



Women's *and* Gender Studies

From the Director: Greetings from Women's & Gender Studies!



By: Margaret Jacobs, WGS Director

We've had an eventful year. We hosted the No Limits student conference, "Global Issues, Local Voices," in March of 2010. Many thanks to Associate Director Rose Holz, who did most of the work to plan and organize the conference.

During the last year, we have been developing our three main emphasis areas: LGBTQ/Sexuality Studies, Transnational Feminism, and Women, Gender, and Science. For LGBTQ/Sexuality Studies, we conducted a search in 2009-2010 with the Department of Sociology to hire a specialist in this field. We are happy to announce that Emily Kazyak, joined our WGS core faculty this fall. Welcome, Emily!

Our Transnational Feminism group used its remaining Kelly Grant funds to team-teach a special section of WMNS 101 focused on Transnational Feminism in Spring 2010. The group also brought Dr. Obioma Nnaemeka as the keynote speaker at the No Limits conference. WGS and the Transnational Feminist group are delighted to welcome new program faculty member Alice Kang, jointly appointed in Political Science and Ethnic Studies.

We also won an interdisciplinary seed grant from the College of Arts and Sciences to develop our emphasis area in Women, Gender, and Science. Since last April 2010, we've been convening a Gender and Science Matters group to read and discuss the newest research on the topic, develop a speaker series (to be held in Spring 2011 – see page 5), build curriculum, and draft a hiring plan for joint appointments. New program faculty member Christina Falci is particularly interested in working with the Gender and Science Matters group. Welcome, Christina!

It would not be possible to convene these groups or hold all of our events without the dedicated work of our office staff members. Many thanks to Lori Weier, Catherine Medici-Thiemann, and Glenda Dietrich Moore for all of their behind-the-scenes efforts. We look forward to another dynamic year.

No Limits 2011

"NO LIMITS: Eco-Feminism & Artful Healing" Student Research Conference

Feature Performance by Haitian-American Lenelle Moise

March 4 & 5, 2011

University of Nebraska-Kearney (Call For Papers/abstracts due February 1)

<http://www.unk.edu/academics/womensstudies.aspx?id=7597>

WGS Colloquium Series:

“The Life and Surprising Adventures of Film Adaptation: Autobiographical Biography as a Mysterious Act of Translation”

- Lindsay Kerns

Leah Klein (Senior, Psychology Major) and Breana Romero (WGS Graduate, Spring 2010)

In her discussion of what she called “Autobiographical Biography,” not only did Lindsay Kerns share her knowledge of the cross-dressing sailor Mary Ann Talbot, but she also demonstrated how biography is not always cut and dry. While adapting the story of Mary Ann Talbot for the stage and the screen, Kerns was confronted by a number of difficulties, most of which arose from the question: How does one stay true to the historical life of Mary Ann Talbot while creating an artistic work? While approaching the varied aspects of this question, Kerns extensively researched the art of biography and coined a few new terms herself in the process.

First, Kerns termed her project an “autobiographical biography.” Although her work was a biography, her individual mark was indelibly left on her screenplay and short film. As the works went from paper to the stage and screen, the actors and actresses left their own marks on the story as well. What had begun as the story of one woman’s life became a collaboration of many lives. Assessing her own part in the whole process, Kerns chose to refer to herself as an “historian-poet.” She took what historians use as factual information about the life of Talbot and added her own creative resources to create coherent works of art that portray a complex and fascinating woman. By doing so, she demonstrated how valuable art can be in the effort to share and preserve history.



Global Issues, Local Voices:

No Limits 2010

One Student’s Perspective

Alicia Meyer (Junior, English and Medieval and Renaissance Studies Major)

I was first drawn to the No Limits Conference because there are simply not many opportunities for undergraduates to present their own academic or creative work, which is important because there is really no substitute for peer review or authoritative feedback.

No Limits not only allowed me to *present* my academic and creative work, but it also enabled me to *create* it. The conference gave me the chance to tap into a field of study that I don’t explore in my usual classes: female superheroes and the gendering of heroism. As someone with a diverse range of interests, No Limits was the kind of inter-disciplinary outlet that I needed. While I always had a clear plan for what I wanted to discuss, as I prepared for the conference I found myself moving deep into uncharted territory, challenged to develop my ideas into something worth contributing to the panel.

While every panel discussion I attended was interesting, I can only speak authoritatively on behalf of my own, *Gendered Fantasies: From Heroism to Happily Ever After*. I was thoroughly relieved to find how intricately connected my research, “The Female Superhero and the Duality of Heroism,” was to those of my fellow presenters and attendees. We each pulled a different piece of a larger discourse together and then openly challenged, commiserated, and celebrated our findings. So, while I had been concerned with developing my own ideas to bring to No Limits, in the end my small contribution was humbled by the collective conversation that ensued with my fellow presenters and audience members. Together, everyone in the room added something vital to the discussion. Thus the adventure was a success because I was exposed to radically new concepts and points of view on a topic that I had already been exploring and will continue to explore in the future. In those few short minutes we spent together, a real sense of academic community and discovery surfaced. It was truly an exceptional experience that has inspired me to continue to seek eye-opening perspectives and unheard voices.



WGS Colloquium Series:

“Building Dignity: From Scholarship to Activism in Latin America”

-Paul Dosh and Emily Hedin

Garbiñe Torreira (PhD Student, Spanish and WGS Minor)

The lecture that took place on September 15 as part of the Fall 2010 Colloquium Series was presented by Emily Hedin (a master’s student in international development at the University of Oxford) and Paul Dosh (an associate professor of political science at Macalaster College). Together, they have created the Center for Development with Dignity, which once completed “will house grassroots development projects, leadership development, community education, and resources for La Encantada’s human rights activists,” as their *Poetry of Dignity* brochure describes. It was in 1971 that the Villa El Salvador was founded with a large community of 25,000 Peruvians that built shacks in the desert. One of the neighborhoods that comprises Villa El Salvador is La Encantada (The Enchanted), a poor community that was founded in 1996. This community is based on the idea of solidarity, and through this they were able to organize a means of transportation and provide electricity. By 2002, La Encantada’s settlers also finally got running water, made possible through the Multisectoral Commission.

What the Center for Development with Dignity has created is a space for leaders to help develop their community. This includes developing a set of workshops for girls and young women from the ages of 10 to 16. These workshops aim to challenge the girls and teach them about human rights and female leaders around the world. Another goal of these workshops is to help these girls feel more comfortable participating in their community in meaningful ways. In so doing, Hedin and Dosh also learned how important it is to eradicate the culture of “machismo,” which they creatively do by including men in this important process of female empowerment.



WGS Colloquium Series:

“Jewelle Gomez Reads from her Work”

- Jewelle Gomez

Garbiñe Torreira (PhD Student, Spanish and WGS) Minor

Jewelle Gomez came to Lincoln to do a reading. I had never heard of her before, but as she started speaking there was strength in her words and she instantly captivated her audience. She introduced herself briefly. She said that she began her work as a writer in the 1960s, and it has always reflected a great deal of activism. Indeed, she is as much an activist and a dreamer as she is a writer. She expressed in her work how she wishes the world would be: a place without margins or mainstream; rather, a creative blending of the two, to form a just society.

After a brief introduction, Gomez took her audience on a trip to her fictional world. Her writing is characterized by a lot of anger but also a lot of humor. In it, she fights for such things as women’s and gay rights as well as an end to racism. Her fight for equality began in a time of great repression when, as she explained, people would take down the names of those who attended feminist talks for use in further investigation. It is probably because she has had to fight so hard for equality that her work is full of sarcasm, parody, and irony.

In fact, humor is Gomez’s main ally, and she adds new perspective by playing with things that are taken for granted. For example, in one of her poems, she responds to the American Psychiatric Association’s 1973 decision no longer to list homosexuality as a mental illness by saying: “I woke up this morning no longer crazy, I’d gone to bed uneasy about my madness.” She concludes the poem by stating that she is still an angry feminist, but she expresses it with a good dose of humor. In her writing she appreciates social change and explores the ways in which it can develop and improve. In sum, her literature laughs at clichés, daring her readers to think outside the box.



Faculty Achievements

Susan Belasco (English) is the new chair of the Department of English at UNL, following in the footsteps of WGS faculty members, Linda Pratt and Joy Ritchie.

Joy Castro (English) had her personal essay about motherhood and violence, "Grip," selected as a Notable Essay in Best American Essays 2010. Her essay "Vesper Adest" (Evening Is Come) appeared in the Spring 2010 special issue on "The Lyric Body" of *Seneca Review*. Her personal essay, "Hip Joints," is forthcoming in the Winter 2010 issue of *Indiana Review*. Her essay, "On Becoming Educated," will appear later this fall in a forthcoming special issue on polyphonic feminisms in the journal of the Barnard Center for Research on Women, *Scholar & Feminist Online* (at <http://www.barnard.edu/sfonline/>).

Sidnie White Crawford (Classics & Religious Studies) gave the Chancellor's Lecture on the topic "The Dead Sea Scrolls After Sixty Years: What Have We Learned?" She also gave a keynote address at the International Society for the Study of the Old Testament meeting in Helsinki, Finland. Title: "Scribal Traditions in the Pentateuch and the History of the Second Temple Period."

Sarah Gervais (Psychology) received the Georgia Babladelis Best Paper Award in *Psychology*

for her article "The Consequence of the Objectifying Gaze," which will appear in the March 2011 issue.

Rose Holz (WGS Associate Director) has signed a book contract for her manuscript, *The Birth Control Clinic in a Marketplace World: Lessons from the Illinois Planned Parenthood Movement and Beyond*, with the University of Rochester Press. It will be published as part of its History of Medicine Series.

Maureen Honey (English) traveled to Washington D.C. and Philadelphia this summer on a Research Council grant to investigate two women poets from the Harlem Renaissance for her book, *Aphrodite's Daughters: Three Modernist Poets of the Harlem Renaissance*.

Wendy Weiss (Textiles, Clothing, and Design) led the committee that organized the Textile Society of America's 12th Biennial Symposium: "Textiles and Settlement: From Plains Space to Cyber Space." It was held here in Lincoln from October 6-9, 2010.

Student / Alumni Achievements

Jill Savage (WGS Alum) received a Fulbright Grant to travel to Korea.

Michelle Zych (WGS Alum) is the new regional development director for Planned Parenthood of the Heartland. She will work with major donors and launch a new capital campaign.

Congratulations Graduates

PhD Specializations:

Tamy Burnett, Kittie Grace, Rachael Robinson-Keilig

Majors:

Jessica Bowder, Leah Kinsel, Courtney Robinson, Breana Romero

Minors:

Rosanna Henning, Jessica Thacker, Ashley Brauer, Diana Jones

LGBTQ / Sexuality Studies Minors:

Michelle Peacock, Sean James, Joshua Starkey

Welcome to our New Faculty

Emily Kazyak, Assistant Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Sociology. Emily received her PhD from the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on lesbians and gays in rural communities.

Christine Falci, Assistant Professor of Sociology. Her research has primarily focused on health disparities among adolescents across gender, social class, and family structure.

Alice Kang, Assistant Professor of Political Science. Kang's research examines the conditions under which governments promote women's rights in Muslim African countries.

WGS Director Margaret Jacobs Wins the Bancroft Prize

Margaret Jacobs was awarded the 2010 Bancroft Prize for her book *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Return of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940*, which she published last year with the University of Nebraska Press. The Bancroft Prize is awarded annually by Columbia University to authors of distinguished works in American history or diplomatic history and is widely regarded as the most respected book award that focuses on American history. Among American historians, it generally ranks only behind the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award in the prestige that it confers.

In *White Mother to a Dark Race*, Jacobs writes about the forced removal of indigenous children from their families and their assimilation into American and Australian culture. Jacobs traveled to Australia and throughout the United States in order to understand better why white women were so invested in this movement and what they hoped to accomplish by removing indigenous children from their families.

Mentorship Program Important to Youth and UNL Students

Rosanna Dell Henning (Recent WGS and English Graduate)

I didn't know, when I entered the Cross-Cultural Mentoring program here at UNL last fall, what to expect. (CCM functions as a class: ANTH/WMNS 408/808 & 409/809.) I was apprehensive about the title "mentor" and didn't know if I had what it took to relate to any teenager, much less a teen from a different culture. I didn't know if I could teach them anything useful. I had a lot to learn.

I was assigned two high school girls, sisters. They came to the U.S. from a refugee camp in Asia in 2008 with their mother and father and several older and younger siblings. Once a week, we met to talk and read together, to catch up on schoolwork and update one another on our lives.

Do you know that refugees to the U.S. are assigned to a "resettlement site" by the government, and are required to remain in their assigned city in order to receive benefits from refugee assistance programs? Do you know how hard it is to find the right bus stop or get to a grocery store if you don't speak English and have no acquaintances in your new neighborhood? Do you know that it's next-to-impossible to decipher letters from the Departments of Health and Human Services and Homeland Security – even for a native English speaker? Do you know what an ordeal it is to get a driver's license if you can't speak English? Or the ins and outs of Medicaid, who qualifies as a "dependent child," and how to continue to provide for your child's safety and well-being when she is no longer deemed a dependent child by Medicaid?

I didn't know about and couldn't really comprehend any of these things before I met my girls and their family, and I found that the more I listened and learned, the more the girls and the family were able to benefit from our relationship. They didn't need an authority so much as a friend.

And I was in fact able to help them, in varying capacities. Yes, there were plenty of things I couldn't resolve, but the family clearly found comfort in having an American with whom they could communicate (albeit limitedly) their concerns, someone invested in their well-being.

Last spring I moved to small village near the Kansas border. I haven't been able to see the girls on a very regular basis since then, but we stay in touch. Both girls' English skills improve markedly almost every time I speak to them over the phone, and both are able to write and read emails effectively (more easily now,

since the family has recently received a computer and has internet access at home). We had a wonderful visit during the celebration of Eid ul-Fitr (the Muslim holiday marking the end of Ramadan), and it seems that the girls and their family are happy and doing well, although their material circumstances have changed very little. The world did not stop when I stopped coming every week. But for the seven months I regularly mentored the girls, I was one person who always showed up when I said I would, who did not put stipulations on the terms of our relationship, who made myself vulnerable to the volatility of their situation, and completely invested myself in cultivating friendships.

Cross-Cultural Mentoring is a class and an overall experience that I promise will be pivotal in your education—it will change the way you think, the way you interact, maybe the way you live—if you are willing to invest yourself wholly. And of course there are other programs, other ways to reach out. What's most important is that we find opportunities to use our privilege and abilities in the service of someone else; and as I've found, there are many people, too many people, who need that service, need that relationship, that care. It's necessary for their survival, and maybe it's necessary for our own.

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

Spring 2011 Colloquium: Gender and Science Matters

January 24

"Brain Sex: Truth, Tall Tales, and Time for a Developmental Perspective"

Lise Eliot, Neuroscientist and Professor at the Chicago Medical School of Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine & Science

March 15

"Motherhood, the Elephant in the Laboratory: Reconsidering the leaky pipeline?"

Emily Monosson, Toxicologist, Activist, and Author

April 4

"Gendered Innovations in Science and Engineering"

Londa Schiebinger, John L. Hinds Professor of History of Science; Director of the Gendered Innovations in Science, Medicine, and Engineering Project, Stanford University

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