

Intersections →



As seen by WGS Students - Spring 2004

Newsletter of the Macalester College Women's and Gender Studies Program

Institutional Responsibility at Macalester

By Renée Lepreau '06

Maybe there was something to what Robert Fulghum said – pay a little more attention during kindergarten and we'd all be a lot better off. Not to glorify that institution of rigorous edification, but there are a few things from that era of my education worth chewing over in my more advanced years (and no, not play-doh and Elmer's, though I can still recall the taste). A few overworked axioms come to mind: pick up your mess (or better yet, don't make one), write down what you are going to do in your planner and do it, and treat your teachers and fellow students with some minimal dignity and respect.

If we can ask a five year old to follow these sorts of rules, why shouldn't we extend that to our college? We make plenty of messes (environmental and social), sign promises and don't follow through (Tailloires, Apparel Purchasing Code of Conduct) and have control over the livelihoods of many, many people.

WGS knows that 'linking theory and practice' is crucial. One of the best ways to implement our theory is to demand that our institution take responsibility for its actions. Student organizations as varied as the Mac Dems, Mac Slac, Mac Greens, MPJC, and E-Funk, for starters, are working on issues that directly examine the effects of Macalester's relationships with other communities. Students formed an informal group to co-ordinate these efforts.

There are campaigns galore that stem from this reflexive inspection. Already countless ways Macalester could stand up and be accountable to its actions have been discussed by students. Responsibly investing the endowment, breaking our contract with Coca-Cola (and instead using organic, localized sodas and juices), maintaining need blind-admissions, stopping all

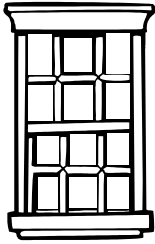
van trips to corporations like Target, boycotting Wal-Mart, supporting sustainable agriculture in our cafeteria (at the expense of Bon Appetit, if need be), conserving energy, hiring an environmental director, holding our academic departments responsible for the world-view they teach, and – why not? – making sure that students don't graduate without some basic knowledge of gender and environmental issues, per the diversity requirement. Whew. And that was only a few ideas?

A glance at the February 20th issue of the Mac Weekly shows me that institutional responsibility is already at the forefront of many students' minds. There is Richard Graves asking Macalester to follow the Kyoto protocol and Erik Morales calling for admissions policies to more actively recruit students of color. My e-mail box is full of messages discussing campaigns and actions by students (a request by Mac Slac that the administration deal with the Cintas uniforms which Facilities Management employees wear, for example) that have to do with how our institution conducts itself and relates to the world outside of these small square blocks. It's on the way.

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For more information visit us online:
www.macalester.edu/wgs



How would WGS Students like Macalester College to View the WGS Department?

By Delaney Keyes '04

I was asked to write about how WGS Students would like Macalester College to see the WGS Department. However, for my own personal sanity I have amended it to “how *a* WGS student...” I cannot even begin to conceive of the comments that such an array of people would each have on the topic. We are taught to question and think critically, which doesn't necessarily lead to a homogenous groupthink. We don't agree in class, why would we here?

Nevertheless, there were a number of comments made at the WGS retreat in reference to this question that I think are critical to the department's image. First, it seems to strike WGS faculty and students alike as odd that our department can often seem somewhat peripheral to the college's projected image. This may be largely due to our small size; however, we are also physically separated to the attic of Old Main! But for those of us who call WGS home in some manner, the department is seen as already much more central than the college may realize. The college's core pillars of academic excellence, internationalism, diversity, and civic engagement are embodied, I believe, in WGS scholarship and actions. Many of us feel that we deserve more recognition for this fact.

As a student, I would like others to see the department as the thriving, engaging, ambitious location that it is within Macalester. After all, what other department has had such a fabulous, productive and well-attended retreat? I feel supported and inspired by my fellow students, staff, and faculty's work and energy. I do not know of any other department where students are so included at the basis of planning, creation, and evaluation. In WGS, I have felt listened to and respected at all stages of my involvement, whether it was in class or on committees.

I think it is essential that the college comes to a greater appreciation of WGS because of its support of its students, critical scholarship, and involvement with the Macalester community. But no matter what, for those of us involved, WGS will always stand out as a unique place that has shaped our experiences here.

Internship

By Megan Stevenson '04

Last semester I did a 4-credit internship for my WGS major at OutFront Minnesota, the state's leading organization serving gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities. On my first day I was introduced to Connie Kauppi, Office Administrator for OutFront, who asked me to help her with a project idea that she'd been sitting on. Recognizing the difficulty for transgender, transsexual, and genderqueer people in securing safe and affordable housing, Connie was determined to start a non-profit organization that ran a trans-specific apartment building. She dubbed this project TLI, the Transgender Living Initiative.

My job in the initial implementation of the project was to conduct interviews with trans-identified individuals in the Twin Cities to assess their housing and community needs. In December I wrote a paper for Scott Morgensen's *Local/Global Sexual Politics* class within which the internship was integrated. I described the project background, the

results of the interviews, and my recommendations for the future of the project. My report detailed the need for both a community center and transitional housing for the trans community, in addition to an apartment building. It was decided that a single building could encompass all three projects — providing living space, securing fully-subsidized units to serve as shelter space, and allowing a large community resource area.

At this point, the future of TLI is both promising and overwhelming. The prospect of applying for 501(c)3 status, writing a business plan and a grant, buying and renovating a building, applying for HUD funding, and seeing the opening of TLI seems a daunting process, especially since Connie has a full-time job and I am still in school. I have looked into grants and fellowships to pay me to work on this project after I graduate in May, but unfortunately, foundations seem primarily interested in supporting the continuation of existing non-profits, rather than assisting in the start-up of new ones. Involvement with TLI has been the most inspiring and mobilizing experience of my four years at Macalester and I look forward to my continued participation in this indispensable project.

Chaos and the Collective

By Tyler Wood '04
WGS Major

Until this fall semester, my experience at Macalester has been rather sheltered. I was secluded, isolated, and unaware. I feel now, that I have been in some kind of “bubble;” disconnected from what is going on in my community. However, the disconnect I feel is not between Macalester and the so-called “Real World.” The “us and them” slogan has been popular among too many students and continues to devalue the endeavors of diligent and brilliant students everywhere on our campus.

I think we are programmed to obey a narrow definition of work as use-oriented. Then, we confound utility or usefulness with social service work or even charity. I believe the application of our education starts locally, here on campus. If I am not connected with what you all are doing here then my *theory* gets no *practice*.

I say this having had numerous incredible off campus experiences both connected to my courses and as a process of living and working across the cities. Practicum education is of extreme value on this campus and not under attack from this letter. However, I am ardently promoting that students, especially those in the WGS department, be aware of the amazing work that we are doing right here, next to each other.

As a development of working out a senior project and a combined senior music recital, I have been attending a great number of events on campus for the past two years. I watch student short plays in the black box. I slowly stroll through the art department and look at student works. Anytime somebody gives me the line about the all-nighter paper extravaganza. I ask her to tell me about it or e-mail me a copy. I listen outside the doors of the practice rooms at the music department. Unbeknownst to me, amazing things are happening at the hands of students when no one is watching!

My project is simply to organize with you all, to produce and receive ideas. Then we collectively arrange and perform those ideas. It sounds simple only because it is autonomous. We are doing a major student work without the investment or direction of any staff, faculty, or

group on campus. *Chaos and the Collective* will be among the first performances at Macalester to incorporate aspects of all of the fine arts disciplines and to work them together onto the highly constraining stage space of the music department’s concert hall.

We are learning as we go, how to build an initiative upon intersections of race, sexuality, gender and otherwise multiple and conflicting identities among members. Our predecessors in grass-roots organizing do not explain the ten easy steps to confronting whiteness! Nor do they offer simple solutions for a better self-reflexive analysis. These tasks are in our hands and our minds collectively. Through the process of creation and coalition we are learning to engage and confront ourselves in representation on stage.

I am a firm believer in practicing the theory here at home. In a crowd of like-minded, similarly acculturated, friends it is dangerously easy to become tacit to complex personal and political problems. If we wait until we are overseas to practice transnationalism, the point is lost.

Note: If anyone is interested in becoming a part of *Chaos and the Collective* please e-mail Tyler Wood at jwood@macalester.edu

Chaos and the Collective





Trans ally project: Helps a WGS student “get it”

By Danielle Nelson '05

Last semester, I had the opportunity to meet and discuss gender with folks who identify as trans allies. This opportunity, created through a Women's and Gender Studies independent project, was an amazing chance to network with Twin Cities community members and create an end product that will hopefully be useful in encouraging others to become trans allies as well.

After an amazing summer working with people of all sexualities and genders at a summer camp, I returned for fall semester with a question in my mind: What does it mean to be a “trans ally”? With Scott Morgensen's help, we constructed a semester that would explore this question. I learned about ethnographic research, read Kate Bornstein (among others) and spent a lot of time reflecting. Eventually, the idea for a “zine-type thing” arose.

And the fun began. I emailed list serves and contacted Twin Cities organizations, asking if anyone would meet with me to discuss their experiences as a trans ally in the Twin Cities. The response was awesome! Before I knew it, I had twelve interviews and rolls of film under my belt, ready to be compiled, but not without the help of Queer Union and other Macalester students who volunteered to help transcribe the overwhelming amounts of material.

The final product, *Transitioning: Ally Work in the Twin Cities*, explored how the interviewees came to be allies, challenges they face in having this identity and their experiences in and around the trans and trans allied community in the Twin Cities. Once the ‘zine’ was completed, a debut was held on Friday, December 5, 2003, in the 4th Floor Lounge - Old Main at Macalester, bringing together the greater Twin Cities community members with the Macalester community.

This independent project will undoubtedly be one of my most memorable and valuable experiences at Macalester. After so much discussion about bringing together theory

and practice, this project helped me to *really get it*. Admittedly, I am sometimes cynical about my time at Macalester and about Academia more broadly. Before, I thought that I was spending all of my time writing papers for people who would never read them, but I've learned that it doesn't have to be this way—I need the “theory” to do the “practice” and the “practice” to do the “theory.” Do you just love Women's and Gender Studies?

--If you'd like a copy of the ‘zine’ for yourself or to share, just drop me an email
(dnelson@macalester.edu)

Graduate School Resources

Junior year is the time to start thinking about and applying to graduate school. Please make use of the graduate school file in the WGS Resource Room (4th floor, Old Main) which contains information on WGS graduate programs from universities all over the United States and abroad.





Alumni Shot-Spots

Amelia Buttress '00

I was a WGS major at Macalester. I am currently enrolled in a media and communication graduate program with the European Graduate School, a program that I think might be of great interest to current Macalester students. I am including a short description from their website and a link so you can view it. Many of the lecturers at the program are world renowned and I studied works by many of them while at Macalester (Judith Butler, Donna Haraway to name a few). In addition to providing an opportunity for graduate studies, there are many resources including papers and interviews that might be good resources to current students. 95% of enrolled students in EGS have found it through the web and so we want to continue to work to make it available to as many people as possible. I know one other Macalester student who is enrolled in the program and I think Macalester is the type of school that would be likely to produce valuable candidates for this program.

The following is a short description and partial list of professors at the program.

The European Graduate School EGS Media and Communications program, facilitating creative breakthroughs and theoretical paradigm shifts, brings together master's and doctoral students with the visionaries and philosophers of the media world who inspire learning about art, philosophy, communications, film, literature, internet, web and cyberspace studies from a cross-disciplinary perspective.

Our faculty includes, Giorgio Agamben, Chantal Akerman, Pierre Aubenque, Alain Badiou, Lewis Baltz, Jean Baudrillard, Yve-Alain

Bois, Catherine Breillat, Victor Burgin, Judith Butler, Diane Davis, Manuel de Landa, Claire Denis, Tracey Emin, Chris Fynsk, Peter Greenaway, Donna Haraway, Martin Hielscher, Shelley Jackson, Claude Lanzmann, David Lynch, Paul D. Miller a.k.a. DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid, Carl Mitcham, Jean-Luc Nancy, Cornelia Parker, Avital Ronell, Wolfgang Schirmacher, Volker Schlöndorff, Michael Schmidt, Hendrik Speck, Bruce Sterling, Sandy Stone, Fred Ulfers, Gregory Ulmer, Agnès Varda, Victor J. Vitanza, Hubertus von Amelunxen, John Waters, Samuel Weber, Krzysztof Zanussi, Siegfried Zielinski and Slavoj Zizek. Jean-François Lyotard was a guiding spirit during the founding phase.

The comprehensive program of the European Graduate School EGS is distinguished by the cordial interaction of eminent faculty members with students who are the best of their generation. A true international mix. Our students are outstanding graduates as well as filmmakers, artists, web designers, computer programmers, college instructors, writers, actors, photographers, theater directors, teachers, journalists, graphic designers, musicians, critics, and editors.

If you have questions or would like more information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

ameliabuttress@hotmail.com



WGS Events – Spring 2004



March

[Women's History Month]

Thu., Mar. 4th

12:00-1:00 pm

Soup & Substance:

Women's Ways of Knowing: The Politics of Identity for Women

Kagin Commons, Lower Level

6:30-8:00 pm

All-you-can-ask About WGS Gala

Old Main, 4th Floor Lounge

Mon., Mar. 8th

7:00 pm

Population, the Environment and Family Planning
A Celebration of International Women's Day

Olin Rice - #305

Thu., Mar. 11th

12:00-1:00 pm

Lee Roper-Batker

Women's Foundation of Minnesota

Old Main, 4th Floor Lounge

Tue., Mar. 23rd

12:00-1:00 pm

Andrea Smith

(Professor of American Culture and
Women's Studies, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor)

Old Main - #111

Tue., Mar. 30th

12:00-1:00 pm

Science Group

Old Main - #111

April

Tue., Apr. 20th

12:00-1:00 pm

R. Zamora Linmark – Reading from new novel Leche
(Author of Rolling the R's, Kaya Press, 1995)

Old Main, 4th Floor Lounge

Apr. 29th

5:00-8:00 pm

WGS Honors Project/ Research Presentations

Old Main, 4th Floor Lounge

Resources –

Sites of Interest

National Organization for Women

www.now.org

The European Graduate School
EGS Media and Communications

www.egs.edu

Graduate Schools in Women's Studies

www.smith.edu/wst/gradlinks.html



<http://outfront.org/index.html>

National Transgender Advocacy Coalition

www.ntac.org

Incite! Women of Color Against Violence

www.incite-national.org

Voices in the Wilderness

<http://vitw.org>

Women's Studies Conferences

www.womstd.uiuc.edu/conferences.html



WGS Retreat - 2004



The WGS retreat was a remarkable example of ability of the program to engage faculty from multiple disciplines and divisions into close collaborative work with students. WGS continues to prove its intellectual and social vitality to the campus.

Karen Nakamura
Assistant Professor of Anthropology



Faculty, students and staff gathered on Sat., February 7th to discuss exciting plans for the future of WGS.

- ❖ Department Review preparations
- ❖ Revisiting our mission statement
- ❖ Renaming the department
- ❖ Events for spring semester
- ❖ Curricular gaps and Crosslisting



Even before I moved to St. Paul, I attended the WGS Retreat and saw the remarkable collegiality and participatory decision-making among the WGS students, faculty, and staff. I now know that our smart and varied conversations at the retreat reflect dialogues sustained long before it occurs, and, I trust, these dialogues will not just continue but proliferate into the future.

Scott Morgensen
Assistant Professor in LGBT Studies
Women's & Gender Studies Department



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