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Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

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Illinois State University

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From the Director

Alison Bailey, Acting Director

On the Meaning of "W is for Women!"

I watched the Republican and Democratic Conventions like most people watch traffic accidents. I was curious about what might happen but afraid of what I might see if I looked for too long. Party conventions used to be an occasion for citizens to come together, deliberate, and then nominate a candidate. Now candidates are chosen and groomed months prior to the conventions and we are left with a highly scripted three-day visual feast of sound bites, celebrity appearances, and orchestrated cheering crowds. Watching the conventions because you want to educate yourself about each party's platform is like reading the *World Weekly News* in the supermarket check out line because you want to learn a little something about U.S. foreign policy. It's more telling to actually read the platforms themselves. What's really interesting is how little of the actual platform content was made visible in Boston and New York. And what's more telling is what was left out.

I want to focus on New York, because I was struck by the images of so many women with placards that said "W is for Women." And, for the life of me, I can't figure out what this means. The philosopher in me wants to unpack this phrase and its referents. So let's start with the obvious. The letter W can stand for Women. Okay, yes. Not interesting.

Maybe W stands for women because women attended the convention in large numbers, or because there are Republican women in high places. The first and second ladies spoke. Senator Elizabeth Dole (R-NC), Representative Heather Wilson (R-NM), Representative Anne Northrop (R-KY), and Secretary of Labor Eliane Chao are meant to remind us that the Grand Old Party has installed some women in grand old places. Erika Harold, the 22-year old 2003 Miss America, shared her personal story as a victim of bullying violence. And, there was the Iraqi woman, who was listed as "TBA—whoever she is she'll be great" on the GOP line up—who spoke gratefully of her country's liberation. Oh... the Bush twins, too.

The fact that many women are Republicans and that the party has been attentive to promoting women to visible positions means that Republicans have supported some women in their own ranks. It does not follow, however, that "W," or the Republican Party is *for* women. When someone says to me that they are for women, I take it as shorthand for "I support women's concerns, interests, and needs as women *themselves* define them." And this needs spelling out, since race, class, ethnicity, and immigrant status shape women's medical, educational, or economic needs in very specific ways that are often lost under the broader banner of women's issues. Both parties are guilty of such blurring.

If W is for women, this should be reflected in W's policy decisions that directly impact women's lives. So let's take a look at the economy, health, and reproductive rights and see whether W is *for* women.

Some people have suggested that women have made less money than men under W. This is true, but it is also true for every administration. However, it is accurate to say that the erosion of the minimum wage and legislation protecting women from job discrimination has had gendered effects under W. When he took office Mr. Bush quietly closed the White House Office on Women's Issues (Associated Press, 3/28/01). According to the National Women's Law Center, the Bush Administration eliminated the Equal Pay Initiative, which was designed to expand federal enforcement of job discrimination cases. He also abandoned prosecution of pending sexual discrimination cases. The unemployment rate for white women (5.6%) is 37% higher than it was when W took office. For Black women it is 10.4%, or 117% higher than for white women. For Latinas it is 8.4%, or 62% higher than for white women. This means that 1,078,000 women have lost their jobs since Bush took office (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Since Bush's tax cuts do not cut payroll taxes, low-income women and their families will continue to be taxed on their meager incomes and receive no tax credits.

Women are most often the gatekeepers to the healthcare system for their families and dependents. So legislation on medical matters impacts women exponentially. Over the past four years, family healthcare premiums have

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Women's Studies Staff

Dr. Val Moghadam	Director – On Leave	438-2947
Dr. Alison Bailey	Acting Director	438-5617
Dr. Becca Chase	Acting Assistant Director/Advisor	438-7361
Ms. Rozel White	Secretary	438-2947
Ms. Bethany Struebing	Graduate Assistant	438-2948
Mr. Ryan Rademacher	Undergraduate Assistant	438-2947

Visit our newly designed website at: <http://www.womenstudies.ilstu.edu>

INVITATIONS

(From the Director – Continued from Page 1)

increased by \$2,630, while family income has dropped by \$1,462 (Kaiser Family Foundation; Census Bureau). Women in particular have been hurt by the high cost of health care. By 2003, 14.4% of women lost their healthcare coverage. This is an increase of 2.2 million women. The rates of coverage loss for Latinas were three times higher. And 3.5 million African-American women live without insurance (US Census Bureau). Bush's Association Health Plans (AHP) would allow states to offer plans without women-specific benefits such as pediatric care, maternity, and contraception.

Finally, W's policies have done more than any previous administration to roll back gains made in women's reproductive health. The list of rollbacks is unfortunately too long to reproduce here. However, keep in mind that contraceptive coverage for federal employees was stripped by the President from his first federal budget (April 9, 2001). Within the next year the House passed the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act" and the "Child Custody Protection Act." The former allows prosecutors to count murder of a pregnant woman as a double homicide: Sounds right, until you consider the implications—it counts the fetus as a rights bearer. The latter makes it a federal crime to transport a minor across state lines for an abortion unless the parental involvement requirements of her home state have been met. Under W's watch the House also passed the so-called "Abortion Non-Discrimination Act" (ANDA), a sweeping refusal clause that allows any healthcare entity to discriminate against any provider who provides or even gives information about abortion. Anti-Choice former governor Tommy Thompson (WI) was selected as Secretary of Health and Human Services (December 29, 2000). Two years into his term he announced new guidelines making fetuses, but not pregnant women, eligible for prenatal care in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) (March 5, 2002). Later that year the U.S. became the only industrialized nation not to ratify the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

So, does W stand for women? Only if we let him. ■

You are cordially invited to join

Women in Academia

a new Yahoo! Group for female faculty at colleges and universities to:

- share stories about your experiences
- offer suggestions and support
- learn about resources
- just listen to the conversation

We **welcome all female faculty**, regardless of rank, TT or NTT status, institution, academic field, orientation, race/ethnicity, or family situation.

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/women_in_academia/
E-mail Sherrilyn Billger at smbillg@ilstu.edu for more info.

U of I Graduate Symposium Call for Papers

The Sixth Annual Graduate Student Symposium on Women's and Gender History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign would like to invite your participation in their annual conference, March 10-12, 2005.

They invite submissions from graduate students on any subject within its historical context, as well as panel submissions of three papers united by a common theme. They encourage panels analyzing the state of the field in women's and gender history, engaging with a work or body of work that has been influential in the field, and/or dealing with the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality. The submission deadline is November 15.

For more information, please contact Programming Committee Chair April Lindsey at genderymp@uiuc.edu, or visit their website at: <http://www.history.uiuc.edu/hist%20grad%20orgs/WGHS/WGHS.html>. ■

WOMEN'S STUDIES RECEPTION



Women's Studies welcomed new women faculty, returning affiliated faculty, and friends of the Women's Studies program at a reception held September 9, 2004 in the University Galleries.



PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Women's Mentoring Network Holds First Conference at ISU

by Teri Farr

The first Women's Mentoring Network Conference was held on September 18 on the ISU campus in the Bone Student Center. Nearly 100 people, including faculty, staff, students, and community members, attended.

Some of the highlights of the conference were the presentation of the first Dorothy E. Lee Scholarship to Rhonda Starkey and morning workshops for both students and professionals who work with nontraditional students. Dr. Cheri Miller, a Bloomington-Normal psychologist and life coach and former nontraditional student herself, worked with the students. She provided tips and strategies for balancing student and life responsibilities while staying motivated as a student. Pat Colter, retired former Coordinator of the Adult Services office at Illinois State, spoke with mentors and professionals about how to stay motivated while working with adult learners. Pat also shared her personal tips during the lunch-time keynote address.

The afternoon sessions focused on career development, healthy living, and financial planning. The afternoon ended with a dessert break and fabulous door prizes were awarded.

The Women's Mentoring Network, established in the spring of 2003, is comprised of faculty and staff at ISU who themselves were nontraditional students. They mentor newly admitted nontraditional women students and provide guidance and a support network. The program is currently serving approximately 75 students.

For more information or to find out how to get involved, please contact Teri Farr at tjarr@ilstu.edu or by phone at 438-8669. You may also visit their website at mentoringnetwork.ilstu.edu/. ■



Rhonda Starkey and Dorothy Lee



Teri Farr

Welcome to Women's Studies!

Women's Studies Minors

We welcome these students to Women's Studies:

Lisa Berube—Psychology
Susan Harsha—History
Talia Menachem—Sociology
Callie Swanlund—Psychology

Graduate Certificate Program

We welcome these new certificate students:

Layla Johnston—Politics and Government
William Lindig—History
Machelle Shannon—Non-degree
Jeris Vascellaro—Non-degree
Jennifer Woodruff—Sociology

Congratulations on Completion!

Graduate Certificates Awarded

Congratulations to our students who completed the certificate program in August:

Debbie Armstrong
Darcie Punke



Pat Colter



Dean Gary Olson and Provost John Presley

*Do you have a special occasion coming up soon?
Do you want gifts, but have too much stuff already?
Why not mark the occasion by requesting
people contribute to the*

DOROTHY E. LEE ENDOWMENT FUND or the LUELLEN LAURENTI SCHOLARSHIP FUND

For more information contact the Women's Studies Program or visit us at <http://www.womenstudies.ilstu.edu/aboutus/scholarships.htm>

STUDENT NEWS AND VIEWS

WS 398 Professional Practice Opportunity

The Bloomington-Normal Safe Schools Project is looking for a student assistant who is interested in education and has good interpersonal skills. This person would help to coordinate educational activities related to making schools safer and more supportive for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, family members, their friends, and school staff.

This semester the Safe Schools Project is planning two main events: 1) A film showing of "It's Elementary" with a panel discussion, and 2) A workshop conducted by a librarian at Normal Public Library about fiction and nonfiction books that could be useful to students, parents, teachers, and counselors. Other activities that the Project has been involved with and may continue next spring are: Speaking engagements at local businesses; workshops with teachers, parents, and counselors in schools; and speaking with ISU teacher education faculty about incorporating issues about sexual orientation and gender identity into their courses.

Responsibilities for this semester would include phoning possible presenters and panelists, reserving space for events, contacting ISU faculty about bringing students to events, and publicizing the library event in the local schools. In addition, the student assistant would keep bibliographies up-to-date and identify new books and videos that would be of interest to the education community.

If you are interested in working with the Safe Schools Project, contact Paula Ressler, Director of English Education, Illinois State University, at 309-438-7798 or e-mail pressle@ilstu.edu. ■

Children's Foundation Internship

by Jessica Surd

During this past summer I interned at The Children's Foundation in Bloomington. The Children's Foundation is composed of about half a dozen different programs; I interned with the Family Visitation Center (FVC).

My internship experience made the issues we discussed in WS 120 class come to life. Sure, we read about and researched different populations for class, but the nature of domestic and sexual violence only really began to hit me when I worked with families that utilized the Family Visitation Center. My primary job was to keep the children and parents safe while supervising visits and exchanges between children and the nonresidential parent. Without the FVC many children would not have the opportunity to spend time with both of their parents.

Working with the other employees and dealing with the families that came through the Family Visitation Center has made me a more compassionate and understanding person. Interning with the Family Visitation Center was a rewarding experience that I would highly recommend to other minors and any social work majors. ■

Stepping Stones Internship

by Brea Moon

This summer I was involved in an internship at Stepping Stones in Bloomington. Stepping Stones is the YWCA Sexual Assault Program, which provides free and confidential advocacy services for survivors of sexual assault and their loved ones. The services provided by Stepping Stones include a 24-hour crisis and question hotline, free medical and legal advocacy, counseling and support groups for adults, counseling for minors,

and community education programs. My role within the program was to get the word out to the community about our organization, help with legal advocacy services, and spend time on-call for the 24-hour hotline.

Stepping Stones is a truly wonderful organization. Those involved in the program work hard to empower victims of sexual assault by providing them with all the information necessary to allow them to make informed decisions about their options. Stepping Stones is always looking for volunteers, so if you're interested you can contact Vickie Smith at 309-662-0461 ext. 272. You won't regret it. ■

Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance

by Ryan Rademacher

Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA) is excited and anxious to get this semester underway. The group has many programs and opportunities for students of all races, creeds, sexualities, and genders to participate in. The general meetings for FMLA are the first and third Mondays of each month at 7 PM at the Student Services Building (SSB) in room 375. SSB is located on University and College streets across from the Bone Student Center. All meetings and programs focus on women and feminist issues. "Putting a face to feminism" is the general theme of all the meetings and programs throughout the year.

FMLA will host two major events this semester. Because October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, it is an appropriate time to honor the memory of those who have been affected by domestic abuse. The Clothesline Project will take place on the Quad from 9 AM to 3 PM on October 12-13. The Clothesline Project acts as both a visual reminder and memorial to all victims and survivors of domestic violence.



**The
Clothesline
Project**

**October
12-13, 2004**

9 AM – 3 PM

On the Quad

Domestic Violence Awareness Month will culminate with Take Back the Night. On October 14 women and men allies will march together to call attention to issues of violence against women. Although men will march along side women, there will be separate spaces for both men and women exclusively to have consciousness-raising discussions about what each gender, separately, can do to help the feminist cause in respect to domestic abuse.

This being an election year, FMLA is working diligently to register ISU students to vote. In the spring, FMLA will produce The Vagina Monologues to raise funds for local women's organizations. The play will be performed February 11-13.

The FMLA extends a friendly welcome to any student, faculty, or community member wishing to attend their meetings. The only criteria are that you want to discuss feminist issues and organize educational events for ISU and the Bloomington-Normal community. ■

WOMEN'S STUDIES FACULTY NEWS

Faculty Accomplishments

Pat Badani has been working on a global project for the last two years. The project, entitled "Where are you from," was screened at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest, Romania in May 2004. The project and research paper have been selected for presentation during the international conference: "New Forms Festival 04: Technography," to be held in Vancouver, Canada, October 14-16.

Alison Bailey's "Strategic Ignorance and the Politics of Purity" has been accepted for publication in Nancy Tuana's and Shannon Sullivan's edited collection *Epistemologies of Ignorance*, forthcoming from Penn State University Press.

Dawn Beichner joined the Criminal Justice Sciences faculty in August 2003. She recently completed a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Her dissertation, "Prosecutorial Charging Decisions in Sexual Assault Cases: Examining the Impact of a Specialized Prosecution Unit," was supported by a dissertation fellowship from the American Association of University Women. Dawn's research interests include women and criminal justice; race, ethnicity, and crime; prosecutorial decision making; and wrongful convictions. One of her current research projects, with Robbin Ogle of the University of Nebraska, centers on the practice of denying bail to domestic batterers. She and John McHale co-advise the ISU Innocence Project, a multidisciplinary student organization that investigates allegations of wrongful convictions.

Perle Besserman was interviewed in the August issue of *Cosmopolitan* (that famous feminist magazine) for a story on Madonna and the Kabbalah, and in *The Honolulu Advertiser* for a more serious look at the Kabbalah as a spiritual practice. Her book *A New Kabbalah for Women* will be published by Palgrave/St. Martin's on Jan. 1. Her short story "The Wrong Stop" appeared in the on-line version of the prestigious literary magazine *Agni* in July. During her summer in Hawaii, she worked with her "hui" (Hawaiian Women's Collective) to create greater crosscultural understanding among women of various ethnicities living in the Hawaiian Islands through "talk story."

Deb Gentry has been elected to a term of service on the executive board of directors for the National Council on Family Relations, headquartered in Minneapolis.

Tom Gershick has just published "Masculinity and Degrees of Bodily Normativity in Western Culture" in the *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, edited by Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and R.W. Connell, published by Sage.

Victoria Harris was awarded a writing scholarship in the summer at Vermont Studio Center for 8 weeks. She had a nice opportunity to spend time with Ted Kooser, who was poet in residence for a while and is now Poet Laureate.

Kass Fleisher's short fiction "Three Somebodies" was published in *Mandorla*, co-edited by Roberto Tejada of UCSD and ISU's own **Kristin Dykstra**.

Kathleen McKinney recently finished a one-year term as a Carnegie Scholar for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. As a Carnegie Scholar, over the course of the year she spent 5 weeks in residence at the Foundation (on the Stanford campus in CA) working on a project on how sociology majors learn sociology. You can view a "snapshot" of her project and findings at <http://www.cfkeep.org/html/snapshot.php?id=17698415>.

Nathalie op de Beeck's article " 'Sixteen and Dying' : Lurlene McDaniel's Fantasies of Mortal Endangerment" appears in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 29: 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2004). This essay critiques a

series of contemporary young-adult novels. She calls them "gothic hospital dramas"--in which virtuous teenage girls cope with sickness and death.

Melissa Oresky's show "Hive minds and other drawings" will be at the Riverside Arts Center Sept. 10 - Oct. 6. Hive minds are what she is calling the arrangements of brain-forms this series of drawings.

Susan Sprecher and Maria Schmeckle have published "Extended Family and Social Networks" in A. Vangelisti (Ed.), *Handbook of Family Communication*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Susan Sprecher has also published: Sprecher, S., & Cate, R., "Sexual Satisfaction and Sexual Expression as Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction and Stability;" and Willetts, M. C., Sprecher, S., & Beck, F. D., "Overview of Sexual Practices and Attitudes within Relational Contexts." Both appear in her co-edited anthology with Harvey J. Wenzel called *Handbook of Sexuality in Close Relationships*.

Mary Trouille has an article coming out this fall: "The Conflict between Good and Evil, Faith and Irreligion, in Sade's *Marquise de Gange*" in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 17, 1 (October 2004): 55-88. She has also been chosen to chair this year's Clifford Prize selection committee for the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, which awards an annual prize for the best essay published by a member of the society in the area of 18th century studies.

Janet Wilson directed *Shame the Devil! An Audience with Fanny Kemble*, by Anne Ludlum, which opened the Stockyards Theatre Project season at Chicago's Majestic Midway Theatre (Aug. 26 - Sept. 11, 2004). This one-woman tour de force features Lori Adams and celebrates the bravery of 19th-century heroine Fanny Kemble: actress, author, abolitionist, wife, and mother. For more information about this touring production, visit The Fanny Kemble Project website at <www.arts.ilstu.edu/jmwilso4>. ■

Leave No Family Behind

On August 23 and 24 the Lambda Legal Marriage Equality Bus swung through Bloomington-Normal on its way across the state to publicize the civil rights struggle for equal marriage rights for LGBT people. Three couples from the Bloomington-Normal area, including Women's Studies faculty **Becca Chase** and **Paula Ressler**, joined the tour and spoke at three events—a table on the ISU quad and brown-bag luncheon sponsored by the Office of Intercultural Programs and Services on Monday, and a luncheon panel discussion at State Farm on Tuesday. They were joined by Lambda Legal representative RoiAnn Phillips. (Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of LGBT people and people with HIV or AIDS through impact litigation, education, and public policy work.)

Lambda Legal and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) will return to Normal in October to co-sponsor a related event. "Leave No Family Behind" will be a community-based discussion on marriage equality, same-sex marriage and the everyday obstacles faced by gay male and lesbian families. The event features a panel of local residents and experts, including same-sex couples from the Bloomington-Normal area and Rev. Susan Ryder from the New Covenant Community Church. After their presentations there will be a question-and-answer session. This discussion will be held on **Thursday, October 7, 6:30-8:30 p.m., at the Normal Public Library**, 206 W. College Ave. Other sponsors are Equality Illinois and the Advocacy Council for Human Rights (ACHR). Admission is free. ■

Women's Voice
Illinois State University
Women's Studies Program
Rachel Cooper 2nd Floor
Campus Box 4260
Normal, IL 61790-4260

Women's Studies Events Calendar

SEPTEMBER

- 22 Kim Stone, "Single Women in Literature after Colonialism," lecture, 401 STV, 12-1 PM.
- 28 Kathy Perkins, "Creating Theater for Change: Works by Contemporary African Women," lecture, BBC Activity Room, 3-5 PM. Book signing to follow.

OCTOBER

- 1 Reception for CFA Faculty/Staff with Kathy Perkins and Regina Taylor, CVA 110 University Galleries, 10:30-11:30 AM.
- 1 Women's Studies brown bag lunch with Kathy Perkins and Regina Taylor, STV 401, 12-1:30 PM.
- 1 "Crowns" opening night, Center for Performing Arts, 7:30 PM.
- 4 FMLA meeting with Free Pizza!, SSB 375, 7 PM.
- 7 "Leave No Family Behind," Normal Public Library, 6:30-8:30 PM.
- 11 National Coming Out Day, on the Quad
- 12-13 FMLA's "Clothesline Project," on the Quad, 9-3 PM.
- 14 FMLA's Take Back the Night March, location TBA, 7 PM.
- 20 "Is Dubya Wrong for Women?" Panel, 401 STV, 12-1 PM. ■

WS Course Offerings for Spring 2005

WS 120.01	Women, Gender and Society	9:35-10:50 TR	Meridith Kruse
WS 120.02	Women, Gender and Society	11:00-12:15 TR	Meridith Kruse
WS 120.03	Women, Gender and Society	3:00-4:15 MW	Becca Chase
WS 390	Interdisciplinary Research	TBA	Staff
WS 391	Seminar in Women's Studies (see below)	3:00-4:15 MW	Alison Bailey
WS 398	Professional Practice	TBA	Staff
WS 400	Independent Study	TBA	Staff
WS 490	Feminist Theories and Methodological Issues	5:30-8:00 M	Maura Toro-Morn

WS 391 Topic: Racializing Sex and Reproduction

The relative silence around the connections between race and reproduction is striking given their historical connections. Our spring seminar will explore some of ways women's (and to a lesser extent men's) bodies have been, and continue to be, disciplined and regulated to reinforce the dominant white racial order. Contact Alison Bailey at 438-2947 or baileya@ilstu.edu for more information about the class. ■