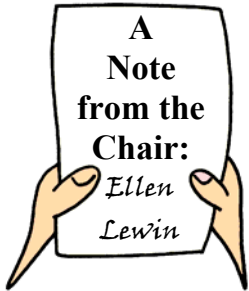


University of Iowa
Women's Studies
October 2001

Newsletter



Good News, Bad News

This column will have to start with one of the proverbial good news-bad news openers.

First, some good news:

We moved successfully from the 2nd to the 7th floor over the summer and everyone seems happy with the new space, even if a bit ambivalent about our dependence on the creaky old elevator. Our student computer lab, a joint project with American Studies, is up and running. Our new graduate students, Shell, Kats, and Erin, have arrived and settled in. Three of our more advanced graduate students, Fiona, Sandi, and Jillian, have passed their comprehensive exams and are moving toward the dissertation. Our newly approved undergraduate major has been launched and a steady stream of students interested in the major has been appearing in classes and faculty offices.

As for faculty, Jael is back from her research leave and is the proud author of a new book. Florence's new book has just hit the bookstores. Melissa's involvement in the department has been strengthened with her new appointment as a full-time faculty member beginning in January 2002. We are fortunate to be sharing a wonderful visiting faculty member, Meena Khandelwal, with Anthropology. Other faculty are pursuing new research and writing projects. A new arrival in the Rhetoric Department, Aimee Carrillo-Rowe, will teach our course on gender, race, and class in the spring, and two visitors from Sociology, Pat Lengermann and Jill Neibrugge-Brantley, will teach the undergraduate feminist theory class.

I'd like to say that's all I have to report, but I have to share some bad news as well.

We've lost three half-time faculty in the last two years, Laura Donaldson, Anne Donadey, and Margery Wolf, and were unsuccessful in our efforts to hire a senior political theorist last year. The current university-wide budgetary emergency makes the likelihood of getting new faculty in the near future very small and points to further cuts that I'm afraid will make our already lean departmental budget look lavish. In line with the financial crisis, in-house funding for faculty research and development has been drastically reduced, and other, as yet unspecified, reductions are on the way. This situation not only means that we will have to carry on with fewer resources but that morale may also suffer.

All of these developments have unfolded at a time of uncommon sorrow for our nation and community. The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11th have taken an enormous toll even on those of us geographically removed from the events, though fortunately none of us in the department seems to have sustained a personal loss. But the prospect of travel has become something to dread, anxiety about the military response to the attacks has surged, and many of us have found the process of establishing a clear political position in the midst of contradictory pressures uncommonly difficult.

The specter of political repression has also emerged, as understandable expressions of patriotism have morphed into angry episodes of chauvinist fervor and threats against racial and ethnic diversity. For those of us old enough to remember the ugly years of McCarthyism, the recent denunciations of anyone questioning absolute obedience to a narrowly-defined nationalist ideal are alarming, to say the least. This antagonism has come close to us, as Florence Babb's sensible call following

September 11th for us as teachers and scholars to link our discussion of terrorism to an effort to counteract nationalist hysteria were met with hostile accusations in the local press and on the campus. If sober and balanced discussion of these important issues becomes “treason” and intellectual investigation “disloyal” then Women’s Studies as a field of critical inquiry may be in for difficult times. We need to remind ourselves that no single position on any issue is “feminist” and that our department must work hard to foster a welcoming environment for open inquiry and the expression of diverse beliefs. This means continuing to attend to each other’s feelings and avoiding impulses toward orthodoxy of any stripe.

I’d like to end by suggesting that we consider how we can turn the “bad news” of the past month or so into “good news.” Can the adversity we will face in the coming year serve to strengthen our commitment to women’s studies as a field and to our department as our academic home? Can we find a way to use feminist approaches to make sense of these events and to suggest appropriate responses? Difficulties and losses are never welcome, but they can help us learn and think more clearly, and may bring us closer together as a community. That may be the real good news for this fall.



Welcome New Students!



l-r, Erin Rand, Katharina (Kats) Mendoza, and Michelle (Shell) Feijo

Michelle (Shell) Feijo has a B.A. in Women’s Studies from North Carolina State University, with minors in Africana Studies and English. Her intellectual interests are the intersections and implications of gender, class

and race. She’s also interested in Francophone women and literature, international women’s movements and the politics of mothering. Shell chose Iowa for graduate school because of the location and the kind of local environment for her children. She was ready for an adventure in a new place on her own! For 8 years she was a daycare worker. She writes (but not for pay — yet) and assisted on a reader entitled “Women, Science and Technology.” When not studying, she likes to watch movies, read fiction, play pool, go to yard sales, swim, go on adventures with the kids (she has 2), and play with her pooch.

Katharina (Kats) Mendoza is originally from Las Piñas City, Philippines. She has a BA from the University of the Philippines, and an MA from Virginia Tech. She is interested in creative writing, revisionist fairy tales, postcolonial literature, and erotic writing. She chose Iowa’s program because she’s never lived anywhere flat before! She’s done some interesting things in her life, among them selling sandals for a very brief (and

unprofitable) period of time. Kats worked as a proofreader for a multilingual newspaper while writing her undergrad thesis. She also taught first-year composition for 5 years, and is the only person at the U of Philippines to have taught a creative writing class on erotica (at the undergrad level). When not in class Kats sings LOUDLY a LOT! (Editor’s note: and quite well!) She plays the guitar, loves hiking and camping, and is learning how to knit.

Erin Rand generally claims north Idaho as “home,” although she doesn’t have family there any more. She moved to Iowa from Seattle, where she’d lived for a year. She has a BA in psychology from Carroll College in Helena, Montana. Her intellectual interests are queer theory and gender theory — specifically, transgender/gender-queer issues. She’s interested in ways of thinking about gender that are not rooted in a male/female binary model. Erin chose Iowa’s program because it seemed to be the most open to and active in studies involving sexuality. Also, since she came from a very rural background, she’s excited to be living in a relatively small town again. Erin has an interesting work history. She was an agriculture volunteer in the Peace Corps for two years in Guinea-Bissau, West Africa. After that, she worked for a year at a boarding school for at-risk teenagers as a counselor, teacher, and wilderness instructor, among other things. When she has free time, she enjoys doing anything outdoors—running, hiking, backpacking, and camping. Erin also enjoys reading, playing with her cat and cooking.



New Directions in the Women's Studies Graduate Program

by lynley shulman

Since its inception in 1998, professors in the Women's Studies department have been committed to growing along with the evolving needs of the new program. Late last semester, graduate students decided to follow in their footsteps by creating a Graduate Committee, designed to meet the needs of the ever-changing graduate population.

The Graduate Committee meetings are a place for graduate students to raise concerns about different aspects of the program, as well as to discuss enriching the many parts of the program that serve us well. In addition, the committee, on behalf of the graduate students, hopes to use this space to generate, receive and process students and faculty feedback; we'd also like to develop strategies for new growth, working alongside faculty members. While we recognize the tremendous amount of informal communication and support that currently goes on in the department, graduate students wanted to make sure we had a more coherent voice in our "academic home."

The Graduate Committee is made up of two faculty members, Professor Sue Lafky and Professor Johanna Schoen, and three graduate students, Cynthia Estep, Jennifer Getting and Kats Mendoza, as well as an alternating graduate representative to the faculty meetings, either Shell Feijo or Erin Rand.

In discussing why they chose to serve on this new committee, and what they bring, I think third year graduate student Jen Getting puts it most eloquently when she says, "I wanted to serve on the committee because I see it as an important new development in the department, with lots of exciting possibilities for creating dialogue, as well as moving to action, on issues important to grad students and faculty. I bring a desire for change as well as a desire to value and recognize what faculty and students are already doing well, formally and informally; I bring a commitment to women's studies in the academy and in the community."

Faculty representatives also bring unique perspectives to the group. Says Professor Sue Lafky, "My Ph.D. is in mass communications and I think that training offers a perspective that other Women's Studies faculty members do not have. I am also a founding member of the Feminist Teacher Editorial Collective, and that

experience has taught me a lot about teaching in a feminist way."

The first Graduate Committee meeting focused on organizing topics and times for a workshop series on professionalization. They decided to hold workshops on Friday morning, from 10am-11am; the committee hopes to be able to provide childcare and transportation if necessary. Some of the sessions that are in the works include discussions about the Qualifying Paper and the Comprehensive Exams, Research and Writing at the Graduate Level and Grants, Fellowships and Summer Funding Opportunities.

The Graduate Committee hasn't been around long enough to secure a concrete plan for the future, but members insist on their continuing commitment to the Women's Studies graduate students. As Kats Mendoza states, "This committee lets the faculty know that the students want to take an active interest not only in our individual professional growth, but also in the growth of the program."

Congratulations

Our first students to take their comprehensive exams have passed with flying colors! **Fiona Young-Brown** passed her comps last spring, **Sandi Solis** passed this summer, and **Jill Duquaine** succeeded last month. Congratulations!!

Student News

Michelle Feijo is currently working on a book review for *Feminist Teacher*. The book is [Pregnant with Meaning: Teen Mothers and the Politics of Inclusive Schooling](#) by Deirdre M. Kelly through Peter Lang Press, 2000.

Bianca Rizzoli has been invited to present a paper called "Beyond Androgyny: Non-Normative Masculinities in Rock Performances" in the Masculinities Area at the annual National Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association Conference in Toronto, Canada, March 2002.



Florence Babb "I attended the conference of the Latin American Studies Association in September in Washington, DC. There I attended a Gender Pre-Conference, chaired the Lesbian and Gay Studies Section, and organized

and chaired a panel on Queering Latin American Studies. My paper, "Out in Nicaragua: Local and Transnational Desires after the Revolution," won the Elsa Chaney Prize awarded by the Gender Studies Section; this was particularly important to me as I knew Elsa from the time I was a grad student through her eleven years in Iowa City, where she was a Fellow in Women's Studies Rockefeller Center for the Study of Rural Women and Feminist Issues. Elsa passed away in July 2000 and her life and work were honored at LASA in a memorial service and a symposium.

My book, After Revolution: Mapping Gender and Cultural Politics in Neoliberal Nicaragua, has just been published by University of Texas Press. I look forward to returning to Nicaragua next summer, when I will give lectures and present my book."

Melissa Deem has just published "The Scandalous Fall of Feminism and the 'First Black President'" in *Blackwell's Companion to Cultural Studies*. This fall she is teaching a new graduate seminar in Feminist Cultural Studies. Students in the seminar will hold their own conference at the end of the semester. Melissa attended a national conference at Emory University on the Women's Studies Ph.D. this October. This conference brought together scholars from across the country to discuss the implications and possibilities produced by the Ph.D. Melissa serves as Vice-Chair of the Critical Cultural Studies Division of the National Communication Association which will meet in Atlanta in early November. At this conference she will present a paper titled, "Feminism's 'Bad Girl': Youth and Hypercriminalization in the United States." She also organized a plenary panel on "Communication and Culture Under Late Liberalism," which brings together scholars from Communications, English, Cinema Studies and Anthropology.

Ellen Lewin has completed a new book, co-edited with William L. Leap of American University, scheduled for publication in fall 2002. It's titled Out in Theory: The Emergence of Lesbian and Gay Anthropology. The publisher is University of Illinois Press.

She will also be presenting in a roundtable on the Marital Civic Sphere at the American Studies Association meetings in Washington, DC, in November.

Rosemarie Scullion organized a panel on French documentary film for the XXth and XXIst Century French and Francophone Studies Colloquium held at the University of California-Davis in March 2001. She also contributed a paper on Chris Marker's 1974 film "L'Ambassade". Rosemarie will be presenting a paper entitled "Adapting (to) History: Luis Puenzo's THE PLAGUE" on a panel devoted to "French Cinema in the 1990s" for the upcoming Western Society for French

Historical Studies. She has organized and will Chair a panel on "Transatlantic Solidarity and Problems of Globalization" for the 2001 Modern Language Association meeting in New Orleans. Rosemarie continues to serve on the Modern Language Association's Executive Council and Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee. She is also serving on two additional MLA committees, the first being the organizing committee for a national conference on the relation between English and Foreign Language Departments to be held at New York University in April 2002. The second, an ad-hoc committee, will address concerns derived from the increased use of part-time instructors in English and Foreign Language departments in the US.

Jael Silliman "My book, Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames: Women's Narratives From A Diaspora of Hope, was released in India this summer and will be published here by the University Press of New England, Brandeis Series on Jewish Women this fall. I am making presentations on this topic at several places, including at the South Asian Studies Annual Conference in Madison. At Madison I will participate on the panel "Losses, Retrievals, and Anxieties of Hope: The Cultural Logic of Trans/forming Indian Identities." I am also speaking at the South Asia Studies program at Columbia University, at the Jewish Studies Program of the five colleges in Amherst, and Brandeis University. I am in the final stages of completing a new anthology, which I am co-editing, that is entitled Policing the National Body: Sex, Race and Criminalization in the US. It will be published in Spring 2002 by South End Press. I have come back to teaching after having a year off. During this year I mostly worked on another book project that examines the roles that women of color have played in defining and expanding reproductive rights in the US and, as with all of us who have been on leave, am finding it hard to get much research done during this very busy semester.

This summer I visited the University of Iowa Study Abroad Program in Mysore, India. I was very satisfied with the courses and opportunities our students have to work on gender issues through the course offerings and the internship program. I hope more of our undergraduate majors will take advantage of this excellent study and internship opportunity. This semester I have also been busy meeting our incoming majors, thirteen so far, as I serve as the Undergraduate Advisor. We already have a great deal of student interest in the program and believe we are off to a very good start.

I am also on the Advisory Committee for the **WASTE 2001** Women Assessing the State of the Environment: Organizing for Sustainable Development in the U.S. and Beyond conference (see notice in Conference section),

and am taking a group of students from my *Gender & Environment* class to participate in this initiative."

Lisa Heineman (Women's Studies affiliate faculty) in the spring of 2001, offered a new graduate readings course on Gender in Modern Europe. She has had two articles published recently in the *Journal of Women's History*: "Whose Mothers? Generational Difference, War, and the Nazi Cult of Motherhood" (2001) and "Single Motherhood and Maternal Employment in Divided Germany: Ideology, Policy, and Social Pressures" (2000). Her article, "Sexuality in German Fascism: What Do We Know?" is in press with the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. Two of her articles on gender and memory appear in the anthologies The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968 (2001) and The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture (in press). She is now working on a book tentatively entitled Sex Objects: Beate Uhse and Sexual Consumer Culture in Germany.

Women's Studies faculty member to give Saturday Scholars Talk

Melissa Deem will present "The Civility Trap: America's Nostalgia for a More Civil Time" on Saturday, October 20, at 10:00 a.m. in 40 Shaeffer Hall. She will also appear on "Iowa Talks," WSUI, AM 910, on Friday, October 19, at 10 a.m. Saturday's talk, part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Saturday Scholars series, is free and open to the public.

Civility has taken on a certain valence within both public and interdisciplinary academic discourse. Lively debate on the proper conduct of the citizen, conviviality, bodily and linguistic deportment, and civic conduct in general has congealed around such issues as political campaigns, the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, sexual harassment, road rage, the decline of community life, school shootings, and the perceived loss of civic virtue within democratic public life. The ubiquity of incivility demonstrates the elasticity of the concept of civility. In this talk, Professor Deem will examine the perceived "crisis" within the everyday conduct of public life that many argue is upon us. She argues that this "crisis" must be contextualized within a more general anti-60's rhetoric that laments the cultural/political transformations wrought by civil rights and feminism. Civility is an important point of

engagement since many proponents such as Stephen Carter argue that the concept is "pre-political" and a universal good. It is difficult to locate a concept anywhere else in U.S. political culture so universally applauded and difficult with which to disagree. Through examining some key moments of "incivility," Professor Deem will ask the question that has been almost impossible within this discursive context—Does civility have a politics? And if it does, what are the politics of civility?

Director of Women's Studies Program PURDUE UNIVERSITY



The Women's Studies Program at Purdue University invites applications for the position of Director, effective August 2002. The appointment is for Full Professor, 50% Women's Studies and 50% tenure home department within the School of Liberal Arts,

The Purdue Women's Studies Program, established in 1979 is an interdisciplinary academic program of the School of Liberal Arts. Qualifications for the position are: A Ph.D. or equivalent, a distinguished record of feminist scholarship and teaching, and demonstrated commitment to interdisciplinary studies and diversity issues (especially issues of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class). Field of specialization is open, but preference may be given to applicants working in areas such as critical race theory, transnational feminisms, or queer theory. Experience in administration, especially in women's studies or related interdisciplinary programs, is strongly preferred. Send: letter of application, curriculum vitae, one recent publication, and 3 letters of recommendation to:

Professor Marcia Stephenson, Interim Director
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Application review begins October 30, 2001 but applications will be accepted until a suitable applicant is hired.

Mothering the Sexy Soul

By Shell Feijo

Drying off from the shower, warm droplets of divine wetness cascade across my puchy belly. Fresh sweat forms between my now fuller, softer breasts. Tattoos of varying size and shape frame the curves of my strong arms, and Goddess dilineates the cusp of my navel.

I love my body. I know its power. I have pushed two babies out into the world and held them up with my own courage. I have done it alone and I have become more and more sexy every day. Hard for a while to accept, my hips widened and some weight has stayed. Yet now, I relish the shape of my skin, the movement of my legs as I moan with ecstatic joy, bringing myself to pleasure long after the loves of my life have fallen asleep.

Being a mother has enriched my soul, taught me more about myself and urged me to dream big. There is nothing more enticing than rising in the dawn to the sound of a daughters breath, dressing in the sun and prancing out into the day, babe in arm, off to work at a job that enriches the lives of women. Sexiness is an integral part of my being, motherhood brought me there.

As a pregnant teenager, sexy was the fashion model or the "right" pair of jeans. As a mother, a feminist, a WOMAN, sexiness is all that I am: courage, strength, independence, activism, shape, movement, stubbornness, individuality and most importantly, the intensity of love that beams from my beautiful sagging breasts as I look toward my children rolling in the sand as I write.

Sexiness is a state of mind, stemming from the Goddess within us all.

For me, now,
Mama is her name.

Calls
for
Papers

and Conferences

WASTE 2001 Women Assessing the State of the Environment: Organizing for Sustainable Development in the U.S. and Beyond.

Join the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the Rachel Carson Institute, Chatham College, at the WASTE Summit at Chatham College, Pittsburgh, PA on **November 9-11, 2001**. They will bring together women from across the country to build a common agenda, share strategies, and forge a strong constituency for a new U.S. domestic and global policy agenda. Summit participants will produce a U.S. women's environmental action agenda, which includes a status report on U.S. progress since the United Nations Earth Summit in 1992 and a set of policy recommendations for action. It will be used to lobby for change on national and international levels and will be taken to the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002. Participants of the WASTE Summit will include national environmental, women's, labor and human rights groups. These groups will endorse and carry forward the women's environmental action plan that emerges from the Summit.

For more information, visit www.wastesummit.org, or call RCI at 412.365.1361.

Women's Studies Department

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Melissa Deem
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Women's Studies Reception

The annual Women's Studies Fall Reception took place on September 20. Approximately 40 people from the university community took advantage of good food and good conversation.



Women's Studies Faculty (L-R): Jael Silliman, Melissa Deem, Ellen Lewin, Susan Birrell, Rosemarie Scullion, and Florence Babb



3rd year student
Vidya Kalaramadam



Rosemarie Scullion & Florence Babb



Susan Birrell chats with College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean Linda Maxson



Post-comps student
Sandi Sollis

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