
Women's & Gender Studies

Fall 2000

at Rutgers-New Brunswick

Sutton-Brown Takes on Sydney

Rutgers senior and Women's Studies major Tammy Sutton-Brown represented Canada at the Sydney Olympics this fall. Having grown up right outside Toronto, she played center for the Canadian women's basketball team, the same position she has played on the Rutgers team for the past four years.

The road to the Olympics was a long one. Sutton-Brown learned of Rutgers from her high school coach, who referred her to Knights coach C. Vivian Stringer. (Stringer is the third coach in women's basketball history to attain 600 wins, and will be inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame next summer.) When Sutton-Brown was a freshman, the team reached the Sweet 16. Last year, when she was a junior, they reached the Final Four, and this year, they are hoping to win the NCAA championship. Her training at Rutgers helped prepare her for the Olympic tryouts.

The tryouts were held in Vancouver at the end of May. Over a three-day period, a field of 30 players was narrowed to 12, who played together all summer. In June, they went to Australia for a preliminary tournament at the site of the actual Olympics. Then they returned to Canada for more training in Vancouver and Toronto. In August, they played exhibition games in Dallas, San Antonio, and Oakland. By September, they had become a real team.

In Sydney, the women's basketball teams were divided into two pools. Each team played every other team in its own pool, with the top four crossing over to play each other. The Canadians played Australia, Senegal, France, Slovakia, and Brazil for a 10th place finish overall.

For Sutton-Brown, the hardest part was missing the first five weeks of her classes. Unlike Chelsea Clinton, who took the semester off from Stanford to travel the world, Sutton-Brown had a full course load



awaiting her at Rutgers upon her return. When asked how many of the Olympic athletes were college students, she said she was one of just two on the Canadian team. But she did know one other Rutgers student who shared her experience—Fatime Ndiaye. Ndiaye transferred to Rutgers this year from Midland Junior College in Texas, and plays forward for the Scarlet Knights. But in Sydney, she played against Sutton-Brown for the Senegali team.

Asked how majoring in Women's Studies has affected the way she sees herself as a female athlete, Sutton-Brown says, "I hope to model for little girls that women can be just as tough on the court as men, but off the court you can still be feminine and be yourself. In fact, it's good for guys to see that too." She regularly sees both girls and boys in the stands at Rutgers on Scouts' Day and Campers' Day, and enjoys signing autographs for them.

After Sydney, would she consider the next Olympics? "If I'm still in good health and good condition, absolutely! And the next one is in Athens." But that's four years away. More immediate possibilities include the WNBA or one of the overseas leagues. Italy and France both have very good women's basketball teams. "Or," she says, "I could get a real job...Nah!"

Fashioning a Blueprint for Women's and Gender Studies

--Letter From the Director

Last May, a two-day retreat of the Women's Studies faculty was the culminating activity of the Research Action Cluster on Feminist Theory and Research Methods underwritten by the Institute for Research on Women. We began as a multidisciplinary group of scholars sharing our work, and ended up, after much vigorous exchange, good food, and walks along the Delaware River, with an interdisciplinary and visionary plan for future work in Women's and Gender Studies. By laying out the assumptions behind our own work, and our sense of future directions for our work, we were able to see broad patterns and urgent questions emerge.

From this discussion, we have fashioned a blueprint for Ph.D. level work in Women's and Gender Studies, which is now a proposal before the Graduate School. This exciting work gives scholars time to develop their own interests, and provides the opportunity for groups of scholars to use their collective knowledge to build a research agenda that defines what kind of questions are best asked and answered by a field. Because the Women's Studies faculty has been divided among so many departments, these questions have not always been evident, and the achievement of this Ph.D. plan is the best argument for bringing Women's Studies scholars together in a stable, departmentally based structure.

The working group on theory and methodology agreed that our basic assumptions include an understanding of the complex intersections of identity categories, an inclusion of global perspectives, and a focus on the relations between theory and practice. And indeed, nowhere else in the university does a curriculum systematically try to teach the dynamics of intersecting identities, complex social structures, and divergent cultures, while taking a critical stance toward the role of our own research and pedagogy in that dynamic. Within these basic assumptions, the Ph.D. plan names three broad areas of concentration in gender at Rutgers: 1) "Agency, Subjectivity, and Social Change"; 2) "Technologies and Poetics of Gender"; 3) "Gendered Borders/Changing Boundaries." Each of these areas is interdisciplinary, including work in humanities and social science

fields, theoretical work challenging many of the assumptions of modernity, and empirical work that charts new territory for studying the world. Each, also, has policy implications for students who wish to think about working in policy-related fields.

This Ph.D. program feels like a great intellectual advance for us as a faculty, as well as for the field. Unfortunately, this fall has also seen one of those periodic attacks on Women's Studies (in an article by Daphne Patai in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*) as ideologically rigid, male bashing, and victim mongering. Since what I see in Women's and Gender Studies research and teaching at Rutgers is just the opposite of this, I feel the need for us to better understand and communicate what Women's Studies does. This new Ph.D. program does exactly that, helping us to synthesize the important work of the past thirty years and envision the work of the future. Social change brings with it social battles, but as an area of knowledge, Women's and Gender Studies has become a crucial component of a liberal education.

Harriet Davidson



Faculty Retreat in May, 2000

Caldicott Visits from the Land Down Under

Dr. Helen Caldicott will arrive in January to begin serving as the Laurie New Jersey Chair in Women's Studies at Douglass College for Spring 2001.

Originally from Australia, Caldicott is a physician active in opposing nuclear arms and in the peace movement more generally. Her political organizing spans three continents: Australasia, Europe, and North America. Highlights from her work in education and advocacy include initiating a movement against French atmospheric tests in 1971-72; leading an education campaign among Australian labor unions about medical and military dangers of uranium mining in 1975-76; founding Physicians for Social Responsibility in the United States in 1978; meeting with Soviet officials to discuss the terms of the Salt II Treaty in 1979; and helping to organize English, Scottish, West German, Dutch, Belgian, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian medical campaigns for the prevention of nuclear war in 1980.

In addition, she founded Green Labor, a new

section within the Australian Labor Party in 1988, and ran as an Independent Candidate for the Australian Federal Parliament in 1990. In 2000, she founded yet another political party, Our Common Future Party.

In her spare time, she has made dozens of presentations at conferences around the world, and has taught pediatrics at Harvard Medical School (1977-78) and at The New School for Social Research, New York (1995-96). She spoke as part of Douglass College's "Shaping A Life" course twice in the late 1990s, and both years was voted favorite speaker by the students. Her work on-campus and off led to her being offered the Laurie New Jersey Chair this Spring.

Caldicott is presently writing a book entitled, *The Coming Nuclear War*. While at Rutgers, she will be teaching an undergraduate seminar on "Women and Activism," open to Women's Studies and Douglass Honors students. Upon her return to Australia, she plans to run for the Australian Federal Senate. We look forward to having her with us.



Graduate Student Potluck



October 18, 2000

Coming Full Circle: Puar Returns to Rutgers

When Jasbir Puar graduated from Rutgers in 1989, she thought she'd never be back. In fact, she traveled to more than 40 countries trying to get away from New Jersey. But this fall, Puar joined the Women's Studies faculty at Rutgers. How did it happen?

Jasbir Puar grew up in Basking Ridge, a white suburban town, just 25 miles from New Brunswick. As a student, she found the racial and ethnic diversity at Rutgers a breath of fresh air. For the first time in her life, she was around other people of color. She double majored in Economics and German, but took a lot of Sociology classes too, including "Sexuality and Society" with Professor Cathy Greenblat. Ironically, Professor Puar is teaching in that same classroom this semester.

Her first trip overseas was her junior year, when she studied abroad in Germany. After graduation, she traveled throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Central America. She paid her way by bartending, making jewelry, and teaching. She taught English in Cairo, and taught English and German in Fukuyama, Japan. It was this experience of mobility and movement, as well as the way she was treated as a woman of color traveling alone that led to her interest in Women's Studies.

In 1993, Puar entered the Masters program in Women's Studies at the University of York, England. While there, she participated in an exchange program in the Netherlands, exploring multicultural feminism in Europe. Her first conference paper was delivered quite by accident. Her advisor, Mary Maynard, was supposed to respond to a paper by feminist theorist Chandra Mohanty, and had to cancel. Puar went in her place, and as the only graduate student present, delivered her response to a woman whose work had profoundly influenced her just six months earlier. Until then, Puar had assumed she would be an activist with a non-profit organization, but this experience convinced her to pursue an academic career.

She went on to study for her Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Her designated emphasis was Women, Gender, and Sexuality, and her dissertation was entitled, "Trans-



national Sexualities and Trinidad: Modern Bodies, National Queers." At Berkeley, she says, "I had to forge what 'interdisciplinary' meant for me. My work is not U.S.-based, like many people's." As Puar speaks, it becomes evident that space is her metaphor. She sees the move to Geography and Women's Studies as an extension of all of her previous work. "While some scholars do post-colonial area studies, and others do American area studies, I think about the connections between them." For example, she traces the relationships to Indianness that different spaces evolve from and also produce. She also considers how "the nation" has been reshaped by multinational corporations and other forces.

This Spring, Puar will be teaching two courses: a Women's Studies graduate seminar entitled, "Transnational Sexualities," and a Geography seminar cross-listed with Women's Studies entitled, "Geography Seminar: Diasporic Geographies." The first course will examine the interrelated histories of how categories of sexuality have been and are produced in various cultural locations. The second will examine Jewish, African, and Indian diasporas in light of the shift from old formulations of colonial domination to new paradigms of globality.

For Professor Puar, the return to Rutgers is "almost karmic, in a way. It's an opportunity for closure that most people don't get." She truly has come full circle.

New Course Applies Ethical Reasoning to Public Life

Among the Women's Studies course offerings this fall is a new 400-level seminar entitled, "Ethics and Leadership." Taught by Professor Mary Hawkesworth, the course explores contemporary relations between ethics and politics, between conceptions of leadership and the production of depoliticized masses, between individual values and public beliefs. It considers whether the world we inhabit is the world we would wish to create for ourselves, as well as leadership strategies that might transform individual beliefs, public values, and community life.

Professor Hawkesworth notes that "while the prevailing values in our society suggest that ethical relativism is the only responsible stance, political philosophers have found that relativism is deeply flawed. Some arguments are, in fact, better than others." This course is designed to help students develop their capacity for ethical reasoning in public contexts.

Asked what is new about the course, she says neither ethics nor leadership is new. The Philosophy Department offers courses in ethics. IWL (Institute for Women's Leadership) has the IWL Scholars Program in Women's Leadership and Social Change. That program consists of courses related to the students' chosen fields, an interdisciplinary seminar, and a two-semester practicum that includes both an internship and a social-action project.

Douglass College offers Emerging Leaders and PLEN. Emerging Leaders is a 10-week program for first-year students and first-semester sophomores that builds communication and teamwork skills for use during the students' tenure at Douglass College. PLEN (Public Leadership Education Network) is a national consortium of women's colleges working together to educate women for public leadership. The program at Douglass sends students to Washington, D.C. for a series of seminars and internships, and brings political women--elected officials, policy analysts, and activists--to campus for a Spring Forum each year. The Political Science Department offers a class on "Women and American Politics" in conjunction with this forum.

CAWP (Center for American Women and Politics) has a NEW Leadership Program, also known as

National Education for Women's Leadership. This program attempts to demystify what it means to be a political woman by bringing college women from New Jersey to campus for a week-long residential institute taught by women officials and activists, who serve as a faculty-in-residence. Afterwards, the students develop their own projects to implement in their own communities.

Each of these programs takes a different approach to strategies of leading and the substance of leading. What the "Ethics and Leadership" seminar adds to the mix is the application of ethical reasoning to both the strategies and the substance of leadership.

From utilitarianism to egoism, from deontology to virtue ethics, students are asked to reason in various ways about complex moral issues. Political theorist Joan Tronto, for example, asks what kind of polity we might create if we took care as an analytic concept. Among the real-world applications is the movement begun by the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo to reclaim their children. As Hawkesworth explains, "These women used a different concept of leadership, focusing on collective action in which the focus of mobilization is creating democratic free spaces in the context of oppression." Other applications include feminist protest within institutions such as the church and the military.

For their research paper, students choose any issue--not necessarily a feminist one--explore the ethical dimensions of that issue, and devise a leadership strategy. The idea is for them to grapple with applied questions: How do you think ethically? What kinds of arguments are better than others? How do you obtain information on which to base a decision, and how do you decide when the outcome is uncertain?

The point Hawkesworth hopes to drive home is that one makes ethical decisions in all of life--from public policy to business decisions to political organizing. "Public life is greatly diminished because people think you can't reason about moral questions." Asked about the long-term impact of the course, she says, "Check back in 25 years when some of these people are running the world, and see if it helped them."

What's the Buzz About.....

...Internships?

The internship course in Women's Studies, taught by instructor Rose Corrigan, is a six-credit course that involves a weekly seminar and 10-15 hours at a community placement each week. The class is open to all undergraduates who have done coursework in Women's Studies, pending departmental approval.

The seminar focuses on such issues as the role of Women's Studies in movements for change; women's activism and the state; leadership, power, and organization; and identity politics in feminist institutions. Writing assignments draw on readings and internship experiences. Placements are available with a wide variety of organizations, both on- and off-campus.

Like the 400-level seminars, the internship provides a cap-stone experience for Women's Studies majors and minors. Taken near the end of their coursework, it enables students to make connections between theoretical work in Women's Studies and practical experience in the field.

Why do an internship? Corrigan says some students come with specific policy interests, others are seeking work experience, and still others want to learn a specific skill, like grant writing. What they get out of the internship largely depends on their reasons for doing it. She adds, "Many students are trying to create a balance between the intellectual work in the classroom and the hands-on piece." A Women's Studies internship is a great way to do that.

...Honors Theses?

The honors research seminar in Women's Studies, taught by visiting Assistant Professor Jennifer Nelson, gives students the opportunity to do extended research on a topic of their choice.

Women's Studies majors and minors with an overall GPA of 3.0 and a Women's Studies GPA of 3.4 or higher receive a letter in their junior year inviting them to participate in the honors program. Interested students then submit a proposal, and if it is accepted, they write a thesis their senior year. The

course is designed to guide them through the process.

Why write a thesis? Nelson says most students who do it are planning to attend graduate school, and this is great preparation. It's generally the first time they've written a paper with several chapters, and at roughly 100 pages, it's almost certainly longer than other work they have done.

"The course is designed for students who are already ready to do this kind of project," she says. The honors proposal helps students evaluate their interest and preparation for the class. The seminar helps students further develop their thinking and writing skills. They also learn how to give and receive critiques of their work. During the course, they read each other's proposals and chapters, offering support as well as feedback.

Topics this year range from women and music in 19th century America to feminist performance art to race and gender bias in local grade schools, Christian feminist theology, and the history of queer activism at Rutgers. Nelson is quick to point out that she is not an expert in all of these areas. That is why each student has another faculty advisor in her specific area of interest.

Writing a thesis can be a rewarding experience for those who choose to do it.



New M.A. Students (l-r): Fu-chia Yang, Carolina Nunez Puente, and Shin-I Lin

New M.A. Students Hail From Spain and Taiwan

This year's entering class of M.A. students includes three international students: Carolina Nunez Puente of Spain, Fu-chia Yang of Taiwan, and Shin-I Lin, also of Taiwan. In a recent group interview, they discussed their backgrounds, their intellectual interests, what brought them to Rutgers, and their plans for the future.

Where they came from

Carolina is a native of Spain, and is already enrolled in the Ph.D. program in English at the University of Coruna. Specifically, she is studying Germanic philology, the culture of English-speaking countries. Given a choice between language and literature, she chose literature, and is studying women writers in American literature.

Fu-chia grew up in Chang-Hua, Taiwan, which she describes as the largest town in Taiwan, located in the middle of the country. She majored in Foreign Languages and Literatures at the National Chiao-Tung University. After graduating, she worked in Taipei for a year at the Fulbright Foundation Scholarship Exchange, helping other people apply to study overseas.

Shin-I grew up in the nearby city of Taichung. (After an extended discussion of what constitutes a town or a city, Shin-I and Fu-chia concluded that Chang-Hua is a large town, and Taichung is a city.) She studied textile engineering at Feng-Chia University. After graduation, she worked in Taipei as management assistant for a textile company.

Their intellectual interests

Within American literature, Carolina is studying the modern period; specifically, the social modernists, who wrote about contemporary social and political issues. Her dissertation will be on Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Meridel Le Sueur. Her program in Spain is quite androcentric. In fact, she was discouraged from studying women writers.

Shin-I's interest in Women's Studies was inspired by her reading of Simone de Beauvoir and Germaine Greer, as well as the experience of growing up with two younger brothers. She has seen first hand the ways in which her culture values males over females. She was originally planning an emphasis in political science, but is now inclined toward sociology.

Fu-chai is interested in how female artists express their sexualities, especially lesbian or bisexual identities, in their work. She has been writing poetry and verse for years, and her work has been published on the Internet. She also took a one-year drama class in college, so her conception of "female art" is broad and inclusive.

What brought them to Rutgers

Carolina says there is no such thing as Women's Studies in Spain, and she felt that in order to proceed with her dissertation, she needed to learn about feminist approaches to literature. She had already read works by Rutgers professors such as Marianne DeKoven, Alice Kessler-Harris (now at Columbia), Drucilla Cornell, and Alicia Ostriker. For her, Rutgers was the obvious choice.

For Fu-chia, the choice was less obvious. Her position at the Fulbright Foundation gave her access to information about programs in the U.K. as well as the United States. She considered Women's Studies programs at San Francisco and San Diego, but chose Rutgers for the quality of its faculty.

Shin-I first applied to law school at George Washington University, before deciding on an M.A. program in Women's Studies. She felt the need to ground her activism in a feminist theoretical framework. She was drawn to Rutgers by its reputation.

Their plans for the future

Carolina plans to return to Spain to complete her dissertation. After that, she wants to be a professor, but feels torn between further study in the U.S. and living at home in Spain. She can see herself introducing women writers into the study of literature in Spain, and joining with other feminist scholars to build a supportive academic community. Together, they could create conferences or start a periodical.

Shin-I would like to be an activist. She will be developing her focus over the next year.

Fu-chia, too, is considering the possibilities. She may one day be an editor, helping other women to publish their work, or she may own a café where women read poetry or perform.

Whatever their focus, the M.A. in Women's Studies will inform their future work.

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