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The University of Montana

Women's Studies Newsletter

LA 435, x-2584

vol. 2, no. 1 December 1993

From the Director . . .

In writing as the first Director of Women's Studies at UM, I want to begin by saluting last year's acting co-directors, Deborah Slicer, Dept. of Philosophy, and Bari Burke, Law School, for their terrific job in strengthening the program and bringing an outstanding array of speakers to campus. Reports of exciting activities reached me even in Dakar, Senegal, where I was a visiting senior Fulbright lecturer in American literature.

This year there is much to celebrate. Above all, the establishment and strengthening of a Women's Studies program at UM is a splendid potential benefit for the university community as a whole. Academically, it means not just that we now acknowledge the contributions of women, artists, scientists, and activists. More importantly, gender is now recognized as a variable in intellectual inquiry as important as class and race. Women have experienced the world differently, and that difference means that we cannot generalize from male experience—in classes, research, scholarship—any more than we would from the experience of middle-class whites. To cite one scholar, "Women's studies proves that research based on men alone cannot yield universal truths." Where and how one is situated, historically and culturally, filters one's view of experience. Accurate and complete scholarship mandates that the portrayal of women and men in a text or their presence in a research model be evaluated; how gender is viewed reveals fundamental truths about an author and her/his society.

Women's Studies aims to benefit the university community in several specific ways. Discussions are underway for expanding the program of study, currently an emphasis within the Liberal Arts major, so that more students can have formal concentrations in Women's Studies. (Please send me the names of students interested in such a program.) 16 courses were crosslisted with Women's Studies this term, and a record-high 20 will be crosslisted next term. Co-sponsored speakers this term have included stirring presentations by national organizer Suzanne Pharr and local activist Laurie Smith during activities for Take Back the Night week in October, a Philosophy Forum by Kathy George on vegetarianism, and an introduction to issues for women in developing countries with Senegalese sociologist Dr. Fatou Sow.

Other activities are in the planning stage: a forum on feminist pedagogy for which Mary Birch, Social Work, and Deborah Slicer were successful in seeking instructional development funding; and a slate of activities for Women's History month (March).

The main focus of activities this term, however, has been on consolidation: establishing a program office in LA 435 (x2584) with two excellent work study helpers—Anne Marie Lombardi, a graduate student in Philosophy and an Erasmus fellow, who is responsible for both this newsletter

Course Listing for Spring 1994

C&I 495 Gender Issues in the Nineties	(R. Sommers-Flanagan)
DANCE 334 Dance History: Twentieth Century	(J. Crump)
ENGL 221 History of American Literature	(V. Stewart)
ENLT 323.02 Comedy (Drama, Power, Gender)	(L. Welch)
ENLT 495.01 Studies in American Women Poets	(P. Goedicke)
ENLT 522.03 The Quixotic Novelistic Discourse	(V. Stewart)
HIST 152 The Americans: to the 21st Century	(D. Garceau)
HIST 395 Women on the American Frontier	(D. Garceau)
HIST 388 Women & Ethnic Minorities in the Middle East	(M. Kia)
LS 330/ENLT 324.03 Classics by Women Writers	(J. Watson)
LING 495.01 Language and Gender	(F. Coles)
NAS 324 American Indian Women's Lives	(D. Earling)
PHIL 361 Feminist Ethics	(D. Slicer)
PHIL 394 Ecofeminism	(D. Slicer)
PSYCH 115 The Psychology of Loving Relationships	(J. Waltz)
PSYCH 295 Psychology of Family Violence	(C. Fiore)
RLST 370 Medieval Women Mystics	(P. Dietrich)
SW 410 Ethics and the Helping Professions	(M. Birch)
SOC 300 The Family	(R. Anderson)
SOC 522-03 Rural Change and Community Development	(J. Belsky and P. Miller)

and our excellent graphics; and Melissa Boyd, a transfer student from Texas who is adapting to our cold winters. Next term they will be joined by a halftime assistant, enabling longer hours in the office and an ambitious slate of activities. Another priority has been setting up a more visible Women's Studies program—in the catalog, on major university committees such as the Diversity Advisory Council—and maintaining an active role on the University Council on Sexual Assault. We also hosted a reception for new women faculty and have a directory of women faculty (and friends) in the works as ways to make women faculty more visible to one another.

The Brown Bag lunch series continues to be stimulating and well-attended on alternate (roughly) Wednesdays at noon in the Pope Room of the Law School, with presentations on women focused on topics ranging from romance to war, voting behavior to Native American perspectives.

The University climate remains a concern. 1992-93 was a year of intensified criticism of university efforts to enhance gender diversity on the faculty and to strengthen education and policy on sexual assault. Such "backlash" is now felt nationwide, with articles and books critical of Women's Studies programs, feminist analyses, and affirmative action gains. Combatting backlash might begin by affirming our strengths. Nationally in 25 years over 600

History 395: "Women on the American Frontier"

The following poems came out of a workshop on creating a "found poem," in Dee Garceau's History 395, Women on the American Frontier (Spring 1993). A "found poem" is constructed from words or phrases found in another form -- such as court testimony, diary entries, billboards, government applications, or folksongs. These words or phrases are borrowed verbatim, rearranged, and added to, to evoke a particular moment or situation. Creating a found poem encourages students to experiment with another way of seeing, another way of combining historical evidence and imagination.

I would like to thank Dee Garceau, who collected the poems and text for this feature. - A.M.L.

Jennifer Jones' poem is reflective of women's diaries of the Overland Journey. These women were part of a mid-nineteenth century migration of mostly white, middle-class, young families to California and Oregon. Among the most intriguing elements of these narratives are women's responses to the landscape, as suggested by Jennifer's poem.

"Untitled" by Jennifer Jones

Mist clings to the early morning land
creaking dry harnesses
upon the soft brown backs of our oxen,
who, snorting, shift
their weary, looming bodies.
The scent of wild, dew-stained grasses
field spread out endlessly, west,
only to be swallowed beneath our wagon wheels.
Sun curls over green swells,
inviting steam off the nearby river,
her banks
clatter and dance under the tumbling pebbles.
Our caravan stretches out
like a greedy child's hand, leaving snail-like tracks
across the empty miles.

"Director" from p. 1

Women's Studies Programs have been established, and we have seen a proliferation of women's centers, shelters, and employment centers. Locally women comprise the majority (51%) of UM's students; gains in hiring and retaining women in faculty and administrative positions are visible. Women's writing and women's issues are becoming more explicit in course content and programming. This decade might even see gender equity in UM athletics!

As we look to consolidate the Women's Studies program, expand outreach, and pursue a commitment to gendered inquiry, we look forward to hearing from more of you on your accomplishments, concerns, needs. We are a community in the making.

Julia Watson
Women's Studies

The following poem address themes of isolation and women's roles in the family economy, which emerged in the northern plains homesteading narratives.

The Order of Life by Melissa Hawley

Step I

A claim
a homestead
"proving up"
a cabin
a long long drive
in an old old hack

Step II

A woman
a wedding
two strawberry roans
a snowstorm
a kerosene lantern in the company sleigh

Step III

River crossings
bad roads
a flood
no supplies
potatoes for days on
end

"And I was unprepared
not knowing how to cook.
I buried my mistakes
and Ed never knew
why flour
was so short
that winter."

Step IV

A new road
a store a midwife
a girl
"Alles in Ordnung"
All is as it should be.

Linda Newton's poem (Untitled) about the "gringo woman" comes out of an article by Susan Johnson about cohabitation in central Arizona mining towns, 1863-73. Johnson found a high incidence of cohabitation between Anglo men and Mexican women. The meaning of this living arrangement, however, was understood differently by Anglos and Mexicans. Mexican men and women of the working class often lived together out of wedlock in frontier areas, sanctioned by the custom of "barrangia," an informal union paralleling marriage. In these unions between Mexican men and women, both partners understood that they had entered into a relationship which carried the obligations of monogamy and economic support. The relationship lacked civil and religious standing only because partners lacked the money for, or access to, a priest or judicial officer.

Under these circumstances, cross-cultural blindness contributed to gender oppression in relationships between Mexican women and Anglo men. That is, in these relationships, the obligations of barrangia were not mutually understood. Anglo men saw Mexican women as "mistresses," and viewed cohabitation with them as a temporary sexual liaison. Anglo society refused to recognize Mexican women living with Anglo men as legitimate partners; in the public record, they remained invisible, legally they had no rights, and socially they were snubbed.

The Women's Studies Program is starting a collection of books for a (future) reading space and lending library. We are currently accepting donations of books or journals you may have used for WS classes that concern women and/or gender studies. Please contact the Women's Studies office at x-2584 or stop by 435 Liberal Arts.



The Women's Studies Program has several recent issues of the National Women's Studies Journal. Articles in the Spring Edition include, "Constituency, Accountability and Deliberation: Reshaping Democracy in the NWSA"; "Comments of Anne Fausto-Sterling's 'Building Two-Way Streets'"; "Bringing Different Voices to the Classroom"; "Teaching About Domestic Violence: Strategies for Empowerment." The Summer Edition includes the following: "In Search of Harriet Tubman's Spiritual Autobiography"; "Ignored, Overlooked, or Subsumed: Research on Lesbian Health and Health Care"; "Afro-Hispanic Writers and Feminist Discourse"; "Emotion Workers on the Production Line: The Feminizing of Casino Card Dealing."

"Untitled" by Linda Newton

I'm a gringo's woman and have
no say-so
'cause we need the dollar---
they won't take the peso.

I clean the house and wash
and cook
and bear the kids with hardly
a look.

I hoe the garden and feed his
herd
Town women pass with
hardly a word.

Frijoles! Tortillas! That's all
and he'll bitch,
but it's all we have till he
strikes it rich.

My adobe home is poor and
dusty
my man gets drunk and comes
home lusty.

The well's near dry and all
day I bailed
Last night he gambled and
landed in jail.

I don't fear drought or heat or
snakes
but when he gets out he'll have
the shakes.

We'll have a tussel - watch for
bruises
it's a sure sign of which one
loses.

When he's sober he teases I'm
his desert flower
I'm an adaptable plant but I
have no power.

Conferences and Calls for Papers

April 13 - 16

"Woman as Social Conscience"

Speculation on the relationship of gender to positions on social, political and economic issues.

University of South Dakota
Vermillion, SD

Contact Susan J. Wolfe (605) 677-5209

April 14 - 17

Northwest Women's Studies Association "From Silence to Language to Action"

A call to break women's silences, speak truths and take action.

Tacoma, WA
Contact NWWSA (206) 535-8759

Send abstracts for paper proposals by January 15, 1994

April 15 - 17

Third Annual Conference on "Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century British and American Women Writers"

Interdisciplinary approaches to women writers of the 18th and 19th centuries.

University of Delaware
Newark, DE

Contact Jessica Schiffman (302) 831-8474

April 15 - 17

National Graduate Womens Studies Programs "Thinking on the Edge: Emerging Theories/Merging Practices in Gender Studies"

Critical Conversation about feminist theories and practices among graduate students in the humanities, social and natural sciences.

University of California, San Diego
Contact Conference Services (619) 534-4220

June 3-4

"Innovations in State and Local Government: New Directions for Women"

Will focus on recent innovations and new directions in government at the state and local level and their implications for women as both workers and clients of the public sector.

Washington, D.C.
Contact Lucia Fort (202)785-0393

June 15 - 19

National Women's Studies Association

"Teaching, Theory and Action: Women Working in a Global Perspective"

Ames, IA
Contact NWSA (301) 405-5573

For more information on these conferences, please see postings outside the Women's Studies office, 435 Liberal Arts. We receive information on conferences, calls for papers, and job openings on a regular basis, so please stop by.

UM Events Highlighting Women

DECEMBER 1993

1 UM Women's Center Open House, Women's Center Office, UC 211 in the Lounge, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. 243-4153.

2 President's Lecture Series - "Chaucer and the Problem of Decency in Language," Professor Larry Benson, Department of English and American Literature and Language, Harvard University, 8 p.m., Urey Lecture Hall.

8 Women's Studies Brown Bag Lunch Series - "Changing Roles of Native American Women," Bonnie Craig, J.D., Director of Native American Studies, 12 Noon, Pope Room, Law School. Bring a lunch, beverages provided.

LADY GRIZ SCHEDULE Harry Adams Field House

Dec. 2 @ 7:30 pm	20 @ 7:30 pm
4 @ 3:00 pm	21 @ 6:00 pm
5 @ 2:00pm	29 @ 6:30 pm
	30 @ 6:30 pm

If you have any comments or suggestions for future newsletters, please send them to Anne-Marie Lombardi, c/o the Women's Studies Program, 435 Liberal Arts Building, University of Montana Missoula, MT 59812-1045. Our phone is (406) 243-2584.

If you are not yet on our Women's Studies mailing list, and would like to be, please return to us:

Name:

Department

or

Address

Phone (optional)

How did you hear about the UM Women's Studies Program?

Please return to Women's Studies, University of Montana