

# WOMEN'S VU

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## Women's Studies, Then And Now

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What was a college education like without women's studies? When I went to high school and college in the 1960s, my main interest was music, which I studied in an arts and humanities context. Except for queens, women writers, and the occasional artists, there were no women in the curriculum before the 20th century. It's as though the whole tradition of Western thought and culture grew without their contribution.

Back then women were evident in history primarily as objects of representation, as sources of inspiration, and by implication. They fed that army that marched on its stomach. They married and mothered the so-called great men.

Today's students are more likely to learn about women's roles in history, religion, science, the arts, politics, and the professions. They may study feminist theory, which has enlivened the fields of psychology, philosophy, sociology, film, and literature. They are likely to use language less overtly sexist and exclusionary than in my day.

Women's studies began around 1969. The first courses reflected a concern for the study of women within particular fields. A concerted movement with its own agenda soon emerged. Originally a corrective movement, the study of women's issues and concerns soon raised a new question: Why had women been excluded in the first place?

To answer this question women's studies scholars had to examine culture, the important relations between men and women, the definition of what is natural. Social scientists recognized that if arrangements between the sexes are socially determined then sex roles can maintain a particular social order or promote its change. Thus, women's studies evolved two major goals: (1) to affect the content of courses in areas specifically relating to women, and (2) to question and analyze the methodology and assumptions of traditional disciplines which have excluded women and ignored gender as an analytical category.

To take an example from my own research into the history of journalism: I was looking for

antecedents of the New Journalists of the 1960s. I turned to an earlier period in American history when innovative reporters for newspaper publishers like Hearst and Pulitzer were notorious for departing from standard journalistic practice to expose political corruption and victimization of the poor. Several of these "new journalists" were women.

Instead of being called investigative reporters these women were labeled "stunt" reporters and "sob sisters." They performed such "stunts" as falling down in the streets of San Francisco to test medical care (Winifred Black, "Annie Laurie"), posing as insane in order to get committed to an insane asylum to see how women defined as abnormal were treated (Elizabeth Cochrane, "Nellie Bly"), and working among the poor for two years in order to expose debilitating job conditions (Rheta Childe Dorr).

Another outstanding journalist of the period was Ida B. Wells-Barnett, a black editor and part-owner of a weekly newspaper. She crusaded singlehandedly to expose and end the lynchings of black men. She had to be invited to lecture in Britain before she could get a hearing in white newspapers in the U.S.

Why wasn't she known for what she accomplished at a time when her work was critical and effective? Does it have anything to do with the fact that she was not only black, but a woman? And why were Black, Cochrane, and Dorr labeled disparagingly and their exploits trivialized and then neglected by the dominant journalism and by historians? Why do we never hear about these women?

The answer seems part of a larger pattern: women have been marginalized, set apart as "other" throughout history. The history of "others"—racial, religious, and ethnic minorities, even of radical political groups—has been one of assimilation, or when they cannot be accom-

modated within the dominant culture, exclusion.

Women's studies is ideological. Its very agenda makes it cohere as a discipline or area of study. But it is no more radical than other disciplines which question their own traditional structures and methodologies.

Women's studies is "feminist" in that it reflects the belief that women should be given the same legal, political, social, and economic rights as men. Who isn't a feminist under this definition?

Women's studies seeks to overcome past effects of the belief that half the human race is inferior or secondary to the other half. It opens up future possibilities for women within the academic institution and the larger community. It challenges students and teachers—men and women—to remain self-critical in the search for understanding of the human race.

*Professor Frus taught Images of Women in the Fall, 1986. She is working on a book about the relation between journalism and the American novel.* ■

## "So long, it's been good to know you"

The refrain above was written by Woody Guthrie in a dusty Texas bar as he and others were waiting for what they thought was the end of their world. They were (prematurely) exiting with grace and reverence toward each other.

Saying goodbye has always been hard for me, but I'm saying it now. I have edited *Women's VU* for two years, on deadline, with the help of many people on and off campus: people who wrote, commented, advised, sent articles, encouraged, affixed mailing labels, etc.

I want to thank all of you — contributors and readers — for helping to make *Women's VU* the voice for women that it is on and off campus. Special thanks go to the Women's Center staff: Nancy Ransom, whose headwork always improves a product; Kathy Thornton, who has labored mightily and well to maintain a growing mailing list; Susan Seay, who cheerfully gathered background information and illustrations from the Women's Center library; and Suzanne Ewing, who helped with distribution while offering excellent critical advice.

A new editor will be doing the October issue. I am leaving the Women's Center to take a position in publishing off campus. I wish everyone well as you live and work toward a more equal and just society for all.

—Joan Anderson ■



## International Congress On Women

Nancy A. Ransom  
Director of the Women's Center

Women's Studies has spread across the seas. In over 100 countries scholars and teachers are doing women's studies. Some of their research was reported at the Third International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women in Dublin, Ireland last July, which I attended. Over 1000 women and men convened at beautiful Trinity College in the heart of the city for an intensive week of papers, symposia, keynote addresses, workshops and exhibits. The theme was "Women's Worlds: Visions and Revisions."

My paper, on U.S. academic women from 1870 to 1970, was presented at one of three panels on higher education. At my session one of the other papers dealt with academic women in Poland. Another treated women's status in Canadian universities and colleges.

Margaret Gillett of McGill University in Montreal identified two triumphs of the women's movement affecting educational opportunities: today, half of Canadian college students are women and women now serve on the faculties of all Canadian universities. These are recent changes, due in large part to women's organized challenge to sex discrimination.

Gillett cited four problems for women that persist today: (1) complacency, (2) marginalization, (3) cooptation of women who have only token representation on faculties; and (4) condescension toward women from the still predominantly male power structure.

At another panel an Israeli scholar reported on a study which finds that academic women in her country have greater difficulty gaining promotion in the social sciences and humanities than in natural and physical sciences, where the proportion of women is very small, only 8 percent.

Similarities from country to country were evident from many papers. In Poland and Canada, as in the U.S., there also are few women on the natural and physical science faculties. Women tend to be concentrated in humanities, to receive smaller salaries than men, and to remain at the lower ranks.

Research on careers and family life also shows cross-cultural similarities. A Turkish scholar compared tensions between career and family responsibilities among academic women in Turkey and Jordan. She found that while the two groups differed in their coping strategies, they shared the need to resolve a conflict between their two roles which men do not experience.

The Dublin conference followed closely the National Women's Studies Association Conference that was held in Atlanta in June. Many American women attended both meetings.

There is no doubt that the community of scholars interested in women's studies continues to grow both here and abroad. The field is enriched by scholarship conducted in different societies. The next International Congress will be held in 1990 at Hunter College in New York.

## New Rules Threaten Federal Family Planning

On the eve of Senate consideration of the Federal Family Planning Program, the Reagan administration proposed new rules which would cut off federal funds to clinics that inform clients about abortion.

Abortion is legal in the United States. For 17 years Congress has appropriated money for family planning and counseling that informs pregnancy women of all their options: keeping the baby, giving it up for adoption, or abortion. If the new regulations take effect, family planning clinics will be barred from informing women about abortion or making abortion referrals.

About 4,000 clinics serving 4.3 million clients receive federal dollars for family planning. Eighty-five percent of the clients are low-income women and one-third are teen-age girls.

Another proposed change in Title X regulations would require clinics that provide both family planning and abortion to separate the two operations completely. At present, separate book-keeping must be maintained by such clinics to guarantee that no federal funds are used for abortion. A clinic can fund abortions in other ways, however, such as fees or contributions.

For several years the federal government has audited Planned Parenthood clinics around the country that offer both abortion and family planning. These audits failed to turn up a single case of non-compliance with the guidelines.

Planned Parenthood of Nashville, which offers both family planning and abortion at its adult clinic on 21st Avenue, would be affected by the new rules. Half of eligible women and girls in Davidson County might lose subsidized contraception and family planning counseling if the administration's proposal takes effect.

Phyllis Dettman, Executive Director of Planned Parenthood Association of Nashville, made the following statement about the proposed changes: "It is ironic that those who oppose abortion are attacking family planning. If these rules go into effect the number of unplanned pregnancies will surely rise. The poor and the young will suffer most."

Last spring the Reagan administration provoked several law suits by banning payments to organizations which provide family planning in foreign countries and tell pregnant women about abortion. In 1985 the administration stopped payments of family planning aid to developing nations which had legal abortion. ■

## "FLU CREW" Needs More Volunteers

Participants are needed for research to develop a new improved influenza vaccine which is being conducted by Vanderbilt University in cooperation with the National Institute of Health.

The new vaccine is administered by nosedrops instead of injection. Vanderbilt physicians have been testing the effectiveness of the nosedrop vaccine in children for more than 10 years. Now that the nosedrop vaccine has been found to be safe, its effectiveness is being compared with the flu shot in a large population.

Participants in the study provide a blood sample on their first visit in the fall. One month later, and again in the following spring, blood samples

are drawn to monitor each individual's change in flu protection. Each time participants have blood samples drawn they are paid \$10.

This is a voluntary study. Participants must be under 65 years of age and in reasonably good health. Pregnant women and persons with chronic illness cannot participate. Everyone who participates is vaccinated against influenza.

The research team plans to follow 3000 volunteers in this 5-year program to compare the effectiveness of the two vaccines. Anyone interested in participating should call Mary Westrich, R.N., Nurse Coordinator at the Flu Study, at 322-2477.

## Changing Jobs?

Hidden costs of job hopping. A ten percent pay increase is usually not a legitimate reason for a switch in employers. You may risk valuable retirement income, vacation days per year, accumulated sick days, and other benefits. You lose the intangibles such as possible promotions and an established track record and rapport with co-workers, clients, and bosses. Your new work environment may not be as agreeable as the one you left.

While no one is going to turn down the job of a lifetime because she's worried about looking restless or losing some of her benefits, the important thing is to consider the long-term effects of every career decision you make.

—Working Woman  
February 1987

Female administrators work for smaller institutions and earn less than males, according to a survey of 238 male and 68 female administrators done by Milton Gordon of Chicago State University. During the first seven career years, salaries for male and female administrators do not differ significantly. After seven years, only 25.2 percent of males had salaries less than \$35,000, compared to 53.8 percent of the females. Median salaries were \$43,275 for males and \$34,334 for females. Male administrators were three times as likely to work at institutions with over 300 faculty members.

—University Women  
December 1985

Courtship violence affects 20 percent of college students, and 60 percent of students know of someone involved in a violent relationship, according to Murray State University researchers W. and R.B. Allbritten. The victims often have low self esteem and feel that if they pass up a relationship they won't be able to attract anybody else. The researchers plan to produce guidelines on courtship violence.

—*Newsweek on Campus*  
March 1987

**College women as problem drinkers:** According to a continuing nationwide study by Ruth Engs at Indiana University, 80 percent of college women drink (compared with 87 percent of college men). The number of heavy drinkers (six or more drinks at one sitting at least once a week) was up to 14 percent in 1985. Because of a hangover, 24 percent missed class last year.

Habitual drinking increases a woman's chances of infertility, miscarriages and stillbirths, as well as breast cancer and liver disease.

—*Newsweek on Campus*  
March 1987

## Free from the Women's Center

For employers: "Checking References? Here Are Ten Tough Questions to Ask" from the booklet *How to Check References When References Are Hard to Check*, by Robert Half, seen in *Working Woman*.

For employees: "Good Boss — Bad Boss: How to Spot a Good Boss Before You Take the Job" from *Woman Engineer*, Spring 1987, seen in *AWSI Job Bulletin*.

For a photocopy, call 322-4843.



## Automatic Cure for Sexist Writing

A new software program, Grammatik, is available for some word processors. It not only checks a manuscript for approximately 100 gender-specific words such as watchman, spokesman, and bell boy, it also replaces them with substitutes such as guard, representative and attendant.

—*Women and Language*,  
Vol. IX, No. 1

## For Medical Purposes Only . . .

According to endocrinologists R. and J. Wurtman at M.I.T., starches and other sweets really do make us feel better. Some sugars and starches (pastries, chips, french fries, soft drinks and candy) indirectly trigger the release of serotonin, a brain chemical that appears to lessen anxiety and depression for some people and at the same time reduce the craving for more carbohydrate-rich foods. People deprived of these essential carbohydrates, then, may actually develop a physiologically induced need for them. The Wurtmans believe that someone bingeing on carbohydrates may in fact be suffering from depression and—without realizing it—be trying to medicate herself out of her depressed state.

"Many patients describe themselves as feeling anxious, tense or depressed before consuming the carbohydrate snack and then peaceful and relaxed afterward. It may be more than a coincidence that dietary carbohydrates and both major classes of antidepressant drugs . . . are thought to increase the quantities of serotonin within the brain synapses," writes R. Wurtman in the medical journal *Lancet*.

—*Ladies Home Journal*  
April 1987

## Women's Center Programs

Call 322-4843 for information on the programs listed below.

The Single Mothers Group will meet September 1 and 15, 6:45 - 8:15 p.m., at the Vanderbilt Child Care Center. Program theme for September is self-esteem. Nancy Ransom, director of the Women's Center, will join the group at 7:30 to discuss women and self-esteem.

The Book Group meets on September 28 from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m. at the Women's Center. The selection is *Mayflower Madam* by Sidney D. Barrows. Light refreshments. Open to readers on and off campus.

A brown-bag lunch for new employees will be sponsored by the Women's Center on Friday, September 25. This is a chance for new employees to learn about services available to women at Vanderbilt, to meet other newcomers to the staff, and to learn more about the Women's Center. Anyone interested in attending can call the Women's Center, 322-4843.

A dissertation writers support group for women will meet at the Women's Center from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month except in December. An organizational meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 15. Call 322-4843 for directions or more information.

## Kudos

Marlene Hall, detective in Police and Security, received a national award in May from the General Federation of Women's Clubs for her work in developing and presenting a seminar on preventing and handling sexual assaults. The seminar has been presented on and off campus.

—*The Vanderbilt Register*  
June 26, 1987

Associate professor of History Elisabeth Perry's book *Belle Moskowitz: Feminine Politics and the Exercise of Power in the Age of Alfred E. Smith* is co-winner of the 1987 New York State Historical Association Manuscript Award. The biography—a chronicle of Moskowitz's role in social reform, settlement work, and labor relations, as well as her role as adviser to governor Alfred E. Smith—will be published this fall by Oxford University Press.

# Announcements et cetera

The Breast Cancer Screening Program will be a regular service for Vanderbilt employees provided through Occupational Health Service. Women over 35 should have a baseline mammogram exam with repeat mammograms at regular intervals for the rest of their lives. Mammograms (x-ray examination of the breast) are the best method now available to recognize breast cancer in its early and curative phase. Call 322-7700. Cost is \$40. ■

The Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College offers fellowship programs designed to support women who wish to pursue independent study in residence in the Boston area and at the Institute. Radcliffe/Harvard privileges are provided. Receipt of doctorate at least two years prior to appointment or equivalent professional experience for non-academic applicants is required. Awards vary from no stipend to \$20,000 plus research expenses. Women scholars, professionals, creative writers, poets, visual and performing artists, and musicians are invited to apply. Write Fellowship program, Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College, 10 Garden St., Cambridge, MA 02138. October 15 deadlines. ■

Rita Burgett, owner of A Woman's Place, has moved to Fountain Square Shopping Complex in Metro Center and has expanded by opening a bookstore there called Woman's Book Store. Tentative hours at press time were Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. ■

A March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights is scheduled for October 11. Issues include the need for better funding for AIDS research and the right of gays and lesbians to live and work where and how they choose without fear of legal or societal censure due to sexual preference. To attend the march in Washington or to support it financially, contact the Tennessee March Committee, P.O. Box 120834, Nashville, TN 37212, 297-4293 or 834-3769. ■

Metro public schools adult and community education in a wide variety of classes (Computer Literacy, Dog Obedience, Guitar, etc.) will begin the fall semester with registration September 1. Weekly classes are held all over the city at school sites. Fees are under \$50. For information, call 259-8549. ■

The Middle Tennessee Women's Studies Association is open to regional scholars and teachers interested in women's studies for an annual fee of \$10. Students may join for \$5 a year. The group meets monthly to hear papers and discuss topics of mutual interest.

For more information contact Elisabeth I. Perry, Box 113 Station B, 322-3388. ■

YWCA classes beginning in September include:

- Empowering Working Women
- How to Start Your Own Business
- Looks That Win (dressing for interviews, etc.)
- What's In and What's Not (fashion)
- Understanding Aging Parents
- Yoga

Classes are one or more sessions and include a small fee. Call 269-9922 for information. ■

The Business and Professional Women's Foundation (BPWF) sponsors the Sally Butler Memorial Fund for Latina Research on issues of importance to women. Candidates must be Latin American women and doctoral candidates whose proposals have been approved. Applications for awards for academic year 1988-89 are available September 1, 1987. Awards are \$500 to \$3,000. Write BPWF, 2012 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. ■

Nashville CARES (Council on AIDS Resources, Education, and Support) is having a volunteers training program in September for people who would like to serve as Buddies (support in hospital or at home for an AIDS victim), speaker's bureau, and office work. Call 385-1510 or 385-2437 for training date and time. ■

## The Depth of Beauty

"I'm tired of all this nonsense about beauty being only skin-deep. That's deep enough. What do you want — an adorable pancreas?"

—Jean Kerr

*The Snake Has All the Lines* ■

*Edited by Joan Anderson and Nancy A. Ransom*

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