's Studies in the US, with the latest one being a rigorous and interesting-looking program at the University of Minnesota. But in our current organization, we would not be able to hire a Women's Studies Ph.D. for a job here. Are we happy with this situation? Do we need some clearer plans for how to grow and change for the future? How will we meet the increasing challenges to our ranking as "probably the best Women's Studies program in the country" (from our last external review in 1994)? What do you think?

Clearly the issues raised by Women's Studies are not about to go away and are in fact growing in importance to the "mainstream" as feminist work expands and develops. I would and do argue that Women's Studies represents the cutting edge work of the university. Feminist work has redefined itself around multicultural issues and global issues; feminist science studies is gaining momentum in its development of new ways to approach science and technology; our models of interdisciplinarity have become more central to university thinking in the guise of "integrated" knowledge; and the Women's Studies para-

digm of linking knowledge and action, theory and practice, academia and the community, is now sanctioned by the university in community service learning programs such as the CASE program here at Rutgers. Moreover, feminist work has thought about these new "hot" issues more thoroughly and thoughtfully than any other. We are the future, it seems, and we all need to think about long range plans for this program.

On a different note: Once again, I welcome new people to our growing community. This year we again are lucky to have two new faculty: Jennifer Morgan, who is in Women's Studies and History, specializing in African-American women's history, and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, now on a postdoctoral fellowship at Berkeley, who has been hired into Women's Studies and Geography. We are also privileged to have Karen Barad, physicist from Pomona College, as the Laurie Chair in residence for the next two years, focusing our attention on feminist science studies. Our staff positions have changed as well: Mary Gossy from Spanish has brought her characteristic wit and grace to the graduate director position; Katharine Jones, who recently completed her Ph.D. in Sociology at Rutgers, is our full-time undergraduate instructor; and Patty McDaniel from Sociology is handling the diverse tasks of the Graduate Assistant. We also welcome Helen Greven as the Coordinator of the Graduate Program: Helen brings with her enormous university experience, as well as diverse knowledge from a doctorate in History at Harvard and from her current work as a therapist. Last, but not at all least, I have to give my heartfelt thanks to Joanne Givand for moving into the Administrative Assistant position and taking on all the enormous headaches of running Women's Studies. Joanne's extraordinary skills and level head have already gotten us through a number of crises, and I cannot thank her enough for taking charge here.

Harriet Davidson

TURNING Knowledge INTO Practice

The Women's Studies internship program offers students a unique opportunity to put feminist theory into practice in community or university-based organizations serving women. Each semester, juniors and seniors have the opportunity to work in organizations such as Planned Parenthood, the Center for Women's Global Leadership, the New Jersey State Office of Aging, and the New York City Mayor's Office. They also participate in a weekly seminar that provides a theoretical framework for their internship experience.

Last Spring, Carrie Lang, a Women's Studies major (class of 1999), worked at the Garden State Holistic Healing Center as an apprentice to Dr. Nikki Conte, a naturopathic doctor. Dr. Conte treats women's illnesses naturally, using herbalism, homeopathy, nutrition, vitamin supplements and massage to assist the body's own healing mechanisms. Carrie worked 10 hours a week, assisting with patients and offering suggestions for treatment, creating a new patient questionnaire, and helping run the business end of the office. Carrie thoroughly enjoyed the hands-on approach to learning, so much so that she is planning another internship next semester with a midwife.

FACTS ON FILE

- BETWEEN 1995 AND 1996, DEATHS FROM AIDS DROPPED 19% IN THE US.
- WOMEN'S DEATHS DECLINED BY 7%, WHILE MEN'S DEATHS DECLINED BY 22%.
- AMONG WHITES, DEATHS FROM AIDS DECLINED BY 28%, COMPARED TO A 10% DECLINE AMONG BLACKS, AND A 16% DECLINE AMONG HISPANICS.
- AIDS IS NOW THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN AGED 25 TO 44.

(SOURCE: *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, JULY 20, 1997)

Women's Studies ... On The Move

As many of you may have noticed, the new building that will house Women's Studies, the Ruth Dill Crockett Johnson Center, located behind the Institute for Research on Women & the Global Center, is close to completion. Unlike our old quarters in the Voorhees Chapel basement, the new building is, to quote an anonymous source, "huge and delicious," with a plethora of windows.

Women's Studies will occupy space on the ground and second floors. The ground floor contains a conference room capable of holding over 100 people, a seminar room, and two large offices. The second floor contains more offices for Women's Studies staff and faculty, a kitchen, lounge, and bathrooms. The Institute for Women's Leadership, the Center for Women and Work, and the Laurie New Jersey Chair in Women's Studies will occupy the third floor.

The move to the new building is scheduled for early January. Women's Studies' phone numbers will hopefully remain the same, but the address will change; the powers-that-be at the post office are still debating about the number to be assigned to the new building. Stay tuned for more information.

Calling All Artists:
The new building needs artwork.
Make your mark by contributing
an original work of art for the
walls.

Where Are They Now? A Women's Studies' M.A. Graduate Checks In

Deevy Holcomb, class of 1996, was one of the first graduates of the Women's Studies Master's Program. Her thesis, "Woman, Nation, Violation: Spectacle or Strategy?: Women's Human Rights Testimony," analyzed human rights education practices among a group of women activists in the United States.

Deevy is currently working for Idasa (Institute for Democracy in South Africa), part of the Local Government Information Centre (LOGIC). LOGIC is a research and training centre dedicated to developing a democratic and fully-fledged local government structure in South Africa. (South Africa is one of the few countries which enshrines local government as a sphere of government in its constitution.) Deevy is officially employed as the publications co-ordinator, but considers herself the "resident every-woman." She edits and writes a newsletter that goes to local government councillors; edits and writes research publications on different local government topics; writes training manuals for government officials on the new South African constitution, local government legislation, and democratic processes; and runs a women's human rights and local government research and workshop program.

Education around the new South African constitution is a particularly important part of her job, "since it is the first democratic constitution in South Africa, and the most progressive constitution in the world in terms of recognition of all people's (including women's and gay people's) human rights. There is a lot of education that needs to happen around human rights and constitutional culture (as opposed to the culture and history of repression)."

When asked how her participation in the Women's Studies Master's program helped prepare her for this job, she replied, "Writing a thesis is preparation for anything. The discipline required of self-studying, and the short time period allowed

a Master's student to finish made me a very productive little worker." She also found the program's emphasis on the differences between and nuances of "academic" and "activist" feminism to be a helpful context for the grassroots-level work she is involved in now.

Reflecting on how she incorporates her theoretical knowledge about women and gender into a job that is not specifically focused on women, she said: "Feminism, and a commitment to women means a commitment to social justice for everyone, particularly the poor in any community, country, or group. To understand women and gender one should take a holistic look at where she or they live, work, eat, walk, what they look at from their kitchen window, what they do all day and who they do it with, etc. Not working in an organization that is explicitly and solely for women, or about gender issues, has re-emphasized this to me. And the daily challenge of being gender sensitive in and at work, while a real pain sometimes in a hostile environment, has disciplined me more in gender than my studies or past working experience in gender has."



MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR:

NOVEMBER 12

1:00 - 3:00 pm

Radha S. Hegde, " Setting Them Free: Other Narratives of Motherhood from a South Indian Context"

IRW: Toward 2000, 27 Clifton Avenue, Douglass

NOVEMBER 19

2:30 pm

Women's Studies Program General Meeting

Voorhees Chapel Basement, Rm 5, Douglass

NOVEMBER 20-21

Conference: New Perspectives on Slavery and the Slave Trade

Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis, Eagleton, Douglass

NOVEMBER 25-DECEMBER 10

7th Annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence

Contact the Center for Women's Global Leadership for details (932-9072)

DECEMBER 4

4:30 pm

Emma Donoghue, reading and discussion of lesbian literature

IRW, 27 Clifton Ave, Douglass

DECEMBER 11

6:00 pm

Women's Studies Holiday Party

5 Cobb Road, Douglass

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Barbara Balliet, *Women's Studies*

Marlene Bednarczyk, *Women's Studies Major*

C. Lynn Carr, *Sociology*

Harriet Davidson, *Women's Studies*

Marianne Dekoven, *IRW*

Leela Fernandes, *Political Science & WS*

Samantha Frost, *Political Science*

Mary Gossy, *Spanish & Comp. Lit & WS*

Dorothy Hodgson, *Anthropology*

Monique Rhodes, *Women's Studies Minor*

Bonnie Smith, *History*

Caridad Souza, *Puerto Rican & Hisp. Can Studies*

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

Barbara Balliet, *Women's Studies*

Susan Carroll, *Political Science*

Judy Gerson, *Sociology*

Jennifer Nelson, *History*

Results of the Women's Studies Undergraduate Survey

Over the past several years, some Women's Studies majors and minors have expressed concerns about the Women's Studies curriculum, particularly the nature, content, and classroom climate of cross-listed courses. In an effort to formally assess undergraduates' concerns, several Sociology graduate students and a Women's Studies undergraduate created a survey that was mailed out last spring to all majors and minors (a total of 140 students). The survey contained both open- and closed-ended questions regarding the students' experiences in Women's Studies core and cross-listed courses and with advising. Despite extensive advertising and prize incentives, the response rate was low: approximately thirty percent of all majors and minors completed and returned the survey.

Students who responded had few serious programmatic concerns: most were generally satisfied with the availability of introductory and intermediate courses in Women's Studies (although they were less satisfied with the availability of advanced courses); most were satisfied with the sequence of courses taken; and most found Women's Studies advising to be useful or somewhat useful. Students were less consistently content with their experiences in cross-listed courses, although

responses varied widely. For example, over one-third of students reported that all or most faculty teaching cross-listed courses incorporate a range of feminist theories and empirical research, while another third reported that only some faculty do so. More consistent complaints were a lack of focus on differences among women in these courses, and the repetition of material across cross-listed courses. On a more positive note, the majority of students answering the survey reported that the readings in cross-listed courses were sufficiently challenging.

The Women's Studies undergraduate curriculum committee will be discussing these findings and assessing their significance for the program. Thank you, everyone who completed a survey, and thank you, Courtney Jackson, Jennifer Fuld, Johanna Foster, and Melissa Padula for creating, administering, and analyzing the survey.

Notes from Underground

The stylish outfits and scintillating banter in many languages may lead unsuspecting visitors to the erroneous perception that they have landed in the midst of an haute-couture coffee klatch, but as habitués are well aware, the basement of Voorhees Chapel is no bourgeois mall - what we are dealing with here is really a lean and mean underground guerilla operation.

I am happy to include myself in the cadre as new Director of the Graduate Program. Helen Greven, the Program Coordinator is new to Women's Studies too but is a longtime observer and interpreter of the labyrinthine ways of Rutgers. Along with the 10 new M.A. students, we have been working hard to continue the struggle for the propagation of Women's Studies research, theory, and practice at the graduate level at Rutgers. This year's students are an engaging, lucid, and powerful group of women. It has been my good fortune to work with many of them in the graduate Feminist Theory course. This course also includes students from other disciplines, many of whom are working towards the Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies. As a result, the theory course, like many others in the Women's Studies graduate core curriculum, is a highly charged site for adventurous and challenging interdisciplinary work. We have here in the basement a treasure trove of academic talent and activist energy - an unsuspected precious cache hidden in the trenches. It will be sad to leave them (the trenches) behind.

Nonetheless, the move to our new headquarters secreted in the woods beyond the Global Center will help us in our mission of combining the elegance of a fine salon with incendiary intellectual fervor. Come join us!

Mary Gossy

UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Barbara Balliet, *Women's Studies*
Harriet Davidson, *Women's Studies*
Jerry Flieger, *French*
Johanna Foster, *Sociology*
Natasha Garaway, *Women's Studies Major*
Beth Hutchison, *IRW*
Katharine Jones, *Women's Studies*
Alice Kessler-Harris, *History*
Carmen Miroshna, *Women's Studies Major*
Jennifer Morgan, *History & Women's Studies*
Louisa Schein, *Anthropology*

GRADUATE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE:

Barbara Balliet, *Women's Studies*
Harriet Davidson, *Women's Studies*
Leela Fernandes, *Political Science & Women's Studies*
Mary Gossy, *Spanish & Comp. Lit & Women's Studies*
Briavel Holcomb, *Urban Planning*
Jennifer Jones, *History*
Patricia McDaniel, *Sociology*
Carol Smith, *English*

Minnie Raps

A column in which the newest, and youngest addition to Women's Studies, Minnie, Warrior Puppy Extraordinaire, answers your questions about the program.



Dear Minnie,

How do you handle being the new dog on the block? I am a new graduate student, and I need some tips on how to meet people in Women's Studies.

Dazed and Confused

Dear Dazed,

I find that leaping on people, gazing at them with big, moist eyes, and wagging my tail all help to signal my interest in making someone's acquaintance. When these ploys fail to facilitate a satisfying interaction, it doesn't hurt to yelp to indicate my dissatisfaction.

For you, however, I suggest a more subdued approach; come to meetings and events and bond with the person sitting next to you by talking about the amazing puppy that keeps wandering into the room. To insure that you are kept informed about Women's Studies activities, call the office (932-9331) and ask to be put on the mailing list.

Dear Minnie,

I can't get into any Women's Studies 101 sections. What should I do?

A Feminist In Need

Dear F.I.N.,

I can assure you that phoning the harried office staff and demanding to be let into any available section is NOT what this dog would do. Register early and try to iron out any problems by talking to a Women's Studies' advisor BEFORE the semester begins. If you discover that you are a budding

feminist AFTER the semester has already begun, you must discuss this transformation with the instructor, who will then provide Women's Studies with your name. Only then will the suddenly receptive office staff give you a special permission number.

Dear Minnie,

I want to put my B.A. in Women's Studies to good use. Do you have any career suggestions for me?

Clueless

Dear Clueless,

I often congratulate myself on having arrived at my own career, that of woman's best friend, purely by luck. Unfortunately, this same kind of luck will not necessarily come to the aid of Women's Studies majors. As a first step, I suggest that you look at the job listings provided on the Feminist Majority Foundation's web site (www.feminist.org/911/911jobs.html); that will give you some clues as to the options available to you.

Minnie

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD....

NEW FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

- Elin Diamond (English): *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater* (Routledge, 1997).
- Leela Fernandes (Political Science & Women's Studies): *Producing Workers: The Politics of Gender, Class, and Culture in the Calcutta Jute Mills* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).
- Elena A. Gerstmann and Deirdre A. Kramer (Psychology): "Feminist Identity Development: Psychometric Analyses of Two Feminist Identity Scales," *Sex Roles*, 1997, Volume 36, nos. 5/6, pp. 327-348.
- Mary Gossy (Spanish & Comparative Literature & Women's Studies): "Skirting the Question: Lesbians and Maria de Zayas." In Sylvia Malloy (ed.) *Hispanism and Homosexuality* (Duke University Press, 1997).

FAVORITE SUMMERTIME READING AMONG THE WOMEN'S STUDIES COMMUNITY

Diana Prince, Exercise Science and Sports Studies, *The Magician's Assistant* by Ann Patchett

Barbara Balliet, Women's Studies, *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood

Wendy Kroy, Communications, *Gay New York: Gender, Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* by George Chauncey

Nikita Femmla, French, *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap* by Peggy Orenstein

Katharine Jones, Women's Studies, *The Crow Road* by Iain Banks

Sarah Connor, Computer Science, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* by Joan J. Brumberg

Buffy V. Slayer, Institute for Health, *The Angel of Darkness* by Caleb Carr

WOMEN'S STUDIES AT RUTGERS, NEW BRUNSWICK

Director: Harriet Davidson
Associate Director: Barbara Balliet
Administrative Assistant: Joanne Givand
Graduate Director: Mary Gossy
Program Coordinator: Helen Greven
Graduate Assistant: Patricia McDaniel
Student Assistants: Catherine Burkhart
Kalanit Oded
Adia Phillips
Jacklyn Port
Aurilis Sanchez

HOW TO REACH US:

Phone: 932-9331
Fax: 932-1335
Web: <http://womens-studies.rutgers.edu>

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Women's Studies
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
5 Chapel Drive
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8526

