The University of Kansas Women’s Studies Program

NEWS & NOTES

Fall 2006

Director’s Notes/Ann Cudd

There is a buzz on campus as we begin this academic year with a bevy of new faces, new ideas, new agendas, and renewed energy. Our new Provost Richard Lariviere is challenging campus units to carefully define and hone our mission and purpose, and our new Dean Joseph Steinmetz is setting high standards for our intellectual achievements and promises improved support for graduate education. We greeted these new administrators with our new Strategic Plan that was unveiled on July 1. In Women’s Studies we have a new faculty member and are searching for yet another.

I begin my director's report with an update on our faculty ranks. We are most pleased to welcome Professor Tanya Hart, who comes to us from Yale University as a freshly minted PhD in History. Tanya specializes in African American women’s history and the history of the public health system in the US, and holds a joint appointment with American Studies. (See the article on Prof. Hart later in this issue.) Professor Lorraine Bayard de Volo has unfortunately left KU for a full appointment in Women’s Studies at the University of Colorado, and we wish her the best. We hope that this may yield cooperative efforts with our neighbor to the west. We will be hiring a tenure-track joint appointment with Anthropology this year, with a specialization yet to be determined. We intend with this hire to shore up the international gender studies component of our program, along with the social scientific study of gender. We look forward to inviting three exciting younger scholars to campus this winter to make campus visits and interview for this position.

We have two graduate teaching assistants with us this year. Ailecia Ruscin returns to teach WS 201, our introductory course, along with Liz Miller, who is new to teaching Women's Studies. Both are PhD students in American Studies and graduate certificate holders from Women's Studies.

Women's Studies will co-sponsor two lectures this fall. On September 19 Beth Bailey at 3:30, Professor of History at Temple University will present “Gender and the All Volunteer Army” to the Hall Center for the Humanities Gender Seminar. Professor Bailey is the author of several books, among which are “Sex in the Heartland: Politics, Culture, and the Sexual Revolution,” which was a study of sexual relations in Lawrence, Kansas in the 1970’s, and “America in the 70’s”.

Gisela Erbsloeh, will be speaking Tuesday, Nov. 28, at the Center for Russian, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies, on the topic, Prometheus’ Daughters: Women in the Ruins of the North Caucasus. Ms. Erbsloeh is a German freelance radio journalist. This last May took a brave and fascinating trip to Ingushetia, into the regions of the Chechen war, in order to gather materials for a radio feature on the impact of the war on women. This will be a unique look at women of the Caucasus in a horrible time in the history of the region.

Women's Studies has enjoyed strong and continuing support from the administration of the College and the University. With that support we have built a solid undergraduate major and minor, and a graduate certificate program. With a little more faculty support, an MA program is within our reach, as well, and Dean Steinmetz has promised us his support in this effort. In last year’s column I mentioned that “David Horowitz and conservative allies are pressing for Congress to legislate an Academic Bill of Rights.” Little did I realize that in March 2006 our Program would be the (temporary) target of his attack. We in the KU Women’s Studies Program are proud of our record and our service to our local and global communities. As I said last year, and wish to reaffirm: we remain committed to staying the course in this storm, to teach our students to critically evaluate their culture and values, while prizing and preserving the best in what women and men have done and can do, and advancing the struggle for peace and justice in the world.
Strategic Plan

The Core faculty and the Advisory Board held a retreat, hosted by Janet Sharistanian, in January and began work on a strategic plan to define our mission, refine our vision, and set the agenda for the next five or so years for the Program. After several months of hard work and collegial cooperation, we presented our Plan to the incoming Dean Joseph Steinmetz on July 1, 2006. The full plan is posted on our website. The mission statement reads: The Women’s Studies Program fosters the interdisciplinary study of women, gender, and sexuality, through a rich multicultural and internationally informed academic environment. Our Program seeks to produce intellectually rigorous, analytical and creative work that embodies the perspective of gender in its local and global dimensions through teaching, research, and outreach activities.

The Plan outlines seven goals and a number of tasks under each. These goals and tasks provide the agenda for our work as a Program in the coming years. We urge you to look at the Plan on our website, and we invite your feedback and participation as we seek to fulfill these goals. The full list of goals, and some of the highlighted tasks include:

Goal 1. Map the State of Women’s Studies
   • Devote an annual Gender Seminar session to discussion of the State of Women’s (Gender) Studies
   • Consider name change to include “Gender”
Goal 2. Increase Majors and Minors
   • Establish a Human Sexuality minor
Goal 3. Develop Tracks in the Major
Goal 4. Enhance Assessment of Student Learning
Goal 5. Build the Graduate Program
   • Propose and Build an M.A. Program
Goal 6. Enhance Outreach
   • Continue Developing February Sisters Association
   • Revive Friends of Women’s Studies
   • Connect Students and Alums
Goal 7. Enhance Visibility
   • Continue to develop a national and international research profile
   • Document history of women’s studies at KU and the February Sisters programs

WS Graduate Certificate Program

Since beginning the Graduate Certificate Program in Fall 2002, we have conferred sixteen certificates, including a class of six this past Spring semester. Our most recent class of graduates are: Christine Anderson, Jennifer Balke, Ivery Goldstein, Jane Irungu, Anne Marie Morgan and Milton Wendland. The pipeline of students includes six students in the first course for the certificate program, WS 801, this fall. Certificate students have come from a wide range of disciplines in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the School of Education, and we hope to attract students from other Schools in the University as well. We have devoted a page on our website listing the names of our graduates and links to their certificate research, if available.

Student Internships and Service Learning

In each of the past three years Women's Studies has been fortunate to be granted support for Service Learning projects from Student Senate as a part of their Educational Opportunity Fund Grant. Last year we were able to fund one student for a summer service learning projects. Ashley Depenbusch worked for Women's Transitional Care Services. In Service Learning classes, students prepare reading lists and complete the readings, keep journals of their experiences and reflections, and write final papers connecting the academic to the service components of the class. This year we have funding for one more student for summer service learning projects, and we will continue to apply for more funding from Student Senate.

Women's Studies is seeking to expand opportunities in service learning and internships by combining efforts with existing programs and adding service learning components to selected courses. Some of this work by students is displayed on our website in the form of digital posters. These experiences are valuable ways for students to activate and expand their knowledge and serve the community at the same time. We would encourage any Friends or colleagues who could sponsor a service learning or internship student to contact us to discuss a possible link with us.
Women's Studies Endowment Funds

Our Endowment funds make possible projects, scholarships, and social occasions that help us build a community beyond the classroom. Thanks to our Endowment funds we are still able to support several important events and awards. Among the events were our traditional New Women Faculty Potluck and our end of the year annual Awards Banquet, along with the visits of three candidates for the Women’s Studies/American Studies faculty position.

Fiscal Year 2006 Donors to the Women’s Studies Endowment Account:

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The Women’s Studies & Friends Awards Banquet, 2006

On May 11, Women’s Studies faculty, students and staff joined the Friends of Women’s Studies for our annual recognition ceremony in which award winners, graduating WS Seniors and graduating WS Graduate Certificate students are recognized. Awardees for 2005-2006 are as follows: a $500.00 Virginia’s Purse Award, made possible from WS Endowment contributions, was made to WS Major Jessica Funk and WS Major’s Samantha Birchfield and Kathleen Lynch tied for second place, each receiving $250.00. Ashley Depenbusch was awarded an allocation of $1,500 from Student Senate’s Service Learning Award, also receiving Honorable Mention for the Sara and Mary Paretsky Award for Creativity. WS Major Joy Lawson was congratulated for winning an award from ChoiceUSA for Outstanding Chapter Leadership. Outstanding WS Major Jennifer Sheldon-Sherman was recognized for receiving the Chancellor’s Student Award: Donald K. Alderson Memorial Award which is presented to a graduating senior who has demonstrated loyalty to an interest in the University and who has been an active participant in student activities and services of benefit to other students. Jennifer was also awarded the $100 Senior Thesis Prize. The $1,500 (Honors Program) Harley S. Nelson Scholarship was presented to Jessica Funk. Jessica also spent Summer 2006 on a Study Abroad in Africa program where she worked with women’s groups on domestic violence prevention. Jessica contributed an article on her study abroad trip which follows in this newsletter. Women’s Studies also recognized WS Major Keeja Andrews whom was recently accepted in the Masters Program in Social Welfare. Keeja began working as a student assistant in the Women’s Studies Program in the fall of 2003 and during that time Keeja twice received the Equal Opportunity Fund Grant Scholarship in recognition of her class work in women’s studies.

Awardees of the Spring 2006 Women’s Studies Graduate Certificate are Christine Anderson, Jennifer Balke, Ivery Goldstein, Jane Iruengu, Anne Marie Morgan and Milton Wendland. Women’s Studies GTA and American Studies Graduate student Milton Wendland was recognized for receiving the CLAS Graduate School’s Distinguished Service Award, the only GTA to receive this on the KU campus.
At the banquet: Prof. Hannah Britton and the WS 601 Class

A Welcome to new faculty member
**Tanya Hart**

Tanya specializes in African American women’s history and the history of the public health system in the US, and holds a joint appointment with American Studies.

Professor Hart holds a joint appointment with Women’s Studies and American Studies. She comes to KU from the University of New Hampshire, where she was a visiting lecturer in the History Department. Prof. Hart holds a doctorate in history from Yale University, a master’s in history from UCLA, and her BA from the University of Washington. Prof. Hart is a native of Kansas City, Kansas. Before going back to school, she was a manufacturing engineer for Boeing and McDonnell-Douglass, having worked her way up from the factory floor to supervisory positions in the very male-dominated airline industry. Thankfully for us, Prof. Hart discovered the allure of the humanities and was hooked by the study of history. She specializes in African-American women’s history and the history of the public health system in the United States.

Women’s Studies Faculty

left to right, sitting:
**Tanya Hart**, American Studies and Women’s Studies
**Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka**, Theatre & Film and Women’s Studies

left to right, standing:
**Ann Schofield**, American Studies and Women’s Studies
**Ann Cudd**, Director of Women’s Studies, Prof. of Philosophy
**Marta Vicente**, History and Women’s Studies
**Charlene Muehlenhard**, Psychology and Women’s Studies
**Hannah Britton**, Political Science and Women’s Studies

WS faculty recently published books

**Prof. Ann Cudd:**
*Studies in Feminist Philosophy*
*Analyzing Oppression*

Description: Analyzing Oppression presents a new, integrated theory of social oppression, which tackles the fundamental question that no theory of oppression has satisfactorily answered: if there is no natural hierarchy among humans, why are some cases of oppression so persistent? I argue that the explanation lies in the coercive co-opting of the oppressed to join in their own oppression. This answer sets the stage for analysis throughout the book, as it explores the questions of how and why the oppressed join in their oppression.
Prof. Hannah Britton:  
*Women in African Parliaments*  
Gretchen Bauer and Hannah Britton, editors  
Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006  
Description: Working together across religious, ethnic, and class divisions, African women are helping to formulate legislation and foster democracies more inclusive of women’s interests. *Women in African Parliaments* explores this phenomenon, examining the impact and experiences of African women as they seek increased representation in national legislatures.

Prof. Marta Vicente:  
*Clothing the Spanish Empire*  
Description: By the 1780s in the city of Barcelona alone, more than 150 factories shipped calicoes to every major city in Spain and across the Atlantic, from Veracruz to Montevideo. Catalan, Basque and Castilian families sent relatives throughout the Iberian Peninsula and Spanish America, hoping to enrich themselves from the trade in calicoes. *Clothing the Spanish Empire* narrates the lives of families on both sides of the Atlantic who profited from the craze for calicoes, and in doing so helped the Spanish empire to flourish in the eighteenth century.

Gender Seminar, Fall 2006

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Speaker(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tue., Sept. 19</td>
<td>Beth Bailey, History, Temple University</td>
<td>“Gender and the All Volunteer Army”</td>
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<td>Tue., Oct. 17</td>
<td>Tara Welch, Classics</td>
<td>“Vestal Versions: Varro’s Tarpeia and the Politics of Gender”</td>
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| Tue., Dec. 5 | Marta Vicente, History/Women’s Studies          | “Gipsy Songs and Flamenco Dances: Theater Performance and the Making of Gender in Eighteenth-Century Spain”  
*Co-sponsored by the Early Modern Seminar*

The Gender Seminar studies gender as a basic concept in humanistic scholarship and/or as a fundamental organizing principal in social life. If you would like more information, contact Marta Vicente (History/Women’s Studies, 864-2235, mvicente@ku.edu) or Ann Schofield (American Studies/Women’s Studies, 864-2304, schofield@ku.edu).

Sessions are open to all graduate students, faculty and staff of the University of Kansas and their guests. Papers for all sessions are available on our website www.hallcenter.ku.edu for anyone wishing to attend. A PDF file of the paper is listed according to speaker, and a password is required to access the paper. Please contact the Hall Center at hallcenter@ku.edu for the password. All sessions are held in the Hall Center Seminar Room from 3:30-5:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

February Sisters Association is back in action

The February Sisters Association (FSA) student group has been reactivated. At the organizing meeting, FSA members elected new officers for the organization. The new officers are: Kat Brown, President; Mindy Dormagen and Lavinia Roberts, Co-Vice Presidents; and Makenna Bartel, Treasurer. At the initial meeting, FSA members brainstormed ideas
for speakers and campus events for the February 2007 FSA program. The group plans to sponsor events around feminist themes on campus throughout the academic year. Ideas for possible service opportunities in the Lawrence community were also discussed. The next meeting of the FSA is scheduled for Thursday, September 21, 2006 at 7:00 pm in the Kansas Union. Please join us and contribute your ideas and energies to this feminist campus group.

**Summer in West Africa**

**Prof. Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka’s Summer 2006 Abroad**

My summer started a bit early this year as the annual African Literature Association conference in Accra, Ghana which I attended was from May 17-21. It was highly successful conference with over 350 registered participants and as many scholarly presentations. Literary readings, and theatre productions – dance, drama and musical performances admirably complemented the scholarly presentations. The conference was rounded up with tours to historic sites in the country further highlighting the thematic focus of the conference: “Pan-Africanism in the 21st Century: Generations in Creative Dialogue.” There was a dinner-dance-party, of course. In spite of compulsory daily meetings and assignments, as a member of the ALA Executive Board, I was able to attend a number of the sessions as well as present my two papers. I presented a paper on slavery “If we count slaves, secrets will. OUT?” I had also put together and chaired a panel on African and African Diasporic Performance Theory” where I gave a paper on “Beyond Negritude: Critical Theories, Local Concepts and Global Paradigms.”

I stayed three more weeks in Ghana after the conference to enable me do some research on Efua Sutherland, a pioneer theatre practitioner (playwright, director, children’s drama) in contemporary African theatre. I interviewed some of her relatives, colleagues, former students, and artistes. Although one of her plays “The Marriage of Anansewa” specially produced for the conference took place at the conference hotel, another play, *The Slaves-Revisited* by Ben Abdallah (Sutherland’s former student and later colleague), was specially mounted for the conference to be performed at the Efua Sutherland Theatre Centre. The Centre, a theatre with open air sitting and flexible thrust stage is modeled after Sutherland’s original concept and which she herself adapted from the ancient Ghanaian performing spaces. I was also able to visit the rehearsal space she built after her retirement from the University of Legon, and which also functioned as the Children’s Foundation Center she founded.

The next phase of my research took me to Nigeria where I spent most of the month of June gathering materials on dance and interviewing women on their gender specific experiences. I spent about two weeks at the archives in the Centre for Black Arts and Culture (CBAC), located at the National Theatre, Iganmu Lagos. Most of the women I interviewed are located in cosmopolitan cities (Lagos and Ibadan) but I also interviewed women in smaller towns (Awe, Oyo and Ile-Ife). At Ile-Ife, I was able to participate at the Obafemi Awolowo University Humanities Conference. I was invited by the Ajasin University at Akungba in Ondo State to give a public lecture for their Summer lecture Series. My talk, titled “Imagine Nigeria” was sponsored by the Department of Linguistics, the host of the 2006 Lecture Series.

Of course I had to experience the malaria bug to get the total experience of a summer in West Africa. Thanks to grants from the University Travel Research and Department of Theatre & Film, I was able to do make the research trip.

**WS Major Jessica Funk’s Summer Abroad in South Africa**

When I first arrived in Cape Town, South Africa for a semester of study I was overcome by the immediate contrasts of poverty and wealth. When coming into the city it is impossible to miss the sight of countless dilapidated shacks crowded around the highway that make up the townships. Yet, in the background, you can see the towering skyscrapers in the flourishing city center and the majestic beauty of Table Mountain. I would come to find that South Africa is making great strides in overcoming past practices of apartheid, but it is still struggling to improve the conditions, opportunities, and privileges of people who have been victims of that system.

During my time in South Africa, I took courses at the University of Cape Town and participated in service work, which culminated in a research project that explored rape and partner violence in the township.
of Nyanga. I also studied Xhosa language and culture to assist me in my service work. My volunteer work consisted of helping to teach a Health class and an HIV/AIDS class in Nyanga, and working at a domestic violence shelter in Cape Town. These experiences not only broadened my perspective on issues affecting women in South Africa, but they changed my life. Many of the people I met through my volunteer work became like a second family to me, and I found their perseverance, dedication, and wisdom to be genuinely inspiring.

Although I lived in a house off-campus with other UCT students, I had the opportunity to experience a short homestay with a family in the township of Khayelitsha. I will never forget the unwavering generosity shown by my host family and the way they welcomed me wholeheartedly into their family. My host father kept telling me how happy he was to have me stay with them, because he felt that most white people only view the townships as places of violence and hopeless poverty. He was happy to have the opportunity to show a person of a different culture that there is far more than meets the eye in Khayelitsha. Through this and all of my other experiences, I found the most beautiful things about Cape Town were not the breathtaking mountains, stunning beaches, and vibrant cityscapes, but the constant strength, passion, generosity, and kindness exhibited by the people I met during my stay.

**Jessie’s pictures:**

*A view of Cape Town taken from the top of Table Mountain.*

*Children coloring AIDS ribbons for Community Health Day.* Participants of the Health and HIV/AIDS class taught their fellow community members about chosen topics they had learned in class.

*Jessie and several of the Health and HIV/AIDS class participants who graduated from the program that day.*
Each year the Women’s Studies Director plans a reception in which the WS faculty and WS Advisory Board members welcome the new women faculty to KU.