As we bring another productive semester to a close, we take this opportunity to highlight new program developments and initiatives, approaches to WGS pedagogy and scholarship, and collaborations on events and projects. All of these endeavors underscore the program’s important contributions to the RU mission of academic excellence and social justice.

Looking forward to the spring semester, please mark your calendars for the annual undergraduate symposium and check the CFP at the end of this newsletter for details on submitting work. This year’s theme will be “(En)gendering Social Justice.” The WGS faculty and the WGS Minors Advisory Board have been working hard to plan the event, which will be held February 28, 2014. The symposium will showcase the creative, academic, and activist work of our undergraduate students. There are many ways to participate as presenters, moderators, and of course, audience members. We hope to see you there!

Please also note the call for submissions for the Writing and Activism Awards, which the WGS Program established last year in order to recognize and honor the notable achievements of our students. The information on submissions appears at the back of this newsletter and on our website. The deadline is April 11, 2014. Please consider submitting your work!

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 a happy new year.

Ellen O’Brien
Director, Women’s and Gender Studies
Over the last few years, the WGS Program has developed in significant ways. We have opened the Gender Justice Space, instituted an annual undergraduate symposium, created annual writing and activism awards, developed our core and affiliated faculty, and increased undergraduate enrollments and minors. Capitalizing on the momentum of these significant developments, the WGS Program is now undertaking a comprehensive planning process to imagine the future and direction of our program. WGS faculty and students are coming together to consider curriculum, programming, resources, and the possibility of creating an undergraduate major in WGS. The potential for growth at the undergraduate level comes in the context of a reorganization of institutional resources. In August, due to decreases in enrollment and institutional support, admissions to the MA and Graduate Credential Program were rendered “temporarily inactive” for a two-year period. While we face the difficult challenges of maintaining our graduate program, we also welcome the opportunity to create more diverse possibilities for undergraduate education and programming.

- Ellen O’Brien, Director, Women’s and Gender Studies

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WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM OPENS GENDER JUSTICE SPACE ON CAMPUS

Beginning in the fall 2013 semester, the Women’s and Gender Studies program was given full access to a large room in Roosevelt’s Auditorium building, re-naming it the Gender Justice Space. This safe space is open to all involved and/or interested in promoting gender justice on campus and is a place of tolerance, respect, inclusion, and diversity.

The Gender Justice Space provides room for meetings and events to take place, offering a large conference table, access to a chalkboard, and a television for projecting powerpoints and screening documentaries. In addition, this space provides a lounge area, computers for academic work, and the WGS Lending Library.

The on-campus LGBTQ activist student group, RU PROUD, holds their weekly meetings in the space. The Women’s and Gender Studies program hosted its annual fall social as an inaugural event in the Gender Justice Space. Leslie Bloom’s class held their Readers Theater in the space as well. (For more information on the Readers Theater, please see the article on page 7). The space is also becoming increasingly popular as a lounge and study space for gender justice activists.

-Molly Barnard, WGS MA Student
Professor Marjorie Jolles will be teaching a course sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. This course will let students grapple with the enduring question of “What is a Family?” –Molly Barnard, WGS MA Student

**What inspired you to teach this course?**

In my courses and my research, themes of the family keep coming up and I thought I ought to explore it more directly. And while the family is a topic of personal intellectual curiosity, it's also a topic of fierce civic debates: polemics over the changing gender roles in American families; burgeoning practices of transnational surrogacy; same-sex marriage debates; Congressional efforts to defund Planned Parenthood; and so on. So I began to imagine a course on the family that could investigate how this ever-shifting structure has shaped, and been shaped by, gender ideologies, political trends, and social and economic institutions.

**What was the process of getting the National Endowment for the Humanities to sponsor this course?**

The National Endowment for the Humanities solicits applications each year for its "Enduring Questions" grant program. This program gives humanities scholars funding to design and teach undergraduate courses that explore topics that endure, as subjects of inquiry, in the humanist tradition (for example: What is justice? What is happiness?). So I proposed "What is a family?", an undergraduate course in which students would read classic texts in the Western humanities tradition that offer differing conceptions of family, and I explained in my application that this course would equip students to engage knowledgeably in contemporary debates on the topic.

**How did you decide what kinds of learning mediums students would use, and why did you include a trip to the Holocaust museum in your syllabus?**

When I imagined this course, I kept thinking about the role that family imagery plays in the construction of families, in the construction of national and ethnic identity, and in the construction of private and public spheres. I knew I wanted students to grapple with these themes, and I soon realized that the best way to do it would be to give each student a blog space that allows for writing in a variety of genres and uploading and annotating imagery--both personal and publicly-circulating images--related to the family.

In thinking of ways to best expose students to the way the family functions as a keeper of national and ethnic memory, I immediately thought of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie. This museum's collection of artifacts from before, during, and after the Holocaust reveals the intimate relation between family life and politics, showing that how family is understood and enacted is directly related to how nation and tribe are understood and enacted, and vice-versa. This field trip is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**How do you see this course relating to the larger academic field of Women's and Gender Studies?**

The field of Women's and Gender Studies explores--among other things--how power, sexuality, and gender intersect, how gender ideology reproduces itself in everyday life, and how various spheres of human activity become gendered. The family is a central site of all of these phenomena. So I see "What is a Family?" as an examination of a crucial human structure—the family—that is our first encounter with power and which plays a primary role in how sexuality is used and how state institutions are structured.
Next spring, Professor Ann Brigham will be teaching a new course titled, “Women and Food”. This course brings together the growing field of Food Studies and Women’s Studies in order to understand the centrality of gender in the study of food. –Molly Barnard, WGS MA Student

What inspired you to teach this course?
It began with my own curiosity. Through my local farmers’ market, I met Danika Proctor, who owns and operates Lake Breeze Organic Farm with her husband Chad. I started thinking about the roles, experiences, and histories of women in the production of food. Often when we hear about women and food, we hear about eating disorders—what some scholars define as women’s “pathologies” around food consumption. Certainly, this area of inquiry is vitally important. At the same time, I was curious to learn more about other ways to examine women and food. For instance, the growth of farmers’ markets—and the increased attention to them—is part of a bigger phenomenon associated with alternative food movements (think locavore, organic, and urban farming, for instance) and with concerns about access to “good food.” How are women involved in and affected by these movements? What gender issues emerge in the production and consumption of food? My interest in this subject mushroomed (so to speak!), and I have become very interested in exploring women and food with approaches including the cultural, economic, ecological, sensual, and political.

What will students learn in this course?
Like me, I hope students will learn to be deeply curious about thinking about food in complex and varied ways. This course is organized around two main themes: the social history and the cultural representation of food in relation to women and gender (focusing primarily on the 20th- and 21st-century United States). In terms of social history, we will analyze wide-ranging “food practices”—everything from the manufacturing of new food products and technology (like frozen foods and kitchen stoves) to making dinner and writing cookbooks to surviving starvation and fighting for food justice. Our emphasis will be on historicizing these practices and thinking about the ways that food practices illuminate, reproduce, and/or challenge institutional forces such as racism, classism, colonialism, and capitalism. Then there’s the area of cultural representation—how do we portray women as producers, providers, and consumers of food in popular culture? How do these depictions convey gendered meanings that resonate beyond food? We’ll tackle such questions by examining advertisements and “iconic” American figures like Aunt Jemima and Betty Crocker. Overall, my main goal is for students to be excited and rigorous in their explorations, and hopefully, to make connections between their own food histories and practices and the ones we are studying.

How does the course fit into the larger field of Women’s and Gender Studies?
One of the foundational beliefs of WGS—and one of the unique contributions it makes to academia—is that the study of the mundane activities and routines of everyday life is centrally important to our understanding of larger culture. Food fits into this framework. The study of what we eat and how we eat, and the meanings, significance, and availability of food, is critically important to understanding the gendered constructions and roles of women in society as well as the priorities, problems, pleasures, and politics of American culture at different points in history.
STAFF PROFILE: LYNN WEINER
FORMER DEAN SPEAKS ABOUT ROOSEVELT’S WGS PROGRAM

Lynn Weiner, Professor and former Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, has a long history with the Women’s and Gender Studies program at Roosevelt. A strong supporter of gender justice, she has given much to the program over the years. –Molly Barnard, WGS MA student

How has your academic research related to the field of Women’s and Gender Studies?
I took one of the first courses offered in the U.S. In women's history when I was an undergraduate at the University of Michigan in the late 1960s. That sparked a love of the field and much of my work since has focused on gender, including a book on the history of women workers, and journal articles ranging from studies of motherhood to gender at Disney World. Also I was invited to participate on the President's Commission on the Celebration of American Women's History in 1998.

Can you describe how you were involved in forming the Women’s & Gender Studies program at Roosevelt?
Roosevelt had a pioneering program in Women’s Studies for adult students in the 1980s, in what is now the College of Professional Studies, and an undergraduate concentration in Arts and Sciences by 1980. And I had come to Roosevelt after a position directing the undergraduate Women’s Studies program at Northwestern. Another professor, art historian Susan Weininger (since retired) and I thought it would be interesting to pilot an Arts & Sciences graduate program in Women’s Studies as there were none in the city of Chicago and so together we proposed the MA program --with an undergraduate certificate component --and it was approved to start in the fall of 1996.

What is your perspective of how the WGS program fits into the larger College of Arts and Sciences?
I think interdisciplinary MA programs like WGS offer great opportunities for both students and professors to pursue work that might not fit in a conventional discipline. Our program draws from a variety of Arts and Sciences departments including English, history, sociology, political science, economics, psychology, and many more. Also it has developed into a wonderful minor field for undergraduate students in a variety of programs.

What connection do you see between the WGS program and the university's social justice mission?
You can't separate the WGS program from the social justice mission – our students study gender, women and sexuality from a wide variety of global perspectives and learn not only about critical thinking and writing but also about community activism and how they can make a difference in the world.

What impact do you see donors and other financial support having on the WGS program?
We've already benefitted from some generous donors such as Gloria Miner, the funders of the Grace Mary Stern scholarship, and others. Such funding makes a big difference in enabling students to attend the university, and also enables the program to provide resources that would otherwise not be available.

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience with the Women's and Gender Studies program?
We've been so lucky to have great leadership from program directors Ann Brigham and Ellen O'Brien, and from the core and affiliated faculty. And we were able to hire the first fully WGS professor a few years ago – Professor Marjorie Jolles. I've also really enjoyed getting to know some of our interesting, smart and committed students. I think this is a program that will continue to evolve and represent the best of what we value at Roosevelt.
Families: A Social Class Perspective was an interesting read for Professor Leslie Bloom’s course, WGS 306/406: Women, Social Class and Social Policy. Throughout the course we engaged with this work by feminist author, Shirley Hill, in which she analyzes social class differences between upper, middle, and low income families. Within her explanation of differences between these three distinct and categorized social class divisions, reveal how these categories exist in Western culture. Hill incorporates the importance of gender, ability, race, education, and marital status in regards to a family structured lifestyle to produce more of an intersectional analysis of why and how these social class differences exist. She also gives a historical background of the emergence and creation of the social class differences and lends suggestions of how, although it is a great challenge, upward mobility to a higher level income and social class can be reached. Hill also describes how social class is more than just the amount of income one possesses and that it is really about the behaviors and attitudes individuals have within those specific social class divisions which she helped to explain by showing the difficulty of mobility between classes. Hill briefly includes examples of difference in regards to family structures that are nontraditional and tries to explain how these situations relate and intersect with more traditional families and situations of race, class, and gender. Overall, this book has given me tools to analyze social class, race, and gender through the lens of the family.

-Brenden Paradies, WGS Minor
In the Classroom:
Leslie Bloom’s Students Perform a Readers Theater for Roosevelt

Students in Leslie Bloom’s course, WGS 306/406 “Women, Social Class, and Social Policy” spent their semester preparing for a unique end of the semester project, called a readers theater. A readers theater is a staged performance based on narratives developed out of interviews that emphasize social justice issues. The goal of this particular readers theater was to illustrate how social class positions and current economic policies create structural barriers for achieving the American Dream through higher education. The class also hoped that the readers theater would inspire the audience to be activists for educational reform. An important part of a readers theater is audience interaction, so the performance aimed at not only educating the audience, but also engaging in a productive discussion on the topic.

The specific performance for Bloom’s class was titled, “Rethinking the American Dream: Education in Capitalist America”. Students paired up and interviewed individuals whose experiences in the educational system illustrated a diverse picture of education in America. The data collected in the interviews was used as the base of the script, giving voice to these individuals’ experiences. With a specific focus on higher education, students utilized course readings and outside research to supplement the interviews to add theory and statistics. The different topics covered within the performance included: family, identity, educational background, social class, and defining the American Dream.

The students, aided by Professor Bloom, put on the performance entirely by themselves, from creating the program, to marketing the event, gathering data, writing and editing a script, acting in the performance, and writing a detailed academic paper on the experience. Students in the class hope to be able to publish the paper in a peer-reviewed academic journal.

This is the third time Professor Bloom has done a readers theater with her classes, though this is the first at Roosevelt. Professor Bloom says that she enjoys putting on readers theaters in her courses because it allows her to “structure the course in a creative way for students to develop a lot of new knowledge about social class and social policy”. It gives students a chance to utilize their creative skills in the classroom and combine it with theory about social class. Bloom
also thinks about this topic on a broader scale saying, “I also think that students are experiencing a great deal of anxiety about growing economic inequality and their own futures. Creating a readers theater and performing it allows for new knowledge development in a way that ends the semester with hope.”

The benefits of putting on a readers theater in an academic course for the students are many. Professor Bloom describes the ways in which students “develop new knowledge about how to collect, code, and analyze feminist narrative data, and they learn about readers theater performances as a form of public activism. I think that this additional benefit for students knowing that their public performance, based on their knowledge of scholarly research and their narrative data, is a meaningful scholar-activist accomplishment.” Many students in the course described their excitement about doing activism as part of a class, especially in such a creative way.

Doing a readers theater is not just for the benefit of the students. Professor Bloom acknowledges that she is able to teach about a topic in which she is deeply invested, and is never taught the same way twice. Particularly for a Women’s and Gender Studies core course, she appreciates that students are so involved in the creation of the course and have the opportunity to bring their own talents to the table.

Professor Bloom mentions that the process is not always neat and tidy. She describes that there is often a time in the semester when she and the students get anxious about completing the project on time, but that a sense of shared commitment carries them through. One of the greatest personal benefits for Professor Bloom is that, “once we see it coming together, there is such a feeling of achievement. As a professor, being able to nurture that process during the semester is a joy.”

The readers theater performance was held on Thursday, December 5th in Roosevelt’s Gender Justice Space. Over 30 people were in attendance. Students incorporated both narratives from their interviews with data and research to create an engaging and informative evening for guests.

-Molly Barnard, WGS MA Student
CALL FOR PROPOSALS AND PARTICIPATION

(En)gendering Social Justice:
A Symposium for Undergraduate Student Work
in Women’s and Gender Studies
~

Friday, February 28, 2014
Roosevelt University – Chicago Campus –AUD 244

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

- Race, Class, and Intersectionality
- Gender & Public Policy
- Transnational & Global Feminisms
- Gender and Sexuality in Popular Culture
- Transgender Theory and Activism
- Gender & the Workforce
- Environmentalism, Sustainability, and Eco-Feminism
- Masculinities & Feminism
- Families

**Proposal Deadline: February 2, 2014 by 10pm**

To propose an individual presentation, please submit a document including participant’s name, email address, undergraduate major/minor, title, and a short paragraph description of your presentation topic.

Presentations should be 10-15 minutes long (or 5-7 double-spaced pages).

Email proposals to WGS Graduate Assistant, Molly Barnard, at mbarnard01@mail.roosevelt.edu

For more information, contact Professor Ellen O’Brien, at eobrien@roosevelt.edu

WGS graduate assistant Molly Barnard thanks all the WGS students and faculty who contributed to this newsletter issue.
STUDENT AWARDS FOR ACTIVISM and WRITING IN WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES

The Women's and Gender Studies Program announces its annual awards for student activism and student writing. We seek to recognize:

Outstanding student activism that has made an impact on issues relevant to women's and gender studies by an undergraduate WGS minor, a WGS MA student, or a WGS Credential student.

Outstanding student writing on any topic relevant to the field of women's and gender studies, produced in an undergraduate or graduate WGS course (core or cross-listed) during the 2013-2014 academic year, including MA theses, capstone projects, and internships.

Complete instructions available on the WGS website: www.roosevelt.edu/WGS

The deadline for submissions is April 11, 2014.

Questions? Contact Professor Marjorie Jolles at mjolles@roosevelt.edu

Women’s and Gender Studies Program at Roosevelt University

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