

WOMEN'S STUDIES ANNUAL REPORT – 2008/09

STUDENTS/TEACHING:

We graduated 8 majors and 20 concentrators this year, about even with the last few years. We awarded 4 Viola Rossing prizes to seniors, one for a paper and three for student contributions to the gender and sexuality community on campus.

We are already looking at more concentrators and majors for next year. There are 18 declared majors (10 of them scheduled to graduate next spring) and 45 concentrators (25 of them scheduled to graduate next spring). This program is very grow-able.

I am attaching copies of both our assessment rubric and a short assessment report. We decided to examine the ILO focused on mastery of disciplinary theories through the senior seminar. Last fall, the seminar's leader, Diane LeBlanc, and I met and together created an assessment rubric. Diane's brief explanation of how this was implemented is attached, but our plan will require convening a small group to examine and interpret the outcome (probably Diane, myself, and Anna Kuxhausen), but until the second half of the summer, all three of us won't be in town at the same time.

Student interest in our program is increasingly shifting the focus to gender and sexuality issues and overlap with the GLBT community on campus. Both Women's Studies and GLBT students used the Gender and Sexuality Center space provided by the CIS. In that space, they established a library, regularly held meetings, and organized special events. Activism is important, as demonstrated by such things as V Week, informational programs, and internships. This is consistent with developments in other Women's/Gender Studies programs. We are not at a point, though, where we might convert to a gender and sexuality program.

Of concern to Women's Studies students are the changes in the Family Studies program. Currently Family Studies is one of the more common majors Women's Studies students have.

Having now served two consecutive terms as director of Women's Studies, I feel at the top of my game. The consistency of leadership really helps in this program, which is so much about personal connections and one-on-one interaction. I've served as faculty adviser to many of the student organizations related to gender, have overseen internships and independent studies, and have, on occasion, listened to students in crisis. I continue to be reminded that Women's Studies is a lot more personal than other programs and, to illustrate that, I offer this anecdote: my independent studies student arrived outside my office one day so agitated the administrative assistant sent her off to get a drink and cool down, while I finished with another student in my office. When she finally talked to me, she revealed that she had been reading old *Newsweek* magazines in the library as part of her research and had simply abandoned her work mid-way through because she was so outraged at the way a reporter talked about feminism in 1974 and she needed to share her

outrage. That kind of passion and engagement is not unusual in Women's Studies. It is, however, sometimes exhausting for us all.

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM:

Overall, I think pre-registration in the intro course has allowed us to get more students into the introductory class sooner, which means that by junior or senior year, some concentrators are able to trade up to a major. Pre-registration, however, is stopping general interest students and GE students from taking the course, which is too bad since there are many students who don't know they are interested in the program until after they take an exploratory course. Ideally we would love to be able to offer more sections, which carry the valuable and increasingly difficult-to-obtain WRI credit at level I in a less-specialized course. This summer, for the second time in three years, we'll be offering the intro class in summer school. We'll see if that has any impact on the program.

Women's Studies had both a fall and spring social function as always, both at my house. There was good attendance at both and lots of good conversation. Ritual is important to the program and these functions provide some of that ritual. In spring, we traditionally celebrate prize winners, so that students entering the program can see the possibilities. Thanks to the national Women's Studies Association, we finally have buttons majors can wear on their graduation robes identifying them as Women's Studies majors. This ends much consideration of other schools' rituals for a suitable way of acknowledging our place at the campus and, happily for our students, involves neither white gloves nor pearls.

Women's Studies serves the entire campus community via Women's History Month, which is a unique responsibility we have. I have established a tradition of selecting and distributing a shared reading that students, faculty, and staff and meet and talk about. This year's reading, on Betty Crocker, was especially popular with faculty and staff. We bought 30 copies through the bookstore and distributed them and had 3 discussions, led by Kris MacPherson, Diane LeBlanc, and Jan Hill. I tried to extend the reading theme into other activities, including inviting the author (unable to come) and asking General Mills to send down any sort of traveling exhibit on Betty Crocker (which appears not to exist), so in the end the best we could do was a library display. I also revived an older Women's History Month tradition, which was a slideshow history of women at the college, which I prepared and presented in consultation with the college archives. That was enjoyed by faculty, students, and alumni, after being tested out on my Women's History class last family weekend. The challenge of "The Vagina Monologues," put on by students in February, followed the next month by Women's History Month results in the latter being more for the campus community than the student community, but that's fine. This year's students built in learning opportunities and discussions in addition to rehearsals for the Monologues, which enhanced the experience for them and introduced more students to the Women's Studies program.

The director of Women's Studies functions, as I've often joked, as the embodiment of womanhood on the college campus, especially as no committee on the status of women exists any longer. I convene occasional meetings of female chairs and program directors, sometimes to discuss shared concerns (ILOs, for example), sometimes as a consultative group for the Registrar or other campus personnel, and, simply for recreational purposes. I also find that I field some questions and concerns voiced by students or faculty, which I generally try to direct as appropriate to the Dean of Students' Office or the Faculty Life Committee. These are things I choose to do with my time; any subsequent director should not be expected to do the same. Still, it is some of the most satisfying work I do.

COLLEGE:

Director of Women's Studies has become a challenging position because of all the informal parts of it, including those mentioned above. I hope that the college and the next director will be able to reach some agreement about precisely what this job should entail and how it should be compensated. Directing two programs, I can see that Women's Studies is considerably more work and I hope the college will consider a more generous course release program to recognize that.

Judy Kutulas
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