

I ntersections



Spring 2005

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

The State of An Inter-Discipline



Hello, everyone! While the title implies a very large and ongoing discussion, this is a report from my point of view on the February WGS retreat. Everybody worked very hard at knowing more about our various fields of interest and at figuring out

how we could converge better. The state of WGS as an inter-discipline is both thriving and in need of further attention.

There are two signs, at least, of the healthy state of our inter-discipline. The WGS faculty located fully in the department, Scott and myself, offer a spectrum of perspectives—in topics, theories, and methodologies—from the humanities and social sciences. The WGS faculty located in departments other than WGS, but intellectually connected to it, offer variety as well as depth in the crosslistings, representing all the divisions (humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and fine arts). Our WGS students, majors and minors, were at the retreat in full force! They reflected, with sophistication, depth, and openness, on the impact of core and crosslisted courses on their own paths through liberal education settings.

A few and very committed, very enthusiastic, and fully engaged faculty from WGS-related departments were present at the February retreat. We want to thank especially Joan Ostrove (Psychology), Beth Severy-Hoven and Mireille Lee (Classics), Jan Serie (Biology), Hilde Hoogenboom (Russian), Wendy Weber (Political Science) and Alexandra Cuffel (History). Four—Joan, Beth, Jan, and Wendy—have been or are members of the WGS steering committee that discusses policies, curriculum, and events. Our department has also been very successful in establishing that our interdisciplinarity rests upon the historical links between the curricular

and the scholarly co-curricular—we are grateful to Mike Porter (Internship Office) and Paul Schadewald (Community Services Office) in attending and signaling to all that civic engagement is part of our feminist philosophy.

All these colleagues demonstrated, in their presence and participation, to our WGS students, that our allies are keen to establish substantial, content-based, intellectual frameworks-related connections with the kinds of courses offered by Scott and myself. A special thanks goes out to Brett Smith in Environmental Studies for inviting and including WGS in their search for new faculty as well as events planning (see Events Calendar in this newsletter).

However, it is interdisciplinarity itself that is one of the areas in which WGS is eager to continue working on, in the company of these and other friends. The goal is to deepen the understandings as well as practices of the complex potential of interdisciplinarity as the intellectual attitude of academic and professional futures. The other aspect of WGS as an inter-discipline that needs further attention is the representation of topics, theories, and methodologies not yet part of the WGS department core curriculum. In this aspect, we need your help in developing the visibility of feminist understandings of the natural sciences in the context of economic, political, social, and cultural change. Wouldn't it be great to have WGS offer core courses in genetics/eugenics, geography, biochemistry, math, neurosciences, etc.?

The momentum and inspiration generated by the February retreat carries us now into greater efforts to build WGS families across campus. We invite you to contribute to our newsletter with your perspectives and opinions. Look for an invitation also to participate in a "WGS as Interdisciplinary" gathering towards the end of this semester!

From Sonita Sarker, Chair,
Women's and Gender Studies

What's In a Name?

Graham Turner - '07

I often joke about this with friends but as it turns out semantics really are fantastically important. This came into clear relief a few weekends ago when I attended the Women's and Gender Studies Department retreat. About an hour and a half was devoted to the issues of a possible department name change. Many ideas were offered, and the group discussed the political and academic ramifications of changing the name. Although I had given the idea passing thought, the discussion that happened really illustrated for me just how important the name of a department is.

We spent some time looking at and discussing the various names that WGS-like departments at other schools use. Several of them included Feminist, others used Queer. The two schools from England listed in the examples also used Culture in their titles. While it might be overly simple to assume that people read so much into a name it is crucial that the name of the department properly reflect its areas of study.

As several people pointed out (and I must admit here that this is the option that I favor), it seemed a natural step to include Sexuality or Queer within the current name. Sexuality appeared to be the favored term because Queer was believed to express a vested interest in queer politics as opposed to the department's purpose of looking at sexuality in general and as a system. I don't want to misrepresent the discussion that went on but I can't help but plug my favorite. I think that the best approach is to add Sexuality and to move the words around as we see fit. Plus, the acronym of the department should be cool too.

But I suppose that the most important part of our discussion was about how we are to go about making a change to the name. It was agreed upon by all that this is a much larger discussion than solely for those present. So now the goal is to bring the discussion to the whole community. From what I understand this involves engaging not only faculty and staff but also students. WGS plans on creating a dialogue about its name and what everyone else thinks about the possibility of change. Several people (myself included) expressed hope that this process could be concluded before the beginning of fall semester. Now this process is in the hands of everyone interested. Make your own voice heard and let WGS know what you think about its name and where you see it going in the future.



2005 WGS Retreat Attendees



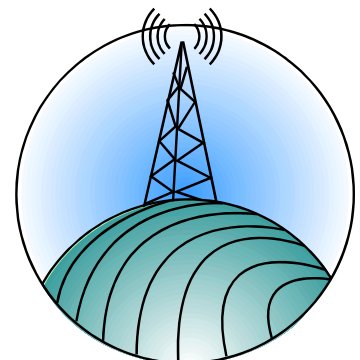
91.7 FM

Megan Sheehan – '05

Beginning this semester, the Macalester College radio station began webcasting its programming on the internet. This allows the radio station to reach alumni, prospective students, community activists, parents, friends, and anyone else all around the world. This simultaneously offers a wonderful opportunity for future involvement between WMCN and the Women's and Gender Studies department. Clearly the WGS department has a strong focus on highlighting the connections between theory and practice, and hopefully in the future WMCN can be a tool and a collaborator in this project. For example, how wonderful would it be for there to be a radio program co-hosted with students and a partner from a community organization that they are working with? Or a show focusing on community activism in the twin cities? Or a program about underground publishing around the world? While these programs don't exist yet, I sincerely hope that these connections will be drawn in the future and that WMCN can be used as an apparatus in helping the WGS department further its goals.

Take for example KFAI Fresh Air Radio based on the West Bank in Minneapolis. While clearly KFAI and WMCN have very different specific settings and circumstances, a lot can be learned through looking at KFAI's community focus and action. With their commitment to social justice and to providing a platform for various communities to voice their perspectives, KFAI demonstrate what vibrant community radio can look like. While media outlets are being gobbled up left and right by mega corporations and mainstream media offers little more than the same conservative perspective, it is extremely important to focus on both the accomplishments and the future potential for independent media. This is particularly true of independent media that is as open-ended as WMCN. WMCN could be used as an amazing tool for activism and for discussing issues that wouldn't dare be touched on corporate stations. I invite anyone who is interested in getting involved to contact us at the station!

Interested in WMCN? Email msheehan@macalester.edu
Visit our website at <http://www.macalester.edu/wmcn>



Alumni Shot-Spots

Martha Aby –'98

In 1998, I graduated from Macalester with an English/Women's and Gender Studies double major and a Spanish minor. I then started working for Casa de Esperanza as a community educator. The fall of 1999 I began the Masters in Social Work program at the University of Minnesota. I graduated the spring of 2001. I then began to work for Ramsey County in the Children's Mental Health Department, first as a Children's Mental Health Case Manager and then as a Children's Mental Health Crisis Worker (with the Children's Crisis Response team). I am currently a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and am able to provide therapy and social work services to the families I encounter.

I came to the field of social work in a haphazard manner. I was sitting in Chile (during my study abroad semester) realizing that I wanted to be an active agent in social change. I returned to Macalester and began to take courses that would allow me to enter a MSW program. I began my MSW career stating that I would "never work for the county" and "never be a case manager" and then quickly defied both. I have come to realize that even though I was adamantly an "outside the system" advocate in college that I can do more for families from within. My feminist perspective helps me do my job better and helps keeps my coworkers on their toes.

My WGS background has been able to help me think about children and families in context. I think about not only their mental health issues but how society interacts with them and how they have come to this particular place in time. To be a good crisis worker, one must be able to quickly interpret multiple strains of data and create a viable theory within minutes. This takes a good understanding of clinical data, human behavior, social structures, and systems. My ability to process information in a strengths based, clientcentric manner has been greatly influenced by my Macalester education in general and my WGS course work in particular.

Join us for our annual . . .

WGS Career Night

Thursday, April 14th

5:30 – 8:00 pm

4th Floor Lounge,
Old Main

Featured speakers

Martha Aby – '98

Natalie Harter – '00

Natalie Harter – '00

I graduated from Macalester College in 2000 with a degree in Women's and Gender Studies and Anthropology. Since graduating, I have worked as an editorial intern at Ruminator Review and a publicist at Llewellyn Publications in St. Paul; where I have been acting as an acquisitions editor for the past 2 ½ years. I also served on the board of Borealis Literary Review, and I am a freelance manuscript reviewer and dance critic for mnartists.org. I have recently applied to graduate school for admittance in fall 2005 in the field of performance studies, where I hope to continue my undergraduate work in the study of feminist ethnography.



Natalie Harter - '00



WGS Event Calendar

In the 'Feminisms Today' speaker series, hosted every month by WGS, we have enjoyed the company of groups and individuals that are renowned for their contribution to local, national and international groups.

FEBRUARY 2005

- Thu. 3rd **Aurora Levins Morales, Ph.D.** - "History, Poetry, and Justice"
- Thu. 3rd - **Carmelita Tropicana** - Performance/ Lecture
- Sat. 5th **Women's and Gender Studies Retreat**
- Thu. 10th **Tara Mateik** - Screening of "TOILET TRAINING: LAW AND ORDER IN THE BATHROOM"
Tara Mateik with The Sylvia Rivera Law Project. 2003, 26 min.

MARCH 2005 - *Celebrating Women's History Month*

- Tue. 1st
7:00-9:00 pm
Davis Lecture Hall, Campus Center
Screening: Shirley Chisholm Documentary
Shirley Chisholm was the first African-American woman elected to Congress, and was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the Presidency in 1972. She was also the co-founder of the National Organization for Women, NOW. She died on January 1, 2005.
- Thu. 3rd
7:00 pm - Play
Alexander G. Hill Ballroom, Kagin Commons
Imani Henry - "B4T" Play
Imani Henry is an activist, writer and performer. His play, B4T, is a smart, funny, and moving multi-media theater that explores race, sexuality and gender expression through the lives of three Black, masculine, female-bodied people.
- Tue. 8th
12:00-1:00 pm
4th Floor Lounge, Old Main
Greta Gaard, Ph.D. - "A Feminist Perspective on the Corporatization of Water"
Her talk will explain how water becomes a feminist issue, particularly in less developed countries where water-gathering and water-maintenance is seen as part as women's gendered role. In the U.S., a feminist perspective on water takes a more structural approach, building on an ecological feminist theory of democracy.

APRIL 2005

- Wed. 6th
5:30 pm - Reception
7:00 pm - Panel Discussion
Weyerhaeuser Board Room/Lounge
Theater and Dance Interdepartmental Symposium
Topic: "WHERE MY DAWGS AT? - Representing and Imagining Black Gay Men on Stage, in the Media and in the Community."
- 7-9th
The Latino Studies Symposium
- Thu. 14th
5:30-8:00 pm
4th Floor Lounge, Old Main
WGS Career Night - Featured Alumni Speakers
Martha Aby - Ramsey County Children's Mental Health Dept. - Clinical Social Worker
Natalie Harter - publicist at Llewellyn Publications in St. Paul
- Thu. 28th
5:30-8:00 pm
4th Floor Lounge, Old Main
WGS Research Presentations
Students will present their research projects.

MAY 2005

- Wed. 4th
9:00 am - 1:00 pm
4th Floor Lounge, Old Main
WGS as Interdisciplinary Event
Crosslisting Retreat



"Don't listen to those who say, 'You can't.' Listen to the voice inside yourself that says, 'I can.' "

Shirley Chisholm

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