

WOMEN'S STUDIES
Spring Newsletter
THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY
May 2009

Director's Corner
Christy Burns

Usually I will welcome you in the fall, but this year—my first as regular Director of the program—took off at a stunning pace. We were joined by a new Visiting Assistant Professor, Beth Currans, who has done a marvelous job of extending the fine work of her predecessor, Margot Weiss. Both are interdisciplinary scholars with an emphasis on Women's Studies. Professor Currans has offered popular and academically rich courses on LGBTIQ topics, including Critical Race and Queer Theory, which provides a capstone experience for students who study sexuality issues. She also teaches transnational feminism and political performance.

My aim as a new Director is to reach out to students and faculty who work on the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality. We want to support your research, encourage your interests, and enhance the campus presence of an integrated interdisciplinary approach that includes a strong emphasis on diversity studies. Thank you to all of you who have shared your expertise with our program, welcoming our students into your classes. Several departments this year offered a number of cross-listed classes that significantly addressed women's issues, gender, and sexuality; the Departments of History, Sociology, and American Studies were particularly helpful, and many others graciously contributed. Thank you for hiring people who have a commitment to women's issues, in their research and their teaching; it helps us all.

If you are interested in becoming more involved, or if you have questions about items in this newsletter, please contact me. I'm most easily reached by e-mail: clburn@wm.edu. Or you may call our office and speak to me or Ann Repeta (who is the design diva of this newsletter): 757-221-2457 in Morton 322.

Women's Studies Student Activism Prize

The Women's Studies Prizes Committee is pleased to award **Cherie Seise** the prize for activism. We were especially impressed by the ways in which Cherie's extensive activist endeavors (with groups such as Tidewater Labor Support Committee, Virginia Organizing Project, United Students Against sweatshops, and immigrant rights organizations in Central and Northern Virginia) demonstrate an understanding of the interconnectedness of multiple forms of oppression and injustice both global and local. Through her activism she has put intersectionality into practice. Her efforts remind us that women's issues are also labor issues, and that GLBT issues are relevant for workers as workers--not only in the United States, but abroad.

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Carol Woody Interns Travel to the Border Lands



Carol Woody

Each year, Women's Studies offers a real world internship to students whose plans take them on the road to do research over spring break. This year, we gave three scholarships to William & Mary students **Katherine Aument**, **Seowon Chung**, and **Amanda Porter**. All three were preparing to travel to the Mexican/U.S. border to work with *Borderlinks*, a non-profit that promotes public awareness of problems arising from border tensions, bearing on immigration, social policy, and community needs. Aument, a senior Sociology/Hispanic Studies major, gathered information for her senior research project, conducting ethnographies planned with help from *Borderlinks* in Tucson/Nogales. She notes that "the research trip to the Border offers very practical outcomes," since she may seek a job with *Borderlinks* or a kindred group that addresses gender challenges in the area. Chung examined the ways in which "transnational social processes unfold locally in the everyday lives of Latina women." A recently naturalized citizen herself, Chung is drawn to this work, focusing on the links between globalization and women's labor along the border. Potter, already a visitor to the Tucson/Nogales areas over her winter break, returned to examine questions about what defines a "migrant" and human rights in the area. Is it a coincidence that all three students chose to travel to the same region? No, all are in a course on the Borderlands. Professors **Silvia Tandeciarz** and **Jennifer Bickham Mendez**, of the Hispanic Studies and Sociology departments, designed and co-taught the course with a 1 credit spring break travel option. Thanks to Carol Woody's generous founding and support of this fellowship!

Winners of the Dean's Prize for Scholarship on Women

The Prizes Committee gave two awards for student scholarship this spring, to **Casey Metheny** and **Margaret Freeman**. Casey Metheny's essay on "Revolutionary Virginity" in Virginia Woolf adroitly explained how Woolf's virginal women can be read as icons of embodied independence and creativity--though not without a burdensome psychic cost--rather than as figures of self-denial and patriarchal purity. We particularly appreciated how Casey drew upon cultural and medical history as well as the literary contexts for Woolf's achievements. Margaret Freeman's article on sororities in the postwar American South locates these institutions as contested ground, where ideals of elite femininity become stressed by competing claims of tradition and modernity, tasteful formality and civic engagement, especially in the context of Cold War patriotism. Margaret's skillful use of archival sources merits special attention; the sorority documents she discusses were truly eye-opening.

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Braithwaite Lecture, February 26, 2009



**When the Poor Took Over Las Vegas:
Historian Annelise Orleck**

Our annual Women's Studies Braithwaite lecture this year featured **Annelise Orleck**, Professor of History from Dartmouth University. Professor Orleck's most recent book, *Storming Casar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*, traces the lives of nine African-American women born in the Mississippi Delta who became hotel maids, union activists, and later welfare rights activists in Las Vegas, Nevada. In 1970, poor women, children, and men protesting Nevada's refusal to support Johnson's War on Poverty, took to the streets of Las Vegas. Their children were without basic health care, food, and housing, as Nevada challenged the Federal government's welfare laws, refused its money, and shut down services. While investigating this story, Annelise Orleck discovered not only a successful resistance movement organized by the poor; she also tracked the many benefits of their locally organized and run services for those in need of welfare. This year's lecture was aided by the generous support from the Margaret E. Gove Foundation.

**Women's History Month:
Salt of the Earth and
Shakespeare's Sister Day**

In addition to bringing Annelise Orleck to campus in late February, we sponsored two events in honor of Women's History Month in March. Our student organization, FMLA, screened the 1954 film, *Salt of the Earth*, and History Professor Leisa Meyer lead Q&A. On March 25th, Women's Studies and English professors Jennifer Putzi and Suzanne Raitt organized the campus's first "Shakespeare's Sister Day," at the Daily Grind. Students and faculty read from women's writing in 10 minute spots across the day.



The Image Awards

Women's Studies was honored by the Student Assembly and NAACP College Chapter this year; we received the Image Award for Outstanding Academic Department. This is our third Image award, and we hope to deserve more in the future. These awards are for groups and individuals that strive to build bridges across lines of difference and to foster a truly inclusive campus community. Other winners included **Provost Geoffrey Feiss, Prof. Robert Vinson, The South Asian Student Organization, LIVE, Wesleyan Foundation, Grace Sherman & Ainab Rahman (The Century Project), Prof. Francis Tangelao-Aguas, Blair Smith, Mark Constantine, and Walker Somerville**. Thanks for the support & congratulations to all!

Women's Studies Students' Community Action Projects

Every spring, the campus sees a flourishing of activist energy, coming from the students who take the Women's Studies introductory course, WMST 205. Students work in groups to design and develop activist projects that support the campus and local communities. Here are some of the initiatives they brought us this year:

- * Workshop on sexual consent, and a sexuality themed mixed CD
- * Student Parents on Campus: Campus Moms focused on starting an organization for students with children, also known as S.P.O.C. (Student Parents on Campus). This organization will support student parents by providing a network of students and advocating for their needs to campus administration.
- * The Gender Coordination Project invited campus organizations concerned with feminist or gender issues to coordinate and work together on events. They created an updated list of contacts for such groups, an open calendar online to post events, a list of on campus resources for setting up events, and promoted wm.blogs, which is easier to use than the WM individual organization web sites.
- * William & Mary Female Beauty Campaign Photo Exhibit: A photo exhibit featuring some of William & Mary's most high-achieving young women designed to challenge onlookers to reevaluate the media-perpetuated concept of female beauty as being solely image-based, and to appreciate the models on display for their personal successes and accomplishments. The exhibit will run from April 26th through May 3rd in the Sadler Center Lobby.
- * STI Awareness Project
- * Helping H.E.R. : These students collected business clothing to donate to job-seeking women at the H.E.R. domestic violence shelter in Portsmouth, VA .
- * Women's Backpacking Trip: This group organized a weekend backpacking trip for women to promote environmental awareness.
- * Men and Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Carnival
- * Women Helping Women: These students organized an event including workshops focused on body image and networking.
- * IF Fund: This group organized a fund-raising dinner to establish a fund for feminist student events on campus.
- * Recognizing Women in Sports: This group worked to increase awareness of and attendance at women's sports events on campus, especially the nationally-ranked women's basketball team.
- * Practical Eating and Living: These students focused on awareness and education on living with diabetes.

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Women's Studies Students' Community Action Projects
Continued

- * The MANual: A zine with student contributions (writing and images) about male sexuality and masculinity.
- * Mom's Night Off : These students worked with the Williamsburg Head Start to host a Mom's Night Off event. For the event, they sent home permission slips and fliers with the children of Head Start with descriptions of the event. On the day of the event, which was held at the Community Action Agency where Head Start is located, parents of Head Start children dropped off their children for a few hours. During the event, face-painting, dinner, games, and activities were held. This gave the children a meal and fun that the mothers did not have to worry about providing, and also gave these mothers a chance to have a few hours to themselves to do something they may not have a chance to do, such as grocery shopping or simply taking a break. Students also trained volunteers for the event, which exposed a greater audience to the poverty that is sometimes ignored in Williamsburg.
- * Get Naked: These students enrolled female students to spend a day without make-up, and made a display of pictures of the students wearing their "Get Naked" T shirts.
- * I Wanna Be Like Britney: These group made a video and website, and organized a film screening and discussion group about images of young women in the media.
- * Diversifying Beauty: These students explored and challenged the predominantly white image of female beauty in the US through their own video and website.
- * SEXperience: These students made a video of students talking about their experiences of sex.

A number of these CAPs have their own websites or were covered in the *Flat Hat* or *DOG Street Journal*.

May 2009

Women's Studies/Black Studies Brown Bag Presentations

In our February Brown Bag, **Iyabo Osiapem**, Visiting Assistant Professor in Linguistics, presented her research on contemporary language use in Bermuda. We learned about how Bermuda differs from Caribbean islands in terms of its history and economic status. Small as it is (21 square miles), it has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world because it is an off shore economic base for insurance companies like AIG. The population boasts a literacy rate of 98% well above its Caribbean counterparts. The local population is 55% black, 34 % white, and 11% other. Professor Osiapem's research focuses on the Black Bermudian speech community, specifically on people who have always lived in Bermuda and who mainly socialized with other Black Bermudians--although they work in a multicultural environment typically with British expatriots. She interviewed 30 Black Bermudians (15 men and 15 women) for a larger study, but focused on Bermudian language with a special interest in women's grammar for the current study. We learned about how she approaches economic diversity in her work, and how women's speech on the island varies from their male counterparts'.

In April, **Beth Currans**, our Visiting Assistant Professor, held a Brown Bag on "Gender, Sexuality, Race, and Space: Conflict and Intra-Movement Surveillance in Santa Barbara 21st Century Anti-War Movement." This is part of ongoing research, with two other academics, looking at the tensions and debates within the anti-war movement in Santa Barbara in the early 21st century. Professor Currans and her co-authors attempt to get away from the more familiar model of academic analysis focused on the conflict between the state and dissenters. She and her co-authors have conducted eleven individual interviews and one focus group with activists who were present in this movement. This is the first of three papers from this research project. Her focus here was on the use of space and conceptions of citizenship within the movement. She raised questions including: How we might think about dissent differently? Do surveillance and conflict mute or radicalize a movement? How do the status quo and state interests re-emerge within a protest movement?

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Congratulations to our 2009 graduates!

Women's Studies Graduates Twenty-Three Students

This May, Women's Studies will graduate twenty-three students—18 majors and 5 minors. Every year, we fete our students at a pre-graduation celebration. This year, the event will take place from 11-12:30 on Saturday May 16th, in Chesapeake A in the Sadler Center. Core and affiliate faculty attend this event, and students bring friends and family to the reception. If you would like to join us, please contact our Director Christy Burns at clburn@wm.edu. Here is a list of our graduates this year:

Majors: **Katherine Burcham, Larisa Cicila, Mathilde Colborn, Anne Cox, Katherine Dixon, Stacey Eunnae, Freddy Gonzalez, James Hood, Wendy Jenkins, Kimberly Johnston, Bridget Kerlick, Tanya Mir, Caroline Mullis, Jessica O'Brien, Ann Rainey, Avina Ross, Katherine Rubida, Jillian Wagner.** *Minors:* **Shiri Ahronovich, Gary Kofman, Jaime Macadangdang, Kimberly Mason, Ainab Rahman.**

Sex Workers' Art Show and The Century Project

This spring, students brought The Sex Workers' Art Show (SWAS) to campus, and also The Century Project. Both events had previously been hosted at William & Mary, SWAS with much-publicized, politicized controversy and The Century Project with a notable absence of such negative attention. This year, The Century Project was put in the spotlight of controversy. The show of photographs of women and girls, posing nude, was originated and curated by Frank Cordelle, who wanted to show audiences how nude photography need not be pornographic, nor nudity a strict social taboo. In support of student activists in their struggles with such controversy, The Women's Studies Program sponsored a panel on "Campus Engagement/Campus Free Speech: Discussion of the Coming of The Century Project & the Sex Workers' Art Show" in mid-March. The panel featured **Caroline Mullis**, who explained how events were financed by the Student Assembly; **William Van Alstyne**, a free speech lawyer from William & Mary's Law School who reviewed the legal definitions of free speech and pornography; **Jessee Vasold**, the student organizer of SWAS's visit this year, who explained how negotiations worked; **Grace Sherman**, the student organizer for The Century Project at W&M, who spoke of the attack by one individual on The Century Project's national tour; and **Frank Cordelle**, who supported Sherman's work and described the negative press and its effects on college campuses.

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Congratulations to Jenny Putzi and Lily Panoussi!

Congratulations to Jenny Putzi on her tenure and promotion to associate professor! She is a joint appointment in Women's Studies and English. Also congratulations to our affiliate Lily Panoussi, who was tenured and promoted in Classical Studies this year. Lily has been on our curriculum committee and teaches courses cross-listed with Women's Studies.

**GIVE TO WMST
through our website**

WWW.WM.EDU/WOMENSSTUDIES



Majors, Minors Graduates:

Please be sure to fill out the "stay in touch" paperwork that is provided in your certificate. This is very important as we try to keep up with what you are doing and our current students can see what you have done with a Women's Studies Major.



Special Thanks to Ann Repeta, our hard working Administrative Assistant, and to Tanya Mir, her great helper. We appreciate all their wonderful contributions to the program!