Director’s Notes/Ann Schofield

My 94-year-old father frequently opens conversations with “the changes I’ve seen in my life time.” And for someone born in 1909, those changes are quite stupendous. My father’s list tends towards the technological. When I riff on the same topic, I frequently find myself thinking about women. Growing up in the 1950s and 1960s I never heard a female voice on the radio announcing the news nor did I ever see a female newscaster as TV came to be our link to the rest of the world. Huntley and Brinkley and then Walter Cronkite guided us through the tumultuous national and international events of the times. When Georgetown Medical School admitted my best friend in 1968, she proudly told me she had won one of the eight slots allotted to women. And, had I the means and test scores to merit an application to an Ivy League school when I graduated from high school in 1964, I would have found Harvard, Yale, Princeton and their lesser cousins all limited to male applicants.

With these memories, I don’t mean to paint a simple “you’ve come a long way baby” scenario of women’s economic and occupational mobility in the past thirty years. We know too much about continued gender inequity in America and the world to assume that seeing Christiana Amapour on CNN means social and economic parity for women and men. What I do think is different, though, in comparing our times with those of my growing up years is our awareness of women. Consider the New York Times front page picture of Amina Lawal, whose conviction for adultery with its penalty of death by stoning was overturned by an Islamic court in northern Nigeria. On her lap is her infant daughter, by her side is her bewigged female Nigerian lawyer. Or, referring also to last week’s news, I was struck by the accounts of the death of Dr. Akila al-Hashimi which pointed out that she was one of three women on the Iraqi governing council. Following the invasion of Afghanistan the western press was filled with stories about the education of girls and the liberation of women form the burka (sadly the situation of Afghani women seemed to have made less of an impression on Western policy makers before 9/11!) The rights of women have made it onto the radar screen of national consciousness.

You’ll find a column by Prof. Kathryn Libal in this issue discussing her new Women’s Studies course, Women and Globalization. Kathryn joins other Women’s Studies core faculty members in their teaching and research on women in Africa, Latin America, Europe and the United States. We’re asking difficult questions about the meaning of feminism in varied cultural and religious contexts, the role of women in families, the theoretical and political implications of similarities and differences among women of varied races, religions, classes, and sexualities. Is this activist/teaching making a difference in women’s situation at home and abroad? I surely hope so. It’s only with continuing to think, analyze and challenge our students that the world for women will expand rather than return to the single voice of Walter Cronkite.

News and Notes contribution from Ann Cudd - Director On-leave Fall 2003

After a difficult but exciting second year directing Women’s Studies, which included producing several major reports, a program review, chairing an interdisciplinary search, and knee surgery, I am taking a much needed sabbatical this fall to focus on my own research. My project is to complete a book manuscript entitled Analyzing Oppression. My aim in this project is to produce an analytically rigorous study of oppression using the tools of neoclassical economics and analytic philosophy and the insights of Marxist economics and feminist theory. Unlike other analyses of oppression, mine demonstrates how oppression manipulates and exploits the apparently free choices of oppressed persons by showing how
their economically rational choices cause and then in turn are fed by non-rational psychological features of oppression such as terror, shame, peer pressure, stereotyping, ideology and false consciousness. I have also just sent to the publisher (Blackwells) the manuscript for an anthology in feminist theory, called Feminist Theory: A Philosophical Anthology, that I am co-editing with Professor Robin Andreason of the University of Delaware.

Last Spring I was fortunate to be able to teach the Graduate Certificate Program’s capstone course, WS 898 Research Colloquium. This course included visits from three scholars of gender from the KU campus, Professors Nyla Branscombe (Psychology), Hagith Sivan (History), and Donna Ginther (Economics), who shared their work with us in several lively and intense sessions. The students then took turns presenting their own research, producing at the end publishable quality articles. Certificates were granted to our first five graduates of the program at the end of the semester. I will be teaching this course again next Spring, and look forward to collaborating with other KU scholars in this endeavor.

This semester Prof. Sherrie Tucker of the American Studies program (and author of Swing Shift: “All Girl” Bands of the 1940s!) is teaching WS 801 the introductory course for the graduate certificate program to an enthusiastic group of students from a variety of disciplines ranging from Religious Studies to philosophy to history. Sherrie had a waiting list for the course and limited enrollment to fifteen so demand for the program remains high.

As I write this, it is September, fall is in the air, and my sabbatical still is pregnant with potential for my work. While I am enjoying this “pregnancy” immensely, I appreciate the work of my colleagues who are keeping the Program running smoothly, and the support of the Advisory Board, and our Friends in the community who make KU Women’s Studies a great home for feminist work and study.

Prof. Gwynne Jenkins
(Anthropology/Women’s Studies)
On-leave Fall 2003-Fall 2005

Gwynne Jenkins recently returned from a six month Fulbright in Costa Rica. During that time, she taught a course on the politics of reproduction, development, and gendered bodies in the Master’s Program in Women’s Studies and the Anthropology Program of the University of Costa Rica. She also conducted pilot research on the history of surgical sterilization use as a form of family planning among families in a rural region of Costa Rica. Gwynne will give her first professional presentation based on this new fieldwork at the American Anthropological Association Meetings in Chicago this November. Upon returning to the U.S., she moved to Baltimore, MD, to become a Greenwall Fellow in Bioethics and Health Policy at the Phoebe R. Berman Bioethics Institute of Johns Hopkins University. She will return to the University of Kansas following this two-year leave of absence (for Fall 2005).

Introducing a New Course on Women and Globalization/
Kathryn Libal

On the first day of class in late August more than thirty students talked about why they had signed up for the new Women’s Studies special topics course called “Women and Globalization.” Globalization is one of those “buzz words” that we have become accustomed to hearing in the media and popular and scholarly literature. When I asked students to give examples of globalization at work in the world (or in their lives), many mentioned the spread of American fast food franchises to countries they had visited. The Golden Arches and Chilies compete with Starbucks for space on a prominent street in Jakarta, noted Women’s Studies major Rebecca McClelland, who had recently returned from relief work at an orphanage in Indonesia. Most students said that they had not studied globalization for more than a session or two in other classes. As the semester nears the mid-way point, many now ask why courses such as this one are not required of all students.

Globalization refers to a set of social processes promoting greater interconnectedness and interdependence. It involves the creation and multiplication of social networks and activities that transcend nation-state borders and the intensification and acceleration of exchanges (economic, social, cultural, and political), due in large part to advances in technology and transportation (Steger 2003, 9-11).

Feminists have been particularly attuned to the ways in which economic restructuring and the move toward global free market trade impacts women. They underscore that many structural adjustment programs (SAPs) promoted by international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have had very uneven and often harmful effects on women throughout the developing world. Valentine Moghadam and Saskia Sassen, for example, argue that economic liberalization, privatization, and a remarkable expansion
of women in the wage-labor force worldwide afford new (if often limited) opportunities for women to gain power and autonomy within their households and community. Even so, such scholars call attention to the feminization of labor and migration, noting that women increasingly take low-wage work out of necessity and often move abroad and away from their children and families in order to better support them financially. Moreover, women and children bear the brunt of the dismantling of social safety nets (including guarantees to health and education), which are often a central part of structural adjustment policies.

“Women and Globalization” introduces students to the gendering of globalization, focusing on the transformation of women’s work, the feminization of poverty and emerging social and economic inequalities, sex trafficking and tourism, migration, transnational marriage, religious fundamentalism, the gendering of commodities and consumption, and global feminisms and women’s rights movements. We are fortunate to have visiting scholar Dorcas Akande of Obafemi Awolowo University (Ile-Ife, Nigeria) as a guest speaker in mid-October. Ms. Akande will outline her work with a non-governmental organization that calls attention to women’s rights and the environmental impact of oil and natural gas production on Igbo women and their families in the Delta region of Nigeria. This session will offer hands-on insight to students who are doing small group research projects tracing web-based transnational feminist activism. With the guidance of Women’s Studies librarian Tami Albin, students are learning to conduct more effective research on the web and consider the importance of the web for transnational feminist organizing and activism. At the end of the semester students will share what they have learned about global feminisms and web-based activism as the culmination of their projects.

Suggested resources:


Leslie Tuttle, History/Humanities & Western Civilization
“Forcing God’s Hand: Charity, Marriage, and Ritual during the French Religious Wars”
Co sponsored by the Early Modern Seminar
Mon., Dec. 1, 2003, 3:30 5:00 p.m.
Hall Center Conference Room

Sherrie Tucker, American Studies
“Gender: A Useful Category for Jazz Studies”
Tue., Dec. 2, 2003, 3:30 5:00 p.m.
Hall Center Conference Room

Mark your calendars for:

Fall 2003 Verne I. Wagner Visiting Speaker
Nancy Folbre (Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts) will present a public lecture “The Invisible Heart and the Economics of Care,” on Thursday, November 6, 2003, 4:00 pm, Alderson Auditorium, Kansas Union. Reception will follow.

and

The 32nd Annual February Sisters Forum/Spring 2004 Speaker Nilofer Pazira will present a public lecture on February 10th. Nilofer Pazira will be speaking about women’s issues and U.S. foreign policy in the middle east.

Women’s Studies Endowment Contributors

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Regan Michelle Buck is pictured, one of the two winners of the Virginia’s Purse Award presented at the Women’s Studies and Friends Banquet on May 4, 2003. The other winner, Anna Watts Holcombe, was unable to attend.