



Women's Studies

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2003

From the Director

– Joy Ritchie

What are the challenges and opportunities facing Women's Studies in the current climate of higher education and at UNL? Forty-four faculty and graduate students began discussing this question at our first luncheon meeting of the semester. Our Colloquium Series continues to highlight one of our strengths. This fall it included Professors Chantal Kalisa (Modern Languages) and Rose Holz (History) discussing their research in "Finding a Research Topic and Doing it Too: Lessons from Two Women's Studies Projects." In October, four Ph.D. students, Em-orn Dispanya, Razia Khan, Kyoko Matsunaga, and Yeaji Shin, presented their creative work and research in "Perspectives of Asian Women: Research and Writing on Asian Women in the United States and Abroad." We also had a Brown-Bag discussion among faculty and students on "Challenges and Approaches to Teaching Women, Gender, and Minority Topics." Ten students joined Barbara DiBernard, Kris Gandara, and me for a workshop on applying for graduate school.

"Imagining Change: Women as Agents for Social Justice" is the theme of the 2004 No Limits Conference at UNL next spring, co-sponsored by UNK and UNO. Thanks to our new graduate assistants, Carmel Morse and Erika Hamilton, and Erin Teuber, WSA president, our planning is well underway. Historically, women and minorities have

played a crucial role in local and global social and political movements for equality, often beginning in homes and churches rather than in more public arenas. But social action also involves gathering information and communicating it to others through traditional academic scholarship and artistic or creative work. For that reason, we welcome presentations of creative work and research by all students.

In her conference keynote presentation, Professor Wendy Smooth of UNL's Department of Political Science will discuss the sometimes unconventional means women and minorities have used to work for social change. Documentary filmmaker, Lourdes Portillo, will highlight the connections between her experimental film projects and social action. Her presentation will be in conjunction with a showing of her award-winning film, *Señorita Extraviada*, a 2002 film that helped bring attention to the murders of women in Juarez, Mexico. We invite everyone to attend the conference, March 5 and 6, 2004.



Faculty and students at the Fall Meeting and Luncheon.



What our Graduates are doing now:

Melissa Nosal, a May 2002 graduate, earned her M.A. in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University, New York, in May 2003. After nearly a month of interviews, she was offered a position as editorial assistant at Palgrave Macmillan to assist two editors. Palgrave, the “scholarly sister” to St. Martin’s Press, publishes academic monographs and scholarly trade books. Melissa is responsible for coordinating scholars to peer review projects and for preparing project packages to present to the Editorial Board. She prepares contracts and works with authors on required forms, permissions, formatting, book jacket descriptions, and endorsements. Melissa also works directly with Palgrave’s office in the United Kingdom to keep track of translation rights and foreign publishing houses that are interested in Palgrave’s titles.

Melissa says: “I know I’m well prepared for this juggling act of working under two editors because of my fantastic experience at UNL. While there, I worked at the Press and *Prairie Schooner* while pursuing my double major. In all of my interviews, but especially here at Palgrave, people were extremely excited to learn I am from Nebraska and UNL.”

Rachel Peterson, a May 2003 graduate, recently became an editorial assistant at Impressions Book and Journal Services in Madison, Wisconsin. Impressions provides a range of services to publishers—from typesetting and electronic publishing to copy editing and other editorial coordination. Their clients (which include the University of California Press, Wiley Press, and Island Press) publish a great variety of scholarly, professional, and non-profit texts.

Rachel moved to Madison in August after receiving her Bachelor’s Degree in English at UNL with minors in Women’s Studies, Sociology, and History. She hopes to engage in graduate work within the next few years, potentially in Women’s Studies and Sociology. For now, she says she’s enjoying life in the great North Woods with its beautiful scenery.

No Limits Conference 2004

Imagining Change: Women as Agents for Social Justice

March 5 - 6, 2004

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

This conference is free and open to all.

For more information contact :
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402-472-9392

No Limits is an annual conference dedicated to exploring a wide range of women’s issues. We invite proposals from undergraduate students, graduate students, and recent graduates on any topic from any discipline related to women’s lives, history, cultures, feminism, gender and women’s studies. Creative writing, visual arts, film, music, performance, and academic papers are welcome. Please submit a 250-500 word description of your proposed paper or project by **January 19, 2004**, to: No Limits Conference, c/o Women’s Studies Program, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1209 Oldfather Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0341.

Conference events will include keynote presentations and:

- A retrospective of Lourdes Portillo’s films in February and March, sponsored by the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater.
- An ethnically appropriate food drive for the Hispanic Community Center.
- Panel of community activists.
- Information Fair of community and recognized student organizations.

Check out our web site at:
www.unl.edu/womenssp/wshome.html



“Finding a Research Topic and Doing it Too” A Review by Michelle Ochsner

Marie-Chantal Kalisa, Assistant Professor of Modern Languages and Literatures, and Rose Holz, Lecturer in the Department of History, each gave a presentation during the September Women’s Studies Colloquium on how to find a research topic, particularly in the area of women’s studies. Their advice was to pick a topic of personal interest.

Kalisa’s research, “Reading Violence in African and Caribbean Women’s Novels,” explores why violence is so prominent in African and Caribbean Women’s novels. Her key tasks were to define violence as it pertained to her topic and to learn how women were treated in African and Caribbean countries during the time the novels were published. The social and political climate certainly would have influenced the authors. Kalisa discovered that domestic violence is overlooked because many African women cannot detach themselves from men. Another challenge for Kalisa, an African woman, was to approach her topic with an unbiased attitude. Her goal is to read several sources and to draw on her own experiences to tackle the bigger question: How do we solve problems of violence?

A valuable lesson from Kalisa is to examine your topic’s context as well as the topic itself. Research should view the broader perspective to accurately depict the narrower topic.

An important lesson from Holz is to not be afraid to get personal and passionate about your topic. For “The Birth Control Clinic in America: Life Within, Life Without, 1923-1972,” Holz researched the history and context for when birth control clinics were appearing. She uncovered the politics influencing clinics and the overall social climate when birth control use was on the rise. Because Holz obtained records from the clinics, she is able to include personal testimonies from clinic patients in her work. These firsthand accounts will add emotion and validity to her research.

Kalisa’s and Holz’s presentations provided great tips for researching topics of interest and left the audience wanting to hear more about their interesting research.

Michelle is a senior Mathematics major at UNL.

Student Profile

Jamie Stock was selected as an editorial intern with the Feminist Press in New York during the summer of 2003. She assisted the editorial department by communicating with authors; reviewing manuscripts; proofing manuscripts; researching authors for back cover copy; and attending weekly editorial and production meetings. Her main assignment was to collect titles, cover art, quotes for epigraphs, essays, and contributor information for an in-house book. The Feminist Press, founded in 1969, is non-profit and dedicated to restoring the lost history and culture of women throughout the world. It publishes the *Women’s Studies Quarterly* and fifteen to twenty books each year.

*Congratulations to the following
Women’s Studies Majors and Minors
who will be graduating in December:*

**Majors: Margit Bergquist-Tracey
Melissa Raabe
Jamie Stock**
**Minors: Stacie Kotschwar
Eve Rumley**

*Congratulations to August 2003
Women’s Studies Graduates:*

**Minors: Mary Ashbury
Megan Wortman**

*Graduation Reception &
Welcome for New Faculty*

*Friday, December 5, 2003
4:00 - 6:30 pm
3004 Stratford Avenue
(Joy Ritchie’s Home)*

Everyone Invited to Attend!

“Perspectives of Asian Women”

A Review by Erika Hamilton

How have Asian women been silenced by the United States and by their own cultures, and how do they overcome that silence? On October 15th, four Ph.D. students addressed this concern by discussing their own experiences and research.

Em-orn Dispanya, a women’s literature student from Thailand, discussed the rhetoric of two Southeast Asian women, Aung San Suu Kyi (a Nobel Peace Prize recipient) and Prateep Ungsongtham-Hata, who overcame cultural ideals of feminine docility to become social activists. Dispanya said Asian women must “work harder and speak louder to make our voices heard.”

Razia Khan, a creative writer, described women in typical Bangladeshi literature as “weak and docile. They suffer mutely.” Razia discussed the work of three women writers, offered two poems by Taslima Nasreen (a



controversial feminist who now lives in exile), and read from her own fiction.

Kyoko Matsunaga, who studies Native American literature and nuclear issues, read her

poem, “Why I Can’t Call My Grandmother,” which explores her feelings about being the granddaughter of a “hibakusha” (a survivor of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima), but not being able to ask her grandmother about it. Matsunaga explained that writing about the bomb’s effects “is problematic because, without mentioning people and telling their stories, we silence them. But when we talk about them, they become symbols of the bomb. . . . We have to know the truth, we have to talk about Japan’s imperialism when we talk about bomb issues, or it means nothing.”

Yeaji Shin concluded the Colloquium by describing how the American military has colonized the environment and women’s bodies in South Korea. Her most poignant example was an incident in 2000 when two middle school girls were crushed by a U.S. tank. The soldiers were later acquitted of homicide. Shin said her native government’s inability to prosecute Americans not only silences South Korean sovereignty, but refuses justice to Korean women who are violently silenced by American soldiers.

WS Program Newsletter
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An equal opportunity educator and employer with a comprehensive plan for diversity.

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