



Women's *and* Gender Studies

From the Director: A Big Year for Women's and Gender Studies!

By: Margaret Jacobs, WGS Director



What a momentous year this has been in American history!

It's also been a banner year in the thirty-two-year history of the UNL Women's and Gender Studies program. We've restructured our program to enable us to have our own faculty, we've been authorized to hire a jointly appointed assistant professor, and we've received a grant to help internationalize our curriculum.

New Program Structure:

In 2007-2008, we worked with the new dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, David Manderscheid, to develop a new model for our program. At our Spring 2008 meeting, the faculty unanimously approved a recommendation to restructure our program to allow us to have positive faculty appointments. (Prior to this, without faculty, it had been difficult to ensure that our classes were taught, and we had not been able to shape the program to meet our own strategic goals or to expand and diversify the curriculum.) We forwarded our recommendation to the Dean, who approved it. Since then, we've formalized two joint appointments: Dr. Barbara DiBernard and Dr. Marie-Chantal Kalisa.

New Position:

Following on this new development, this fall, we were delighted to be given authorization to hire our first external faculty member for an Assistant Professorship in Transnational Feminism and Global Women's Rights. This new faculty member will be jointly appointed with Women's and Gender Studies and another appropriate department in the College of Arts and Sciences. We will be bringing in potential candidates this spring.

Kelly Funds Grant:

Late in the spring, we also learned that our Transnational Feminism Group had received a university system-wide grant to improve teaching. We won the grant for our proposal, "Developing Cross-Cultural Competencies in Global Women's Rights and Transnational Feminism." This fall, we formed a team of about fifteen faculty and graduate students who are meeting with consultants, developing a speaker series and study abroad opportunities, and creating a team-taught interdisciplinary class on Transnational Feminism and Global Women's Rights.



*Kelly Fund Luncheon
Speakers - Rosanne
Kennedy & Shamsa Ali*



We are all very excited by these positive developments for the Women's and Gender Studies program. They will help us to build a stronger program and to better serve our students. And that's what it's all about, after all.

Welcome to our New Faculty!

Barbara DiBernard, a full professor in the Department of English and Women's and Gender Studies, has been involved in the WGS program since the 1970s, served as its director from 1992 to 1998 and again in 2005-2006, and has been a leader in the emerging field of LGBTQ/Sexuality Studies. For many years she has taught courses in the English Department on gay and lesbian literature. Under her tenure as interim director of WGS in 2005-2006, she helped to establish a new LGBTQ/Sexuality Studies minor and has been teaching a new WGS course, WMNS 201: Introduction to LGBT Studies. As a faculty member with a joint appointment in English and WGS, Barbara will continue to teach WMNS 201, develop additional LGBTQ curriculum, recruit and mentor new faculty in this area, and oversee the LGBTQ minor.

Marie-
Chantal
Kalisa



Barbara DiBernard

Marie-Chantal Kalisa, an associate professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Women's and Gender Studies, has been integrally involved in the WGS program since 2002. Chantal served on the WGS Advisory Board from 2004 to 2006 and has directed our new Transnational Feminism research group since the fall of 2006. Chantal's current research focuses on women survivors of the Rwandan genocide. As a faculty member with a joint appointment in Modern Languages and WGS, Chantal will develop new curriculum on Global Women's Rights and Transnational Feminism and continue to direct the WGS group in this area.

WGS Career Workshop



On October 6th, the Women's and Gender Studies program put on its second annual Career Workshop to help answer the age-old question: what can I do with a Women's and Gender Studies degree? The workshop focused on three areas: Internships (Kelli Smith, Career Services), Law School (Susan Poser, Professor of Law and Associate to the Chancellor), and Graduate School (Michelle Howell Smith, Director of Graduate Recruitment).

WGS Colloquium Series:

"America's War on Sex: The Attack on Law, Lust, and Liberty" - Marty Klein, PhD

By Ashley Gruba,
WGS and Sociology Major,
LGBTQ/Sexuality Studies and
Education Minor



Marty Klein, noted author, sex therapist, and marriage counselor, visited the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on October 6 to talk to students and the Lincoln community about his latest book, *America's War on Sex: The Attack on Law, Lust, and Liberty*. Klein lives in California, and was kind enough to swing by Lincoln before heading to a social work conference in Omaha.

Klein's talk was informative, thoughtful, and humorous. He began by discussing the most radical institution of human existence: secular democracy, as inscribed in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Because of this secular democracy, Klein explained, every human being has the right to do or say whatever they want (so long as it does not hurt others, of course). The price of this freedom, however, is that your neighbor, and every other human being, gets that same right.

Klein went on to talk about how in our society people are socialized into feeling that their sexuality is bad or dangerous. As a result of this anxiety, people then tend to be anxious about the sexuality of others – and the “bad” and “dangerous” things that could result from it. Klein was particularly critical of what he called “the sexual disaster industry” and blamed it for the creation of many phony categories. When people talk about social issues or problems, he said, they tend to combine one problem with something else that is not inherently a problem, nor even related to the issue at all. For example, people will often talk about pornography and child pornography as the same thing, or prostitution and trafficking as the same thing.

Klein also emphasized the importance of the rights of all groups. If one group is denied its rights, any other group could be denied its rights as well. Overall, Marty Klein emphasized secular democracy and sexual freedoms. He advocates freedom of speech, freedom from censorship, and the creation of a society based on tolerance not demonization. Marty Klein was an amazing and entertaining speaker. And I hope we can get him to speak here at UNL again.



Marty Klein, Pat Tetrault, and Ryan Fette

WGS Colloquium Series: “Biases in Female Mate Choice: What Biologists Have Learned from Swordtail Fishes” - Alexandra Basolo, School of Biological Sciences, UNL

By Lyndie Christensen,
WGS Graduate Specialization
Student and M.A. Candidate
in Sociology



On Thursday, October 16th, Dr. Alexandra Basolo presented the science feature of the WGS fall colloquium series – “Female Biases in Mate Choice: What Biologists Have Learned from Swordtail Fishes.” Through her research on the presence, length, and color definition of swords in swordtail fishes, Dr. Basolo focused on the disadvantages of some of these features (in terms of energy expenditure and the threat of predation) and also their advantages (in terms of mating preference).

Though a feminist perspective does not initially readily appear in this research, the historical perspective explained by Dr. Basolo regarding natural selection made the feminist slant quite clear. Previous research in mating behavior greatly concentrated on male competition in mate choice – not surprising given the androcentrism prevalent in academia. In contrast, Dr. Basolo focuses on the role that female preferences play in mate choice; after all, the gamete with the greater investment in gestation wields the most power in mating behavior. Hence, male swordtail fishes have less power in mating and so they must compete with other males for the attention of female swordtail fishes.

According to her research, female swordtail fishes prefer male fishes with longer swords, particularly those with completed color composition (dark horizontal lines surrounding a lighter horizontal line) or partial color composition (at least one dark horizontal line). However, the preference for a longer sword diminishes with the threat of predation. When Basolo introduced a predatory effect, female swordtail fishes no longer preferred elongation.

This change in preference should come as no surprise – the female swordtail fishes endeavor to ensure their own survival, regardless of their preference for a male trait. The results indicate that though it may appear that the preference for a particular trait could be exploited, the likelihood is rare. Female swordtails fishes do prefer longer swords in males, but not to the extent that the presence of a male with a longer sword would endanger them.

Dr. Basolo’s talk was refreshing because it prompted me to think about sexual/gendered behavior in a different way. Though WGS is a multidisciplinary field,

it seems we infrequently have the opportunity to look at the gendered world through a scientific lens, an opportunity that was provided to us through Basolo’s presentation.



Alexandra Basolo presentation



Alexandra Basolo

WGS Colloquium Series: “Context and Contradiction: Standing in a Place I Did Not Know How to Imagine” - Dorothy Allison

By Janet Jarvis, Adviser and
Lecturer of English



Dorothy Allison is a wordsmith. She is one of those rare writers who can extract active emotion from her readers. As a lesbian and feminist she can proudly count herself among the greats like Grace Paley, Audre Lorde, and Gloria Anzaldúa. However, as a speaker, Allison is unmatched. Her voice rises and falls like a deep river and just as the audience is starting to drift, her storytelling changes into a self-challenge that usually involves an honest self-inventory. In her recent talk at UNL, she presented a male character who fantasizes about becoming the triumphant victim of a kidnapping. As she spoke, students began visibly to learn and identify with the young man as he fantasized about change; good or bad. Males and females leaned forward in the auditorium chairs. Somehow, Allison rendered rhetoric neutral. The united audience laughed, sighed and audibly agreed with the light-hearted but meaningful southern banter she offered after closing the story. Too soon, Allison quietly vacated the podium to thunderous applause. It was evident in the faces of everyone lucky enough to hear her that with Allison in no longer have the advantage and it is possible that carefully chosen words can be as tactile as comforting hugs.

*Dorothy Allison,
Union Auditorium*



Faculty/Staff Achievements

Donna Akers, Assistant Professor of History and Ethnic Studies, gave a presentation at the 2008 Sequoyah Research Symposium entitled "Challenging the Victors' History: Indian Removal in U.S. History Texts" in Little Rock, Arkansas. While traveling in Arkansas and Oklahoma, she conducted more interviews for her book-in-progress *Grandma Was an Indian Princess* that explores the uses of the popular image of the Indian "Princess" by the dominant society to maintain hegemonic relations of power over Native American women. In this work, she explores the reality of the lives of Native American women in Indian Territory (Oklahoma) in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Akers also will be traveling to Australia to the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education in December to deliver a presentation entitled, "Decolonizing the Master Narrative: A New Model for the Analysis of U.S. Genocide." While there, Akers will be conducting oral interviews of Indigenous leaders from around the world who are attending the conference about the problem of Human Trafficking of young women and girls from Indigenous communities -- a huge problem and urgent issue affecting thousands of individuals. In some instances, so many cases of trafficking have occurred that entire villages are empty of an

entire generation of girls and young women.

John Raible, Assistant Professor of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education, delivered the keynote address at the 15th Annual Midwest Adoption Conference held in Deerfield, Illinois in November. His talk was titled "Transracial Adoption Then and Now: Where We've Been and Where We're Headed."

Hilda Raz, Professor of English and Women's and Gender Studies, and Editor of the *Prairie Schooner*, published a new book in November as part of the Wesleyan University Press Poetry Series entitled *All Odd and Splendid* (available for purchase at www.upne.com).



Raz's edited volume of essays on Loren Eiseley, *Loren Eiseley: Commentary, Biography, and Remembrance*, is just out from UNP, Bison Books (available on nebraskapress.unl.edu).

Raz and her co-author, Aaron Raz Link, taught and read from their Lambda-Award finalist memoir, *What Becomes You*, at Wells College and Cayuga Community College (New York state) in October.

Glenda Dietrich Moore, WGS Program Associate, and **Tamy Burnett**, PhD student in English and Women's and Gender Studies, had an Art Show in November. It was held at Moore's home/studio.

ADVANCE GRANT

In September 2008, UNL received a grant submitted by **Mary Anne Holmes** and **Julia McQuillan** to the National Science Foundation. The ADVANCE-Nebraska grant of \$3.8 million will be used to recruit female faculty and to promote professional development for women in the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) at UNL. For more information about ADVANCE-Nebraska, go to <http://advance.unl.edu>.

TRAFFICK JAMMERS

"Traffick Jammers" is a new campus-community group dedicated to the fight against Human Trafficking, and open to all people on campus and in the community. It has formed task forces that will be working with law enforcement, social services, the media, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), educational institutions, and youth organizations on projects to raise awareness, educate, and act in the fight against this terrible crime. There are 16-17,000 people trafficked into the US each year from other countries, and many thousands of young "runaways" right here in the US that end up as trafficking victims, with most forced to provide commercial sex to strangers. Eighty percent of trafficking victims are women and children. Everyone is welcome and needed to help in the fight against Human Trafficking. For more info, contact Donna Akers at dakers2@unl.edu.



SAGE in South Dakota protesting the abortion ban amendment - which was subsequently defeated.



New Doctoral Field in Feminist Economics at UNL

By Ann Mari May, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Associate Professor of Economics

Although newly minted US doctoral students and disaffected faculty combing the *Journal of Economics* will see position announcements for fields such as environmental economics, health economics, or experimental economics, and even such fields as geospatial analysis and corporate governance, few, if any, fields in the queen of the social sciences openly address the economics of gender or feminist economics. In fact, the transformation to the study of gender in society that took place in the humanities and other social sciences several decades ago has still not caught on in economics.

Of course, we know that feminist economics is not taught at most of the doctoral institutions in the US. In fact, there seems to be striking evidence, for those of you that were following the almost comical banter about the possible nature of feminist economics on the history of economic thought listserv this past year, that there is a good deal of disinterest accompanied by even more confusion about the subject.

While it may be a few more years before the so-called “top ranked” institutions develop the confidence to expose their students to the creative challenges of feminist economics, others schools have begun to move forward. Most recently, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, perhaps the first doctoral institution in the US to do so, offered its first ever field in feminist economics to a doctoral student and fellow International Association For Feminist Economics (IAFFE) member – Elizabeth “Beth” Moorhouse.

According to Beth, attending IAFFE conferences in Washington DC and Los Angeles were instrumental in encouraging her to pursue feminist economics as a field of study. As she put it, “feminist economics is what sustained me through utility maximization models and Slutsky’s Theorem. In our doctoral seminar offered by Professor Ann Mari May, I went on to read the works of such feminist scholars as Bina Agarwal, Heidi Hartmann, Nancy Folbre, Diana Strassman, Marilyn Waring, Marianne Ferber, and Amartya Sen. Each broadened and deepened my understanding of economics. If the success of a field is determined by the passion and ingenuity of its thinkers, feminist economics has a flourishing future ahead and I am thrilled to be a part of it.”

Congratulations to Beth for having the courage to pursue feminist economics as a field of study in her doctoral program! We hope to see her at IAFFE conferences for years to come.



Beth Moorhouse - first UNL doctoral student in Feminist Economics

Rwanda Summer Program: “An Interdisciplinary Study of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath” - Summer Study Abroad, July 12-25, 2009

Postgenocide Rwanda is an important site of knowledge from which we learn about violence, human rights, reconciliation, and justice. After two weekends preparing at UNL, students will spend two weeks in Rwanda, hosted by the Interdisciplinary Genocide Studies Center in Kigali. The program is open to students, both undergraduate and graduate, from all disciplines.

More info: www.unl.edu/iaffairs or contact Dr. Chantal Kalisa at mkalisa2@unl.edu



For news, events, & info, go to:
<http://www.unl.edu/womenssp>

Summer Courses

WMNS 101 - Intro to Women’s and Gender Studies

WMNS 210 - Activism and Feminist Communities

WMNS 498 - Special Topics: Girls Coming of Age

For registration information, go to summer.unl.edu.

For course info, go to www.unl.edu/womenssp/summer.shtml

No Limits Conference:

Topic - “Feminisms, Environments, & New Media”
University of Nebraska at Omaha, March 6-7, 2009
Call for Papers - “No Limits” on the WGS website
(deadline for submission is January 30, 2009)

Spring 2009 Colloquium Series Topic Announced:

Women, Gender, Science and Medicine

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Campaign: LASWMNS07

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