



Women's Studies Program

at Rutgers University, New Brunswick

Newsletter Spring 1997

From the Director -



By now many of you have heard the news that Adelina Rodriguez is retiring and moving to Florida -- sad news for us, but clearly good news for her! Everyone who has worked in Women's Studies over the past 13 years knows how important Adelina has been to our program. Not only has she kept a complicated program running smoothly, but she has always been a wonderful presence in the office, dealing with students and faculty with extraordinary patience and sympathy, and always bringing enormous energy and good humor to her work and the many crises of our office. She will be sorely missed as an excellent administrator and as a wonderful person.

Adelina has also been a primary source of continuity in Women's Studies over the past decade. One of the problems with an interdisciplinary program like Women's Studies in an institution so devoted to the disciplines is that many faculty can be involved in Women's Studies in short and irregular bursts. The continuity that comes with a faculty meeting together over the years has largely been missing here, which has put even more emphasis than usual on the staff to carry institutional memory and what I can only call the personality, the heart, of the program. Adelina has carried both with grace, and we will have a hard time ever replacing that.

We hope that our new budgeted faculty will be the core group in providing the heart and soul of Women's Studies over the next decade. We have now hired three half-time faculty, and twelve tenured faculty have moved

one-quarter of their line each into Women's Studies. We will continue to gain budgeted faculty in the future until we have a large enough group to maintain our status as the very best Women's Studies program in the nation. This faculty and all of our active members will need to work together to hammer out the place of Women's Studies in the University and provide leadership for the program.

And as we start to get budgeted faculty, the question again comes up: is it time to become a department which can hire and tenure faculty of its own? We have always hung on to our anomalous place in the university, finding the margins a good location for critique. But given the many difficulties of our hiring process in straddling the disciplines and the interdisciplinary, and given the backlash that we are seeing in some disciplines about work on gender and sexuality, we may want to reconsider this question. We want to be able to encourage and reward faculty who do interdisciplinary work on women and sexuality. And we must come up with a plan for providing our students with an education that is consistent and coherent in a field that is ever-changing. What structure will let us be both stable and changing -- what Paul Gilroy names the "moving same"? I hope you will help me find an answer to this question.

Harriet Davidson



Last month we received the heartbreaking news that Adelina Rodriguez will be retiring from Rutgers at the end of the semester. Anyone remotely familiar with the Women's Studies Program knows what an enormous loss this is. Adelina has worked at Rutgers for the past twenty-three years, and at Women's Studies for the last thirteen. She has helped the program through enormous transitions, including over seven acting directors!

In 1962, Adelina, pregnant with her third child, emigrated from Cuba to the U.S., leaving behind friends and a father she would never see again. For over a year she waited for her husband Jorge to join her before they moved to New Jersey. Her husband found a position in Manhattan, where he worked for the next thirty-five years. His decision to retire this summer prompted Adelina to make the difficult choice of leaving Rutgers. She is especially disappointed about not being able to work in the new building. But it is important to her to be able to take advantage of her good health and experience things she has had to postpone.

Asked how she will spend the rest of her days away from the Chapel Basement, Adelina flashed her famous grin and responded that she is retiring to a beautiful new home in Boca Raton, Florida, where she will live several months every year. In September, she will spend her fortieth wedding anniversary on a cruise in the Mediterranean. She plans to visit extended family in Spain, as well as travel throughout the Mediterranean coast.

When asked if she had any parting advice for the Women's Studies community, she responded, "Keep looking ahead for a brighter future. I've seen a lot of progress in the time I have been here. I understand people's frustration, but the best is yet to come."

The Women's Studies Program would like to thank Dr. Barbara Callaway for serving as Graduate Director this past year. Her leadership has made this year our most successful to date. We look forward to her teaching in the program next semester.

Congratulations!!!

Professor Sue Carroll, Political Science, was promoted to Professor I last week.

Jaime Hovey, English, received a tenure-track position at the University of Miami.

Beth Loffreda, English, received a tenure-track position at University of Iowa, Ames.

Professor Bonnie Smith was awarded the William Koren Jr. Prize by the Society for French Historical Studies for the best article in an American, Canadian, or European journal by an American or Canadian scholar. Her article was entitled "History and Genius: The Narcotic, Erotic, and Baroque Life of Germaine de Stael," French Historical Studies, 19:4 (Fall 1996).

Professor Karen Mittleman, Exercise Science, was invited to contribute a chapter to a volume of The Encyclopedia of Sports Medicine, a series that represents state-of-the-art information to sports scientists and medical doctors.

The Women's Studies Program is pleased to announce the graduate and teaching assistantships for 1997-1998:

GA -- Patricia McDaniel, Sociology
TA -- Lisa Adler, Political Science
TA -- Johanna Foster, Sociology
TA -- Stephanie Hartman, English
TA -- Jennifer Nelson, History

Women's Studies Welcomes New Faculty: Jennifer Morgan

We are pleased to announce that Jennifer Morgan has accepted a joint position with History and Women's Studies. Professor Morgan is currently finishing a two-year post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Maryland at College Park as well as revising her manuscript, "Laboring Women: Enslaved Women, Reproduction and Slavery in Barbados and South Carolina, 1650-1750," which began as a dissertation at Duke University.

Her work focuses on black women and their reproductive labor, and not only fills a substantial gap in the narrative of early African American history, but illuminates questions of developing English colonial identity. Professor Morgan writes, "...for both slaveowners and the enslaved, reproduction was of central importance. Among enslaved Africans, the ability to reproduce spoke to the parameters of their material lives--nutrition, sex ratios, and labor regimes--that affected fertility and mortality rates under slavery. Assuming that material factors allowed it, reproduction then initiated a particular process of creolization and cultural change. For slaveowners, the idea of reproducing labor force became a crucial component of colonial ideology. Despite initial assumptions on the part of European settlers that the hard labor of the colonies required a male workforce, slaveowners quickly exploited the working bodies of African women on their fields and their communities."

Professor Morgan explores colonialism and the relationship between enslaved women's reproductive labor and nation-building through an interdisciplinary perspective. She draws on literary, economic, demographic, and social history models and materials to explore race and gender in American colonies. It is this multi-layered approach to history that she brings to the classroom. "Ultimately, I am committed to destabilizing the power of a singular, historical narrative, and to that end I attempt to contextualize early American history in the classroom through an intellectual approach shaped by feminism and race theory in the archives."

The Women's Studies Program is delighted to accept this remarkable scholar, and looks forward to her contributions.

Women's Studies Community Discusses Interdisciplinarity

On March 6th, students and faculty of Women's Studies met to discuss the interdisciplinary program, beginning what will hopefully be an ongoing conversation about the place of interdisciplinarity in Rutgers Women's Studies. Led off by comments from Caridad Souza, Department of Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Caribbean Studies, Dorothy Ko (WOMen's Studies and History), and Beth Loffreda (English, American Studies and Women's Studies), the conversation quickly turned to both the theory of interdisciplinarity and its practice.

Caridad Souza questioned how effectively Women's Studies has been able to think about the nexus of race, class, and gender. Discussing how Ethnic Studies has developed race, ethnicity and class as intersecting analytic categories, she challenged Women's Studies to do the same. Dorothy Ko asked the group to recognize the subtle but important differences among the notions of crossdisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and multidisciplinary. Beth Loffreda pointed out that although both the sciences and humanities have begun to embrace interdisciplinarity perspectives, nevertheless very little positive exchange takes place between these two areas of inquiry.

Other participants added important questions to the discussion. What exactly makes a project interdisciplinarity, anyway? What is the object of women's studies - knowledge about "women" or something else? Does cross-listing courses really create interdisciplinary learning? Will a commitment to interdisciplinary programs break down the barriers dividing the university from the surrounding community, as the planners of the first women's studies program hoped? Does it make more sense to call women's studies anti-disciplinary rather than interdisciplinary? These questions became the occasion for lively conversation that has continued in Women's Studies classrooms this semester.

Beth Loffreda, Ph.D. Candidate, English,
American Studies and Women's Studies

Students in the News

Honors Students Projects

Bethann Albert is working on self-esteem and the late mid-life woman. She finds that while adolescent women experience activity followed by passivity, older women's loss of reproductive capacity is often marked first by mourning, but then by new growth and vitality. Contrary to popular stereotypes about "empty nest" syndrome, many older women experience a surge in self-esteem from their late 40s onward.

Maribel Cruz is working on the "sanitary protection" industry and its manipulation of women consumers through negative messages about the female body. She argues that girls from adolescence onwards are encouraged to feel ashamed of their bodies, and to remedy that shame through the consumption of often-harmful menstrual products. As advertising has accelerated in recent years in an attempt to sell more products, negative images of the female body as "leaky and unreliable" have proliferated in American culture.

Holly Dugan argues that romance reading is often equated with shameful private feminine indulgences such as binge eating, and that popular dismissal of romance novels as "junk food" overlooks their subversive elements. Using the novels of Danielle Steele, she shows that sexuality is fluid and cross-gender identification pervasive in most of these novels, and that such alignments might interrogate the gender fixity of Steele's heterosexual female readers.

Jennifer Kamhi is writing about the film genre of the maternal melodrama as a site of resistance to patriarchal symbolic relations. Focusing specifically on *Stella Dallas*, she finds in the mother-daughter sacrificial relationship an exposure to the commodified status of the mother as an object for patriarchal consumption. The spectacle of Stella's sacrifice offers a space for an "other" voice which questions the marginalizing not only of mothers, but of women who are not bourgeois and sexually respectable.



From front left to right: Instructor Jaime Hovey, Jeannie Wakeham, Holly Dugan, Maribel Cruz, Bethann Albert, Brandy Norwood, and Jennifer Kahmi.

Brandy Norwood is studying the ways in which female masochism in nineteenth-century British texts interrogates the sexual indifference scholars have understood as female "passionlessness". Moving from Mary Wollstonecraft to Charlotte to deconstruct the traditional feminine binaries of virgin/whore, mind/body, and reason/passion. The vacillating identity of the female masochist allows her to evade censure yet be a desiring subject.

Jeannie Wakeham explores the many ways in which sexual violence and pornography are not related, while also interrogating Katie Rophie's characterization of second-wave feminist work against sexual violence as "victim feminism". She combines a history of feminist, antipornography civic statutes with an exploration of New York's sex shops and the laws which threaten to close them down, finding in many of the city's sexual venues places where the gazer is confronted by his or her objects, and where prevailing social stereotypes of female sexual powerlessness are radically overturned.

Nichole Quiles, Class of 1997, received the Alumni Prize from Women's Studies. Nicole is both an outstanding student and committed campus leader on women's issues. She takes her Women's Studies knowledge from the classroom and utilizes it in other locations, enriching both with a feminist perspective. Her contributions have been invaluable and impressive.

Upcoming Events

- April 25 **Adrienne Rich**
Voorhees Chapel, DC, 8:30 p.m.
Sponsored by the Department of
English and Rutgers Student Centers
- April 26 **Poet Laureate Robert Hass and
Sonia Sanchez**
Rutgers Student Service Center,
Multipurpose Room, 126 College Ave.,
New Brunswick, 8:00p.m.
Sponsored by Department of English
and Rutgers Student Centers
- April 30 **DC PLEN Spring Forum Final Panel**
Sheila Burke, former Chief-of-Staff
to Bob Dole, **Marjorie Margolies-
Mezvinsky**, President, Women's Cam-
paign Fund, **Velvet Miller**, Deputy
Commissioner, Department of Human
Service
Eagleton Institute of Politics, DC, 4:30
- May 1 **Women's Studies Spring General
Membership Meeting**
Room 5, Voorhees Chapel Basement,
DC 2:30 p.m.
Agenda includes report from commit-
tees, discussion of departmental
status, update on new building
- May 2 **Bonnie Honig** keynote speaker
"Immigrant America? How Foreign-
ness 'Solves' Democracy's Problems"
Brower Commons, Rooms A,B,C
3:00-4:30 p.m.
panel discussions - 5:00-6:30 p.m.
Sponsored by CCACC.

Women's Studies Survey Update

Thanks to all the undergraduate students who responded to the Women's Studies Undergraduate Survey. Currently we are in the process of analyzing the data. There is still an opportunity for undergraduates to become involved with the data analysis. If you want to participate in preparing a report of the findings from undergraduate definitions of Women's Studies to evaluations of cross-listed courses, please email bangert@eden.rutgers.edu. The findings will be reported to the Women's Studies community at the start of the Fall 1997 semester.

The winning numbers for the Survey Lottery were selected at random from all completed surveys. Congratulations to the following winners:

#70675 & #64852 - Winners of a free year's subscription to Ms. Magazine, compliments of the Ms. Foundation.

#52297 - Winner of a copy of Listen Up: Voices From the Next Feminist Generation, a collection of essays by young feminists. Compliments of the Rutgers University Bookstore.

#58534 - Winner of a Rutgers University T-Shirt, compliments of the Rutgers University Bookstore.

If you have one of the winning numbers, please email jfuld@eden.rutgers.edu to receive your prize.

Again thanks to all those undergraduates who participated in providing the Women's Studies Program with valuable information about your experiences with the Women's Studies major and minor. Your voice does make a difference.

Women's Studies co-sponsored several successful events this semester. In February, the History Department co-sponsored a lecture from renowned scholar and social critic Professor **Ueno Chizuko**, Tokyo University. Her lecture was entitled "The Nation State and Gender: Feminist Participation on Japan's Ultrationalism."

New York City's **Company Appels** gave a dance performance that was followed by a panel discussion on "Gender and Space, Moving Bodies and Text: Reflections on Dance and Physical Languages." The participants included **Elin Diamond** and **Marcia Ian**, English, **Claudia Gitelman**, Dance, **Septimo Webre**, Artis-

tic Director and Choreographer, American Repertory Ballet, and **Jon-Robinson Appels**, Artistic Director and Choreographer, Company Appels, and English Dept.

On April 2, the Center for the Study of Jewish Life co-hosted a symposium on War and Gender Relations. Several scholars presented including **Joan Ringelheim**, Director of the Department of Oral History at the Research Institute of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, **Atina Grossman**, History, Columbia, **Yael Zerubavel**, Director of the Center for the Study of Jewish Life, Rutgers, and **Hanna Herzog**, Sociology and Gender Program, Tel Aviv University.

**You're invited
to the
Women's Studies
Spring Semester Party**

Come to celebrate and honor
Adelina Rodriguez' Retirement
Graduating Seniors and M.A. Students

**Buffet Dinner
Monday, May 5, 1997
6:30 p.m.
New Jersey Lounge
Douglass Student Center, D.C.**

R.S.V.P. 932-9331

**Women's Studies at Rutgers -
New Brunswick**

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