



**ROOSEVELT  
UNIVERSITY**

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## WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM

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VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1 FALL 2011

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This issue of the newsletter glimpses the range of academic, activist, and advocacy work undertaken by WGS students and faculty. As you read about this work with the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE), Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), the Mansfield Institute for Social Justice and Transformation, and Women in Film, Chicago, you will see how such projects demonstrate the meaningful connections between scholarly inquiry, feminist praxis, and social justice.

In the classroom, the WGS Program continues to foster rigorous, interdisciplinary approaches to the field. A new class of MA students from diverse backgrounds and a growing number of talented undergraduate minors have enriched our classes in exciting ways. Adjunct instructor Cat Jacquet introduced a new course, "Gender, Violence, Resistance," which, as you will read in the following pages, studied models for theorizing and resisting gender-based violence. And Marjorie Jolles, reprising her popular course, "The Body: Agency, Pain, Desire," included a visit from Rachel DeWoskin, author of *Big Girl Small*, to consider the role of creative work and reader responses in understanding theories and experiences of the body.

Looking forward to the spring semester, I would like to encourage all of our newsletter readers to mark their calendars for the second annual undergraduate symposium and to check the CFP at the end of this newsletter for details on submitting work. This year's theme will be "Debates and Dialogues," and the WGS faculty and the WGS Minors Advisory Board have been working hard to plan the event, which will be held March 30, 2012. The symposium will feature a keynote speaker, a day of panels and roundtables showcasing the creative, academic, and activist work of our dynamic undergraduate students, and the much-celebrated WGS Trivia luncheon.

As we reach the close of this busy and productive semester, I hereby extend warm thanks to everyone who contributed to our successful courses and events. Best wishes for a relaxing and enjoyable winter break, and I will see you in 2012!



Ellen O'Brien  
Director, Women's and Gender Studies

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## FACULTY INTERVIEW: JEFF EDWARDS AND ILLINOIS SAFE SCHOOLS ALLIANCE

### **Q. What does the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance do?**

A. Well, it does three sorts of work. The first thing it does is support youth in organizing in their schools for LGBTQ awareness. For instance, many high schools have a gay-straight alliance. The ISSA supports those types of organizations all over the state. The second thing it does is offer professional development for teachers. ISSA teaches a curriculum that helps teachers become more aware of ways they can support LGBT youth, and be more aware of LGBT harassment. We help them think through the definitions of LGBT terms, and encourage the adoption of school wide anti-bullying policies. The third thing we do is advocacy. We work to change laws concerning LGBT youth, and also try to reach out across Illinois to include as many schools in our organization as possible.



### **Q. How did you get involved?**

A. I was recruited to the board because of my past LGBTQ and AIDS work, though this is the first time I've worked with youth in a sustained way. I've served on the Education and Training Committee where I did a lot of curriculum work, and now I'm moving more towards advocacy work.

### **Q. What is the thing you've been most proud of accomplishing at ISSA?**

A. Well I've only been a part of the organization for a year and counting so there aren't that many "big things" that I've been involved in. However, in the spring of 2010 we were part of a statewide coalition that convinced the legislature to adopt a policy that forces all public schools to have an anti-bullying policy. We are now working to actually implement it.

### **Q. Is ISSA present only at the high school level?**

A. At the moment we do work primarily with high schools and high-school-aged students. However, we are trying to get involved in middle and elementary schools to try and address the bullying issue before it gets to a high-school level.

### **Q. If someone wanted to get involved how might they go about doing that?**

A. They are more than welcome to e-mail me. We do a few large events a year and could always use more volunteers so that the youth are free to do their thing. There are also other opportunities with varying levels of commitment that I would be happy to discuss with anyone who is interested.

Dr. Jeff Edwards is a core member of the Women's and Gender Studies faculty and an Associate Professor of Political Science. His research interests include urban studies, social movements, and LGBTQ politics. You can contact him at: [jedwards@roosevelt.edu](mailto:jedwards@roosevelt.edu)

-Interview by Liz Stigler, WGS MA student

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## FACULTY PROFILE: CATHERINE JACQUET TEACHES “GENDER, VIOLENCE, RESISTANCE”

Catherine Jacquet, a PhD candidate in History at UIC, is teaching the course “Gender, Violence, and Resistance” this Fall semester at Roosevelt University. Jacquet has been researching the politics of sexual violence in the US for the past six years. She was excited to turn her research into a special topics course for RU students: “I constructed this course to theorize sexual violence within a larger context. Often times it is seen as an isolated and unfortunate event, and not connected to larger constructions like race, class, or ability. I wanted students to understand gender-based violence in a much more complex and complicated way.”

In this course students discover the intersections of politics, race, gender, and colonialism (amongst other categories) in relation to domestic violence and sexual assault. The class this semester is comprised of both graduate students and undergraduate students, proving for interesting discussions: “The good thing about Women and Gender Studies courses is we typically tend to have students who are self selecting” says Jacquet. It’s surprising and wonderful that there happens to be a lot of non-WGS minors and majors taking this course: “It’s nice because we have all different perspectives and different reasons for taking the course.”

This class is extremely relatable and important for students considering how prevalent rape and assault are; for example, 20-25 percent of American women have experienced sexual assault of some kind. “In general I think WGS courses tend to be more relevant to people’s lives and connections can be made,” says Jacquet. Some may look at this course and feel that it only focuses on women, if solely because statistics show that women are at a greater risk. However, Jacquet makes it very clear that this is everyone’s issue: “It’s not just about men vs. women, it’s not just about patriarchy. There are particular constructions of masculinity that might encourage men to victimize women, and constructions of femininity that also make men view women as victims.” She goes on to passionately say, “It’s all wrapped up in ideas about gender. That’s why I prefer to use the language of ‘gender-based’ violence because it not about male bodies necessarily against female bodies.”

Jacquet decided to get involved in the anti-violence movement in 2002. Her research and new found interest in the subject turned into a dissertation and a position as a volunteer medical advocate in 2004 with Rape Victim Advocates. Currently she is a volunteer lecturer for the same organization, RVA, as well as the Chicago Rape Crisis Hotline.

So far, the course has been extremely successful. All students are engaged and coming up with their own epiphanies related to the subject of gender-based violence. Jacquet explains, “Hopefully the class will encourage students to pursue a social justice response. I hope that learning about how gender-based violence is being perpetrated (in all different ways) will move some people to action. I always hope that with my classes.”

-Taylor Massa, WGS minor



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## IN THE CLASSROOM: AUTHOR RACHEL DEWOSKIN VISITS MARJORIE JOLLES' BODY CLASS

The students in Marjorie Jolles' class "The Body: Agency, Pain, Desire" had the rare opportunity to meet Rachel DeWoskin, author of the novel *Big Girl Small*, a required text for the class this semester.

Professor Jolles met Rachel through a mutual friend and after reading *Big Girl Small* this past summer, saw connections between the themes in the novel and the topics covered in the body class.

"I went to hear Rachel give a reading, and was immediately struck by the intelligence and authenticity of the voice of Judy Lohden--the narrator and protagonist of the novel," explains Jolles. "Judy, a Little Person, is a non-normatively embodied teenager, and the social pressures she experiences at home and in high school, along with the ways her body makes her special (in all senses of that word), bring to life so many of the philosophical themes I wanted to explore in The Body course."

"For example, Judy prompts the reader to reflect on the cultural imperatives we encounter that insist our outer bodies mirror some inner truth about ourselves; the cultural production and consumption of the 'freak' and the way 'freaks' manage cultural anxieties about personhood; the way we interpret bodily specialness as a kind of blessing/curse; the productive and restricting forces of gender normalization; and neoliberal ideologies that posit a sameness to all of us underneath and despite the differences our bodies express."

Rachel's visit fostered some interesting discussion, as students were assigned the task of creating two thoughtful questions that incorporated ideas from previous class discussions, and which clearly articulated concepts and themes from course readings.

"I always look for people to bring to visit my classes who can illuminate course topics and texts in fresh ways," says Jolles. "It benefits students to talk about their experiences with texts with diverse people, because in the process of talking about what they have read, students tell a story about their own learning and thinking--a practice that strengthens the learning and thinking process."

Students were also asked to reflect on the importance of conversing with an author about his or her work, considering the fact that, as students, we most often do not get the opportunity to meet the authors of our course texts.

"I hope it will be an inspiring and new experience for students to dialogue with the author of the novel we spent a few weeks analyzing together, to share their interpretations of the novel's plot, characters, and implicit arguments and hear more about the author's own motivations," says Jolles.

When asked if she has any plans to have more in-class author visits, Jolles responded, "I'm not often in the position to invite an author of a course text to visit my classes, but whenever I find an author who lives nearby and is open to the invitation, I will invite them to speak to my classes!"

-Linnea Kennedy, WGS MA student



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## IN THE CLASSROOM: STUDENTS REVIEW COURSE TEXTS

Heyes, Cressida. *Self Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

In Prof. Marjorie Jolles' class "The Body: Agency, Pain, Desire" we read *Self Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies* by Cressida J. Heyes. The book critically examines the problematic relationship between the authentic self and the corporeal one, and forces the reader to reflect on their own embodiment. Heyes applies the Foucauldian concepts of 'normalization' and 'discipline' to her analysis of the body via case studies in transgender identities, cosmetic surgery, and weight loss. Each chapter focuses on a transformative bodily process (referred to as a technology of the self) that is designed to create an exterior self that more truthfully reflects the interior self, all the while unpacking the issues surrounding why authenticity is tied to appearance.

One of the book's recurring themes is perception, or as it is referred to in the text, "pictures of the self". We are constantly creating pictures in order to make sense of ourselves and our world, but the danger comes when we cannot see beyond one particular picture and thus become locked into one way of seeing, something Heyes calls "aspectival captivity". She uses the captivity framework to question the motivations behind getting cosmetic surgery, or going on dramatic diets, asking if undergoing such transformation can be authentically empowering or if it is a manifestation of one's captivity.

This book is a fascinating read that effectively introduces the reader to Foucauldian theories, and I highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in philosophies of embodiment and/or constructions of the self.

-Liz Stigler, WGS MA Student



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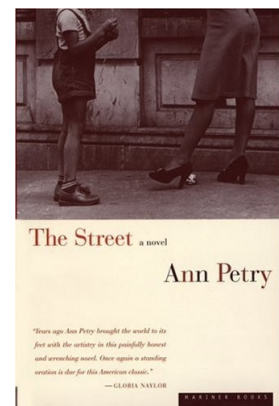
Petry, Ann. *The Street*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991.

As part of the Women's and Gender Studies graduate course "Feminist Modes of Inquiry," Professor Ann Brigham introduced her students to *The Street*, a fictional work by Ann Petry. *The Street*, written in lyrical prose, captures the reader and takes you for a walk on the streets of Harlem in the 1940s. Lutie Johnson, the main character, is a young black mother with an eight-year-old son, Bub, who desperately tries to escape the streets that imprison both of them. Lutie is caught in the politically established social systems that illustrate the harsh realities of being a black, single mom.

Lutie Johnson envisions a world of opportunity and is driven by hope and a relentless need to get away from the overwhelming odds that go against her. Ann Petry takes you to the unkempt, dark and damp streets, and the narrow, dimly-lit hallways, where dreams turn into resignation. Lutie doesn't give up, but her resolve slowly fades into anger against the powerful racially and sexually defined institutions that keep her and her son from finding a safe and better home.

*The Street* is a story that tells more; it is a critical analysis, through literature, of a time period that has passed, but is just as real today; life on the street remains a struggle when you are a woman and a woman of color. Lutie Johnson was "raped" by the white man of her future and "raped" by the black man of her soul. This absorbing read will shed a light on the intricate patriarchal systems that continue to influence life today.

-Jane Whitford, WGS MA Student



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## STUDENT PROFILE: JULIE MYNATT AND WOMEN IN FILM/CHICAGO

In 1920 Catherine Filene published *Careers for Women*, a vocational guide aimed at helping high school and college aged women determine careers to pursue. Included is the category "Motion-Picture Work," an art and communication outlet only twenty years old when the book was published. In the summer of 2011, Women's & Gender Studies graduate student Julie Mynatt embarked on a project in collaboration with Women in Film/Chicago ([www.wifchicago.org](http://www.wifchicago.org)) to examine how this 1920 definition of motion picture work as a career for women holds up in Chicago in 2011.

Through a series of one-on-one interviews and in three separate round-table discussions (held in late June at Cutters, Inc. in Chicago) Julie spoke with nearly two dozen female directors, producers, editors and others employed in the production of motion picture-based media. These women shared their candid views about Chicago as a production center, the challenges surrounding freelance work, and how family needs line up with the busy demands of media creation.

Outside of the specificity of the motion picture industry, the information gathered in this project reflects bigger themes about women in the workplace, women as artists, working women in Chicago and working motherhood. From the collected interviews and round table discussions as well as from a review of existing literature about these subjects, the resulting 25+ page report from Julie's study will be presented to the Women in Film/Chicago board of directors in late October as a means to provide the organization with information about existing issues these women face and ideas how to expand upon its mission and continue to serve its membership.

-Julie Mynatt, WGS MA student



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## MEGGIE CHAMBERS AND RU CAASE: COLLEGES ALIGNED AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) is a non-profit organization that actively promotes justice and advocates for victims and survivors of sexually motivated violence. CAASE collaborates with service providers, advocates, law enforcement and survivors of prostitution to work towards policy reform. I learned about CAASE while trying gain a permanent volunteer position over the Summer. After meeting the Executive Director, Rachel Durschlag, I learned of their recent initiative to create local student chapters. None had yet been established, so Roosevelt University and I would be the first to pioneer this great cause. I accepted the opportunity without hesitation.

My strong passion for these issues stems from my personal experiences and first-hand accounts of the detrimental effects caused by sexual violence. Nationally, the average age of entry into the sex trade is 12-14 years old. Too often people assume that human trafficking happens outside the scope of our reach. The sex trade industry does not only exist internationally. Between 16,000 and 24,000 women and girls are involved in Chicago's sex trade industry. Approximately 90% of them are sexually and physically abused at the hands of traffickers, pimps and people that purchase sex. In Chicago less than 1% of prostitution related arrests are of pimps. It is difficult to conceptualize that today victims experience far greater consequences than the people responsible for committing acts of sexual violence.

The Colleges Aligned Against Sexual Exploitation | Roosevelt University Chapter voluntarily works toward advancing CAASE's mission to eliminate the harms of sexual exploitation by advocating, creating awareness, and fundraising for victims and survivors. This year we are going to do several film screenings, a fundraiser in accordance with PROMISE, for survivors that have recently escaped the harms of prostitution, and a presentation from Rachel Durschlag on her work to end the demand for sexual exploitation. Starting the CAASE | Roosevelt University Chapter is important for students to recognize and be aware of these issues. It is important for social justice. –Meggie Chambers, International Studies major



For more information about RU CAASE, contact Meggie Chambers at [RUCAASE@gmail.com](mailto:RUCAASE@gmail.com).

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## MANSFIELD INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE & COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND FAMILY ISSUES (COFI)

This year, WGS minors Rachel Colias and Olivia Kaplan were selected to participate in the Mansfield Institute's Scholar Activist fellowship program. Students selected for the program are responsible for engaging in research, under the guidance of a faculty mentor, to support community-based organizations in Chicago that are interrupting the cradle-to-prison pipeline. COFI, Community Organizing and Family Issues, is one such community-based organization.

For the past five years, COFI has worked with several public schools in Chicago to establish Restorative Justice practices (e.g.: peer juries, peace centers and peace circles). These practices are intended to replace the harsh, punitive disciplinary practices that are currently common in the Chicago Public Schools. COFI trains parents in the community to work in the schools as "circle keepers." As circle keepers, parents run Peace Centers in a designated school room; these Peace Centers are safe places where children and adolescents can go in individual and group learning settings, to get at the root of problems that cause disciplinary problems, to engage in peer juries, and to learn techniques for resolving conflicts. The belief is that the intensive activities and support of Peace Centers interrupt the school-to-jail pipeline by diverting students away from suspensions and expulsions, while also teaching them life-long conflict resolution skills. Longitudinal quantitative data showing the rates of suspensions and expulsions, collected by COFI at the schools with established Peace Centers, shows that after a five year presence in the Brunson School, there is an 80% improvement in academics, behaviors and attitudes of students who participated in the Peace Center.

The purposes of this qualitative study are a) to ethnographically investigate the practices and processes that take place in Peace Centers at two Chicago schools and b) to understand the experiences of those whose lives are impacted by the Peace Centers, including the parents who are circle keepers, the school administrators who have welcomed restorative justice practices into their buildings, the teachers who refer students to the Peace Centers, and the students who attend Peace Center programs and activities. In COFI's words, the purpose of this study is to know if Peace Centers "make a difference." The research COFI has asked us to conduct will provide them with rich ethnographic descriptions about what takes place in the Peace Centers and with interview data about the influence of Peace Centers on individual lives and school climate.

"My experience with COFI and their Peace Circles at Wells High School has definitely been a great one," says WGS minor Rachel Colias. "It started a little slow, but once more girls in the school learned about the Peace Circles and began attending on a regular basis the whole thing really took off. The program now has regular attendance three times a day and the girls who come stay very consistent. Programs like these are vital to high schools. These young girls have something to say and are so commonly brushed off by the adults and people around them that, once you just ask their opinion on something, how they feel comes pouring out. Everyone needs an outlet like this, regardless of age or gender, and the fact that COFI provides this for a group of people, young students, who need it the most is absolutely wonderful and always positively effective."

The project has been "both eye opening and rewarding" says WGS minor Olivia Kaplan. "I have vastly enjoyed working on this project and believe in the importance of both qualitative research and restorative justice. I look forward to using the stories and information gathered to aiding COFI in their fight for restorative justice and in furthering equality in the education system."

-Prof. Leslie Rebecca Bloom, WGS Core Faculty Member

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WGS graduate assistants and newsletter editors Elizabeth Stigler and Linnea Kennedy would like to thank all the students and faculty who contributed to this issue.



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# CALL FOR PROPOSALS AND PARTICIPATION

## DEBATES AND DIALOGUES: A SYMPOSIUM FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT WORK IN WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

**Friday, March 30, 2012  
Roosevelt University – Chicago Campus**

Proposals are welcome on creative, academic, and activist work  
in women's and gender studies, including the following topics:

Race, Class, and Intersectionality  
Gender, Performance, and Creativity  
Global and Transnational Feminisms  
Transgender Theory and Activism  
Gender and Sexuality in Popular Culture  
Environmentalism, Sustainability, and Eco-Feminism  
Men and Feminism

**Consider participating in one of the following ways:**

Propose an individual paper presentation. Paper presentations should be 10-15 minutes long (or 5-7 double-spaced pages).

Propose a pre-constituted panel of three paper presentations on a related theme. Each paper presentation should be 10-15 minutes long (or 5-7 double-spaced pages).

Propose a topic for a pre-constituted roundtable discussion. Roundtables include 5-6 students who each prepare 5-minute remarks (2 double-spaced pages) on a shared topic or question for audience discussion.

**\*\*Proposal Deadline: February 10, 2012\*\***

Proposals must contain:

Each participant's name, email address, and undergraduate major/minor

For an individual paper presentation: paper title and 75-word description

For a pre-constituted panel of three paper presentations: paper titles, 75-word descriptions for each, and panel title

For a roundtable discussion: roundtable title and 75-word description

Email proposals to WGS Graduate Assistant, Linnea Kennedy, at [lkennedy02@mail.roosevelt.edu](mailto:lkennedy02@mail.roosevelt.edu)

For more information, contact Professor Ellen O'Brien, at [eobrien@roosevelt.edu](mailto:eobrien@roosevelt.edu)

**Women's and Gender Studies Program at Roosevelt University**

**Associate Professor Ellen O'Brien, Director  
[eobrien@roosevelt.edu](mailto:eobrien@roosevelt.edu)**

**Roosevelt University, College of Arts and Sciences  
Mailstop: 724, 430 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605**

**For more information about the program and to view course listings, please visit  
<http://roosevelt.edu/wgs>**