



# Women's *and* Gender Studies

Barbara DiBernard

## From the Director

*This newsletter announces a name change in our program, from "Women's Studies" to "Women's and Gender Studies." The Women's Studies faculty voted to change the name of the program after more than a year of discussion and research. It took several more months for the proposal to work its way up the academic hierarchy, but now it is official. The new name better represents the research and teaching interests of many of the faculty and the direction of Women's Studies nationally. It also represents a commitment to LGBTQ/Sexuality Studies, now an approved minor which is administered through the Women's and Gender Studies Program. However, the Program faculty are also adamant that "Women's Studies" is a major part of our identity, and that many of our courses will remain centered on the lives, experiences, and accomplishments of women. The name change appropriately comes in the 30th year of our program, reflecting our history and looking forward to our future.*

*The Women's and Gender Studies Program is dynamic and growing. Last fall I reported on the new courses we developed to strengthen the program; all of them will be taught next year, giving students a much wider range of courses from which to choose. Our spring Colloquium series, again centered*

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2006 No Limits Conference

## No Limits: Two Perspectives

**By Tamy Burnett, graduate student in English and Women's Studies**

I attended both Friday and Saturday sessions at the 2006 No Limits Conference, hosted this year by UNO. This is my third year participating in and attending No Limits events. Each year I have been impressed by the quality of discussion and presentations, and this year was no exception.

I saw presentations ranging from the marketing and selling of sexual aids to the impact of long-dead women rulers as seen through art; from the role clothing and sexual euphemisms play in supporting/challenging rape culture to creative non-fiction and poetry detailing the authors' experiences with families, cultural expectations, and their own understanding of gender performance; from the various plights of international women as refugees or victims of political oppression and sexual slavery to how lesbian social networks function. (The last was as much a lesson in social science research and data gathering

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**By Melanie Hellwig, senior Women's Studies and Psychology major**

This was my first time attending the annual Women's Studies Conference, No Limits, held this year at UNO, and I had no idea what to expect. I was impressed by the array of topics discussed and that this was a student conference, one that was attended largely by peers. I might just be partial to the students I have interacted with, but I was most impressed with the presentations given by UNL students, both undergraduate and graduate, especially in the areas of fiction in the session Short Stories, and in the session Generations of Women, which featured a more in-depth look

at experiences in the personal as well as academic domains.

What I loved most about attending No Limits was the open dialogue and welcoming atmosphere; the empowerment aspect of Women's Studies was present at this conference. After one session I attended, the participants and audience members had a wonderful discussion



# DeVoted Women Project

by Whitney Douglas, Ph.D. Student, English and Women's Studies

Eric Turley and I conducted research on the rhetoric of the suffrage movement in Nebraska in Joy Ritchie's 4/875A: Rhetoric of Women Writers class in spring 2004. Then, by a stroke of luck, Steve Buhler was in contact with Judy Hart of Angels Theatre Company. Judy wanted to do a play on suffrage, specifically in Nebraska, in celebration of the 85th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment. She asked Steve if there were any graduate students he knew doing work on this. He talked to a few, and someone from Joy's class gave him our names. Thus began our adventure together.



Judy secured grants from various organizations, and found a playwright. Using our research materials and papers Eric and I had written (both for class and those we've presented at local and national conferences), she wrote a play about the movement here in Nebraska.

One of the things we uncovered in the course of our research was a suffrage campaign map, wherein the suffragists divided the state of Nebraska into twelve districts for campaigning purposes. We want to take the play to at least one location in each of those districts. (We have bookings as far away as McCook and Scottsbluff.)

The purpose of the play is to reignite civic dialogue about the importance and responsibility of voting. Following each performance, Eric and/or I will moderate a discussion about our research and then segue into audience conversations about voting in Nebraska. What's especially great about this project are the ways Judy Hart has brought together so many community members throughout the project, making it a truly collaborative effort.

More information can be found at:

<http://www.angelscompany.org/DeVoted/index.htm>

**// The purpose of the play is to reignite civic dialogue about the importance and responsibility of voting. //**

# Colloquium Series



To support the Women's and Gender Studies Program's new minor in LGBTQ/Sexuality Studies, the 2005/2006 Colloquium Series featured presentations on topics related to sexuality.

The Spring series included talks in February and March and a library workshop in February.

This year's colloquium series was one of the best-attended and most successful in recent memory, evidence of the interest in and need for a minor in the subject.

February 2006

## Catholicism, Mormonism, and Jesus' Sexuality

By Rachel Groothuis

Dr. Stephen Lahey of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln spoke to a full room on February 16th. His discussion, "Jesus and Mary Magdalene: The Opposing Orthodoxies of Thomas Aquinas and Joseph Smith and Their Curiously Consonant Anti-Feminist Results," focused on differences and similarities between Catholic and Mormon understandings of Jesus' marital status and sexuality. Lahey pointed out that while Jesus' celibacy is highly important to Catholicism, it is perhaps not as necessary to the Mormon religion. He argued that whether the church recognized Jesus as a married or celibate individual, each church's views on women remained similar, as in both the Catholic and Mormon religions women continue to serve in positions of secondary power. Audience members represented a broad range of faiths, including Catholicism and Mormonism, making the question and answer session following Lahey's presentation thought-filled and provocative.



Right: Stephen Lahey speaks at the February 16th Colloquium.



# Faculty Achievements

**Tom Carr** published *Voices of Seventeenth-Century Abbesses: Preaching by Women at Port-Royal* [Voix des abbesses du Grand Siècle: La Prédication au féminin à Port-Royal] (Tubingen: Narr, 2006).

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Thomas M. Carr Jr.

Voix des abbesses  
du Grand Siècle

La Prédication au féminin à Port-Royal



gntv Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen

**Ruth Heaton** has been awarded an Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award. Heaton is an associate professor in the department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education; her specialty is mathematics education. She is the author of *Teaching Mathematics to the New Standards: Relearning the Dance*, published by Teachers College Press in 2000 and has worked on several NSF-funded



projects, as well as a school-university partnership with teachers from Roper Elementary School.

**Jenn Hunt** has received a grant from the National Science Foundation to study the effects of African American Hurricane Katrina evacuees on racial attitudes and stereotypes among members of the predominantly White communities that housed the evacuees.

**Carole Levin** was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities long term fellowship for a book on early modern English dreams from the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC for 2006-07. She also helped bring the traveling exhibit "Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend" to UNL. The exhibit outlines the life and reign of Queen Elizabeth and was organized by the Newberry Library to celebrate the 400th anniversary of her death. The exhibit remains on display at Love Library through April 20.

**Amelia Montes** has been awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor. She also published a critical essay, "María Amparo Ruiz: A Transhistoric Tradition," in *Symbolism: A New International Annual of Critical Aesthetics Journal* (Volume IV, 2005, pp. 293-311) and a short story, "Amígdala," in *River City Journal* (University of Memphis. Volume VII, 2005, pp. 84-90).

**Susan Poser** recently received the Shining Light Award from the Nebraska State Bar Foundation for her work on the new ethics rules for lawyers in Nebraska. The award "recognizes the outstanding legal research conducted by a lawyer in Nebraska, whether a practitioner, academician, or a non-practicing lawyer."

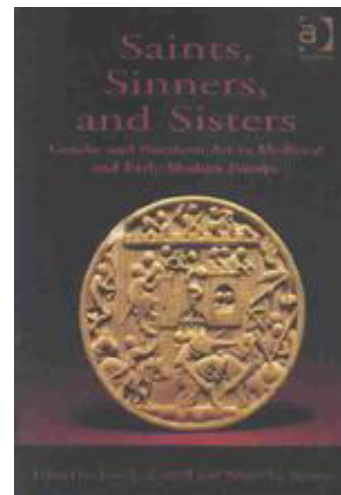
**Linda Pratt** wrote the introduction to a new edition of Meridel LeSueur's novel, *The Girl*, recently published by West End Press.

**Hilda Raz** and Aaron Raz Link's *What Becomes You* will be published next spring by the University of Nebraska Press. The book tracks Aaron's transsexual transformation from both his point of view and Hilda's, his mother.

*Saints, Sinners, and Sisters: Gender and Northern Art in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, a book of essays edited by **Alison Stewart** and Jane Carroll, published in 2003 by Ashgate, has received very favorable reviews in *Women's Art Journal* (Fall/Winter 2006),

*Sixteenth Century Journal* (2005) and CAA Reviews on-line (College Art Association, 11/11/2005).

**Wendy Weiss** and Jay Kreimer are exhibiting their installation entitled "Traveler's Field" as part of an exhibition entitled "Installation/Innovation: Textile Art in the 21st Century" at the San Francisco Museum of Craft + Design from February 17 through May 29. Weiss and Kreimer have also been invited to create new work for an exhibition called "Space of Change" at the District of Columbia Art Center from September 8 through October 8, 2006.



## Student News and Alumnae Updates

**Jamie Stock** (Women's Studies graduate, 2003) will be entering graduate school in the Women's Studies Program at San Francisco State University in the Fall.

**Maureen Gallagher**, a graduate student in German and Women's Studies, has been awarded a Fulbright to Germany for the 2006-2007 academic year.

**Carmel Morse**, former Women's Studies graduate assistant, presented papers at the Women and Arts 8 Conference at Marquette University in March and at the Popular Culture/American Culture Association Conference in April. Her poem "Cinerarium" will appear in the May 2006 issue of the journal *Children, Churches and Daddies*.

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## Colloquium Series

February 2006

### Debbie Krahrmer: Doing Transgender Research

By Rose Holz

To borrow from Melanie Hellwig's thoughtful discussion of the No Limits conference elsewhere in this newsletter, when I attended Debbie Krahrmer's workshop on transgender research "I had no idea what to expect." As a historian of sexuality, I of course was interested in the topic, but what surprised me most was just how much I learned. For those unfamiliar with Debbie Krahrmer, she is an assistant professor in the UNL Libraries and serves as the liaison (or "subject specialist") for psychology and women's and gender studies. And in this particular workshop she showed us how to use our library's vast digital resources to locate scholarship on transgender issues.

One thing I appreciated about the workshop was her demonstration of practical research skills, showing us, for example, some of the tricks of the trade in using the various online search engines. As somebody who is still a throw-back from the pre-digital age, I found her advice invaluable because the tricks she showed us had broader application. But what I especially liked was how she got me thinking about larger issues, notably that of the malleability of language. Indeed, what immediately became apparent was how language changes. Practically speaking, this of course is something to be aware of since terminology choice can make or break a particular search. But it raises as well the connection between language, identity and power because as political and social landscapes change so too do the words people use to describe themselves and the work they do. That Debbie took the time to highlight these issues made the workshop much more than a hands-on experience; it invited the mind to wander down the more theoretical paths.

March 2006

### Sarah Rodriguez: Medicine and Intersexuality

By Ryan Fette

On March 27 Dr. Sarah Rodriguez presented "A 'Veritable Sheep in Wolf's Clothing': Medicine, Intersexuality, and the Role of Clothing in Sex Identity in America, 1935-1950" to a large audience in the Nebraska Union. Dr. Rodriguez spoke about how the medical community altered the bodies of intersex individuals to make them clearly male or female. Gender assignment surgeries became possible after the advancements in plastic surgery after the first World War.

The "veritable sheep in wolf's clothing" was actually a physician's description of

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Right: Debbie Krahrmer speaks at the February 20th Colloquium.

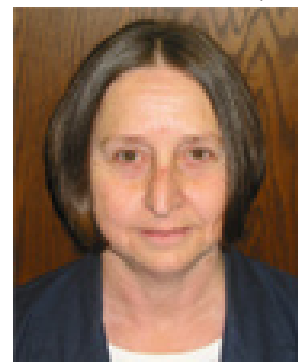
Opposite Page: Sarah Rodriguez responds to audience questions at the March 27th Colloquium.



New Women's and Gender Studies Faculty Member

## Dr. Jennifer Brand

Jennifer Brand received her PhD from the University of California-San Diego in 1992 and is currently a Professor of Chemical Engineering at UNL. Her primary research interests include investigating the interactions of chemical reactivity and surface kinetics, coupled with thermodynamic effects and process fluid mechanics in and for the development of practical manufacturing processes. She has 36 refereed publications, 42 presentations at professional meetings, and has won external funding of \$2,578,976 and UNL/Nebraska Foundation funding of \$1,352,703.



Dr. Brand has been on the Board of Directors of the University of Nebraska Chapter of Graduate Women in Science, was a member of the Chancellor's Special Commission for Safety on Campus for Women in 1999, and has been on the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women since 2003. She has also been active in the American Association of University Women, particularly in presenting science programs for girls.

Through her activities within the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, Dr. Brand has also shown her support for women in science and engineering. She has been the UNL AIChE Chapter Advisor, since 1998 has been a member of the AIChE National Women's Initiative Committee Member; and in 2001-02 was the AIChE National Women's Initiative Committee Recognition Coordinator.

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## From the Director

*on the theme of Sexuality, was very successful, with good attendance and lively discussions. Several of our students presented their work at the "No Limits" conference in Omaha in early March; we are very proud of them. We continue to gain new Women's and Gender Studies majors and minors. At our Graduation Reception and Awards Ceremony we will celebrate the achievements of seven graduating Women's and Gender Studies majors, eight minors, and four graduate students who fulfilled the requirements for the Graduate Specialization, as well as students who are receiving awards and scholarships for their academic and community work. At that same Reception, Amy Miller, legal director of ACLU Nebraska, will receive the Melba Cope Community Associate Award.*

*It has been an honor to serve as Women's Studies Director this year. It's been a pleasure to work with Glenda Moore, program secretary, Rose Holz, Associate Director, and Maureen Gallagher, our graduate assistant; they are the best staff I can imagine. I look forward to the leadership of Margaret Jacobs, who will become director of the program in August. And I urge you to check out our soon-to-be redesigned website and to keep in touch.*

*--Barbara DiBernard*



## No Limits at UNO: A Graduate Student Perspective

as in its topic – illustrating for us that really the study ended up being about white, educated, U.S. lesbians and their social networks.) Some of the speakers I knew quite well; some I remembered from last year and enjoyed the chance to renew our acquaintance; and some I had never met, even though they are UNL students who have been around UNL as long as I have, if not longer.

While I was amazed by the capabilities of those whose work I was already familiar with (as I always am), and I enjoyed the renewed friendships with previous No Limits attendees, I was somewhat saddened by the last group. Their ideas and work were outstanding, yet I immediately assumed they were from UNO or UNK, simply because I did not recognize them or their names. Perhaps that is a touch ego-centric on my part, but we Women's Studies majors, minors, and graduate specializations are not so many that we should pass one another on campus unrecognized or be unaware that there are others in fields far different from our own pursuing the same goals we are.

And yet, the members of the Women's Studies community that I know, by and large, are those within my own department. In recognizing this disparity, I realized that one of those aspects of Women's Studies I so very much enjoy—interdisciplinary research—is one that I all too often do not take advantage of, which does a disservice to me and to the larger community.

The opportunities are there; I receive e-mails and flyers and e-mails (I'm on a lot of overlapping lists!) about a multitude of speakers here on campus in diverse fields. Sometimes the speakers are lecturers being brought to campus by a department or program. Sometimes they are students in other departments. Sometimes they are students within my own department, but in an area of research outside my own. When I have attended talks in areas outside my immediate

interests, I have almost always found that my time was well spent, whether I was learning about the connections between physics and comic books or about a newly recognized culture of aggression in American girls.

All too often, though, when faced with the choice between a speaker and catching up on my own workload, both professional and personal (i.e.: homework or laundry), I choose the latter. As captivating as sorting my darks from my lights is, it doesn't quite measure up to the intellectual stimulation of attending interdisciplinary speakers or to the community such attendance engenders. Why then, do I make this choice? Why do I make it repeatedly?

I don't have a good answer. It's not like I'm unfamiliar with the desperate search for one more clean outfit to put off laundry another day; nor am I so very busy with my schoolwork that I could not possibly spare an hour here or there.

We base our communities in shared ideas and ideals. I am a part of the Women's Studies community both because of my academic

interests and because of my personal belief in the value of feminism(s). A portion of my own feminism values the work that others do, even when, especially when, it is significantly other from the ways in which I understand the world.

Shared ideas and commitments can provide the foundation for a community, but that living, breathing, active thing that is a community thrives not on ideas alone, but on those who share the ideas and put them into practice. I can value interdisciplinary studies all I wish; but until I make the commitment to attend and actively support such pursuits on a more regular basis, and encourage others to do so too, I'm failing my own values and my feminism. Sure, I'm just one audience member at such talks, and the harm I do is largely in limiting my own development. But I suspect I'm not the only one who makes this choice, placing limits on myself and on a community where there should be none.

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## No Limits: An Undergraduate Perspective

which likely would have gone on much longer had there not been another session following. What other conference has this to offer? No Limits was a formal conference in one sense, but often felt like an informal gathering of soon-to-be friends who have so much to contribute and learn from one another in an open atmosphere. I was not one of the presenters (I am not big on public speaking), but I wish that I would have taken advantage of this important opportunity. The atmosphere was inviting and the sessions were small; it was not at all intimidating, as I had imagined.

No Limits is such a great opportunity to connect with other Women's Studies students and staff in the University system; I learned about new topics and reconceived more familiar topics, met other interesting and intelligent women and men, and participated in critical discussions on issues influencing feminism and Women's Studies students and staff. What I took the most from were the presentations by my fellow UNL students; I was able to learn more about them, their lives, and their interests. I now feel so much closer to these individuals because of this shared experience. My only regret is that I had never attended before; it was truly an impacting experience.

# Congratulations to our May and August graduates!

## Majors:

Rachel Groothuis  
Melanie Hellwig  
Bree Hillegas  
Brian Lee  
Katie Taylor  
Jessica Wall  
Michael Whelan

## Minors:

Holly Jo Gay  
Abbigail Grim  
Sara Holmes  
Miranda Mitchell  
Katie Reichenbach  
Tabitha Siebrass  
Tara Simmons  
Tracy Simmons

## Graduate Specialization: Jessica Weddington

Jana Zuehlke-Bennette  
Karla Bergen  
Rachel Brown  
Maureen Gallagher



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a woman with male genitals. Rodriguez proposed that the physicians felt the need to treat intersex conditions because of the gender binary, to ensure that patients could clearly be classified as either male or female. The patients benefited from the surgeries because they felt a return to wholeness, when their bodies matched the gender they had been living as their whole lives.

Clothing was a clear sign of what would later be termed "gender performance" and was the standard a physician used to determine the sex of an individual. The patient's body was surgically altered to align with the gender of their clothing.

This practice was common until the mid-1950s when the current model took over, in which intersex infants are assigned a gender shortly after birth. When asked the reason for this change, Rodriguez answered that before the mid-1950s most births took place outside of hospitals and that physicians did not see individuals with intersex conditions until they were old enough to have developed a gender identity. After the mid-1950s, with most births being attended by physicians in hospitals, the surgery became standard shortly after birth.

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