

# WOMEN'S DUKE STUDIES

Spring 2005 Newsletter

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At times, the show was hilarious, disturbing, and moving—but most importantly, it was wholly unpredictable.



*from "All of the Above," a Response to the Gender Initiative, article on page 5*



*Women's Studies offers Two New Courses find out more on page 10.*

## Graduate Scholars Restructures

By Cindy Current

Under the guidance of Professor Tina Campt, Women's Studies Graduate Scholars has always been an intellectual and social organization concerned with the disciplinary junctures and larger disciplinary concerns of Women's Studies.

Drawing from the diverse graduate population invested in course work and teaching through the Women's Studies Department, the group has grown both in numbers and in intellectual commitment.

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*Jean Fox O'Barr Symposium in Women's Studies—page 3.*

## Director's Column

Dear Friends,

This past fall, I took a much-appreciated leave that allowed me to both travel and enjoy some time at home. The more serious purpose of my leave was to write on two important issues: institutionalizing feminism in the U.S. academy and identity as an academic object of study. I'm thankful to Tina Campt, our interim director, who managed seamlessly while I was gone, directing program initiatives, while conducting her own research and teaching.

When I returned, I was delighted to find a copy of "Social Text" in my mailbox, featuring "Future Matters," the technoscience conference on which I collaborated last year. Women's Studies at Duke has made important commitments to feminist science studies, along with internationalizing our program, and expanding in the direction of other important fields of research, such as Chicana and Latina studies and feminist environmental studies, among others. In this issue of the newsletter,

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our faculty and graduate instructors offer their thoughts on new courses that approach these fields of study, as well as, on such mainstay courses in our curriculum as "Women and the Political Process."

Women's Studies faculty member Jenny Reardon writes about her new book on genomics and reflects here on feminism as a tool for reconciling science and power, and truth and ideology, in the pursuit of technoscientific knowledge. Along these lines, Jenny is collaborating this fall with Priscilla Wald, Professor of English and Women's Studies, on "The Genome Age," a new graduate and faculty Interdisciplinary Debates seminar. Graduate students Ariana Sutton-Grier and Melissa Kenney, Ph.D. candidates in Ecology, also describe in this issue their new course on feminism and ecology offered by Women's Studies in collaboration with the Nicholas School of the Environment. Latina and Chicana feminisms are addressed through a new course taught by Kathy Rudy, one of Women's Studies most popular teachers and winner of the Trinity College Distinguished Teaching Award in 1996 and the Duke Alumni Association's Distinguished Teaching Award in 2000. In addition to offering readings and discussion, the course has spawned an exciting, student-led community project that will continue to offer ways for students to put their social justice concerns and feminist knowledge into practice.

Two graduate students report in this issue on conferences the program participated in this year. In November, we once again collaborated with scholars from the Harvard Program on Law and Social Thought on a two-day conference on "The Law of Dignity/The Politics of Shame." Jimmy Richardson, a Ph.D. candidate in English and one of ten Duke Women's Studies students who attended the conference, contributes an article on the event. Kinohi Nishikawa, a Women's Studies graduate certificate student and Ph.D. candidate in Literature, offers an article on our recent Jean Fox O'Barr Symposium in Women's Studies, which focused on the theme of "Gender and Ethnic Conflict." The symposium, which brought together an interdisciplinary and international group of scholars,

activists, and audience members, is part of the Program's ongoing commitment to comparative international analysis in Women's Studies research and teaching. You can hear the symposium proceedings at <http://www.duke.edu/womstud>.

Members of Women's Studies Graduate Scholars Colloquium played a key role in leading discussion groups at the symposium. Cindy Current, a Women's Studies Graduate Certificate student who will participate in a summer institute at Cornell's School of Criticism and Theory, is one of the coordinators of the newly restructured Colloquium. In this issue of the newsletter, Cindy provides a description of the group as it is now constituted.

We continue to monitor gender equality and quality of life issues on campus at Duke. I am in conversation with President Brodhead and others about the Women's Initiative, from students, faculty and staff concerns to ongoing alumnae involvement in Duke. Our undergraduates are among the most innovative in addressing the issues raised by the Initiative. Rachel Weeks' and her associates' work on a performance called "All of the Above" is one such response. While the production will be over before many of you read about it here, I know we can look forward to continuing work on gender issues from Rachel and other Women's Studies students in the future.

We're quite proud of our graduates and congratulate those who have earned fellowships and merit awards this year, and those who graduated with distinction or accepted positions upon completing their work at Duke. It's always a pleasure to hear about how our alumnae/i fare after graduation. Janelle Blankenship's post-doctoral experience at Brown's Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women is described at length in this issue of the newsletter. We're grateful to those who have kept us posted on their lives after Duke and hope you enjoy hearing about them and our ongoing efforts in the program and at Duke.

My Best-

Robyn Wiegman  
Margaret Taylor Smith  
Director of Women's Studies at Duke

## *Alumni Reunion Draws Future Alumnae*

Women's Studies offered alumni returning to Duke for the April Reunion weekend a chance, not only to reacquaint themselves with campus life and each other, but also to visit the East Duke Parlors on Saturday, April 16 to hear Duke Women's Studies majors Alexandra Miller, Emilie Dahod and Elizabeth Clift talk about their experience at Duke and their plans for the future. The guest list was diverse and included alumni, as well as, members of the Iota Mu Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., who are celebrating their 30th year. The sorority does mentoring in the community and brought local middle and high school students, who are part of the mentoring program, to the April reunion to learn about Women's Studies.

## Jean Fox O'Barr Symposium in Women's Studies: "Gender and Ethnic Conflict"

By Kinohi Nishikawa



Founding Director of Women's Studies, Jean O'Barr (left) and alumna, Laura Ellen Muglia.

Women's Studies hosted the second Jean Fox O'Barr Symposium on Friday and Saturday, March 4-5, 2005, on the theme "Gender and Ethnic Conflict." The symposium, designed to bring feminist theory and feminist activism into productive dialogue, grew out of the graduate seminar of the same name taught last fall by Claudia Koonz, Professor of History and Women's Studies. In different ways, all the speakers

attempted to undo the theory/practice divide by reconciling the disproportionate victimization of women and children in ethnic conflict with a critical understanding of women's participation in and resistance to ethnic conflict itself. The event featured two keynote addresses and three panel discussions, with scholars from history, anthropology, and political science, as well as lawyers and activists, from various parts of the world.

On Friday Amrita Basu, Director of the Five Colleges Women's Studies Research Center, delivered the opening keynote address. She focused on religious differences between India and Sri Lanka on the one hand and Pakistan and Bangladesh on the other in order to discuss how nationalist movements in South Asia foster or discourage women's participation in frequently violent political action. Basu traced the sources of women's politicization in predominantly Hindu and Muslim cultural contexts; she proposed that Indian and Sri Lankan (Tamil) nationalisms attract women's involvement by enhancing women's social positioning and civil rights, whereas Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationalisms promote largely "reactionary" projects that exclude women from political participation. Yet Basu was careful to point out that Muslim women are nonetheless politicized to the extent that they are encouraged to support social conservatism and state theocracy as expressions of their national identity. She ended her talk by suggesting that Islamic nationalist movements in fact have mobilized a certain kind of feminism to politicize women's ethnic identities at the expense of their gender.



Amrita Basu (Director of the Five Colleges Women's Studies Research Center, Amherst), opening keynote speaker.

Saturday's busy schedule began with Eunice Sahle (African Studies & International Studies, UNC-Chapel Hill) speaking about women's complicity in the "ideological production of gender-based violence" in post-independence Kenya. She defused patronizing Western views of that violence by explaining how Kenyan women have helped constitute the "material foundations of their families and communities" en route to "ethnic-based economic modernization." Iris Berger (History, African American Studies & Women's Studies, SUNY-Albany) picked up on the theme of complicity in her brief history of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa, where in the 1950s the cultural consolidation of political apartheid became profoundly attuned to Afrikaner women's desire to be figured as



Eunice Sahle (Assistant Professor, African Studies/International Studies, UNC-Chapel Hill), "Ethnic Consciousness" panelist.

Elizabeth Oglesby's (Latin American Studies, University of Arizona) presentation on the Guatemala Truth Commission, established in the wake of that country's devastating civil war, touched on the intersection of trauma and historical memory as a means of theorizing "postviolence" national situations. Oglesby suggested that the Commission's task of "officializing history," even with the intention of healing past wounds, risked eliding the differences between the state's "juridical analysis" and people's "narrative accounts" of the war and its effects on the population. Mehrangiz Kar, an attorney who was jailed in Iran for critiquing its legal system, listed a number of gender inequalities that Iran's state religion has codified into law. Unlike the opening up of reconciliatory discursive space in postwar Guatemala, Kar articulated a bleak view of Iran's capacity to recognize systematic gender inequality and to host projects for social change through legal redress.



Cynthia Enloe (International Development, Community & Environment and Women's Studies, Clark University), closing keynote speaker.

Clark University scholar and activist Cynthia Enloe concluded the symposium with a keynote address that described her work on arms issues in a United Nations (UN) subcommittee. Writing on the dry-erase board behind her and taking up a pedagogical tone, Enloe proposed a feminist qualification to UN policies of resolving ethnic conflict through arms control. She maintained that "feminist knowledge" exposed how "masculinities fuel the demand for small arms" (the implied penis-anxiety of which was not lost upon an engaged audience) but warned against the "abduction" or "kidnapping" of that knowledge by institutions like the UN. As a gesture toward the critical tension between feminist epistemology and institutional procedure, Enloe's scene of instruction proved a rousing finale to a weekend of intense feminist-inspired inquiry.

## "Gender and Ethnic Conflict"

"mothers of the nation." Like Basu, Sahle and Berger demonstrated how women's empowerment, an explicit goal of transnational feminism, is often practically situated to take up both progressive and reactionary political projects.

Elizabeth Oglesby's (Latin American Studies, University of Arizona) presentation on the Guatemala Truth Commission, established in the wake of that country's devastating civil war, touched on the intersection of trauma



"Ethnic War Zones" panelists: Mehrangiz Kar (Visiting Scholar, Washington College of Law, American University), Elizabeth Oglesby (Center for Latin American Studies, University of Arizona), Diane Nelson (Cultural Anthropology, Duke), moderator.

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*Gender & Ethnic Conflict continued from page 3*

Perhaps the central issue that emerged out of the symposium's proceedings and informal discussion among its participants had to do with the translation of feminist theory and practice across national and cultural borders. For some scholars, women's mobilization through ethnic conflict represents an "appropriation of feminism" by reactionary nationalist movements. In their view, feminism is essentially equivalent to human rights discourse and is thus incompatible with breaches of local civil rights by political actors, whether male or female. For other scholars, it is precisely this conjuncture, whereby local ethnic politics trumps transnational feminist solidarity, that reveals how women's politicization follows not a single, "modernizing" trajectory but multiple, contradictory strategies. According to them, these strategies are locally specific but globally significant, rendering transnational feminism's task one of negotiating national and cultural differences to effect women's politicization through a range of social fields.



Tina Campt (*Women's Studies, Duke*) questions panelists.

terrorism, Rantisi's co-panelist, Israeli author and activist Rela Mazali, outlined a more strategic plan for feminist engagement. Her claim that gender and ethnicity should be conceived as critical responsibilities, not identitarian attachments (the manipulation of which, Mazali argued, grounds the Israeli state's masculinist militarization of Israeli culture), served to show how the ethics of feminist epistemology can sustain political critique in the face of women's victimization by and complicity with ethnic violence. Mazali's talk was animated by her theoretical and activist commitments: she is cofounder of New Profile ([www.newprofile.org](http://www.newprofile.org)), a joint Israeli and Palestinian feminist movement working to demilitarize Israeli society by refusing state-imposed gender and ethnic categories. Among New Profile's many forms of grassroots protest, Mazali organizes Israeli and Palestinian women's marches under banners like "We Refuse to Serve the Occupation" and "We Refuse to Be Enemies." This ethics of politicized refusal would displace a coherent feminist knowledge-project with a self-reflexive transnational feminism in order to come to terms with gender's flexible positioning within ethnic conflict. Mazali's lesson was that progressive, antiviolenace politics is a matter of strategizing gender-flexibility and not of gender as such.



Hilary Rantisi, (*Associate Director Middle East Institute, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard*).

*Funding for the symposium was generously provided by The Laura Ellen and Robert Muglia Family Foundation and the Friends of Women's Studies; grants from the John Hope Franklin "Risky Knowledge" project, Kenan Institute for Ethics, and the Josiah Charles Trent Memorial Foundation; and from these Duke units: Art and Art History, Center for Documentary Studies, Center for European Studies, Center for International Development Research, Comparative Area Studies, Duke School of Law, Film/Video/Digital Section of the Program in Literature, Franklin Humanities Institute, Freewater Films, Marxism and Society, Romance Studies, Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies, and Women's Studies.*



Rebecca Stein (*Cultural Anthropology, Duke*), Palestine/Israel Panel Moderator Rela Mazali (*Israeli author and activist*).

Saturday's panel on ethnic reconciliation in Israel and Palestine highlighted these two broad approaches to transnational feminism. Hilary Rantisi, Associate Director of the Middle East Institute at Harvard University, described how grassroots Palestinian women's movements protest the Israeli military occupation of their land by demanding refugee rights from the state. Her most provocative contention was that because "women see conflict in a different way from men," Palestinian women's politicization necessarily entails a critique of patriarchy and the occupation. Recognizing that women's politicization could just as well entail women's involvement in violent political action, including



Kinohi Nishikawa is a Ph.D. candidate in the Graduate Program in Literature and is pursuing the Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies.

*Graduate Scholars Restructures continued from page 1*

This semester, the organization has taken that commitment to a new level. After graduate students expressed a desire for the group to devote itself to in-depth and substantive dialogue with their own work,

Graduate Scholars evolved into a colloquium where advanced graduate scholars from a variety of disciplines present their work in the fields of feminist, gender, and sexuality studies.

In February of 2005, the colloquium featured the work of Amy Carroll entitled "Accidental Allegories" Meet "The Performative Documentary": Boystown, Señorita Extraviada, and the Border-Brothel/Maquiladora Paradigm." Carroll recently completed her Ph.D. in the Literature Program at Duke University. She has been an active participant in Graduate Scholars and earned a graduate certificate in Women's Studies.

In March of 2005, the colloquium discussed the work of Cybelle McFadden Wilkens entitled "My Body, My Video: Dominique Cabrera's *Demain et encore demain journal 1995* (1997)." McFadden

Wilkens is a Ph.D. candidate in the department of Romance Studies at Duke University and has earned a graduate certificate in Women's Studies. Her article, "Body, Text, and Language: Wittig's Struggle For The Universal in *Les Guérillères*," is forthcoming in *Women in French Studies* 12 (2004).

In order to support the work of such programming, Women's Studies has awarded fellowships to Eden Osucha and Cynthia Current. Eden Osucha is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English at Duke University, where she has taught undergraduate courses in English and Women's Studies and earned additional

## “All of the Above,” a Response to the Gender Initiative

by Rachel Weeks

Last spring, my best friend and I performed in a play together for the first time in our lives. The play — “All of the Above” — was the brainchild of Mary Adkins and Tamara Giwa, seniors I’d long admired as confident, wise, hilarious women with their heads on their shoulders. Together, they assembled a cast of Duke women from all walks of life to write and perform each other’s work. We wrote monologues about everything from a girl’s love of ear lobes to eating disorders, one-night stands, and lop-sided breasts. The diversity, like the women, was utterly impressive.

Although the play was motivated and inspired by the findings of the Women’s Initiative, the term “effortless perfection,” which appeared in the report and was widely mentioned in subsequent press coverage, was never once uttered on stage. Instead, we allowed the depth and range of our experiences to speak for themselves, to create a space where those findings were not forgotten, but were wrestled with. We envisioned, and created, an *alternative* to the troubling image painted of undergraduate women at Duke. At times, the show was hilarious, disturbing, and moving—but most importantly, it was wholly unpredictable.

This year, my friend Lauren McLaughlin and I are returning a year after our first acting experience to work on this year’s production of “All of the Above.” We helped collect submissions and the month of March was devoted to auditions and rehearsals with this year’s cast. Show times were set for the weekend of April 15-17, 2005. The co-directors this year will be Tsu-Yin Chang, Lauren McLaughlin, and Laura Pyatt.

This show has been our means of contributing to the ongoing, dynamic, necessary response to the Women’s Initiative. We offer no formal critiques, no feminist analysis of the situation of Duke Women — just our truths. We hope our audience enjoys the show as much as we enjoy the challenge of bringing it to them.



*Rachel Weeks is a sophomore, Trinity Scholar, and Women’s Studies Major. Her internship with BUST Magazine last summer yielded the founding of BUST’s College Street Team, as well as a running column called “Hair Hopper” in which she teaches readers how to reconstruct vintage hairstyles. She currently works with Matter Magazine, Saturday Night: Untold Stories of Sexual Assault at Duke, and the Undergraduate Publications Board. This summer she will participate in the Duke in Mexico Program, and next year she plans to travel to the Netherlands with the School for International Training’s Program on Sexuality, Gender, and Identity.*

certification from the programs in Women’s Studies and African and African-American Studies. Her primary research and teaching interests are twentieth-century American literature and culture, feminist and queer theory, critical race studies, disability, and cultural studies of the law. Her dissertation, “The Subject of Privacy: Race, Rights, and Intimate Personhood in American Literature and Law, 1890-1960,” examines the emergence of “intimate personhood” as a crucial term of racial and gendered distinction in American literature, popular culture, and the law in relation to the early history of the right to privacy, prior to its articulation as constitutional doctrine.

Osucha also holds an M.A. in English from the University of California at Davis and a B.A. in American Studies from Wellesley College, from which she graduated magna cum laude. She is originally from California.

Cynthia Current is a Ph.D. candidate and Teaching Fellow in the Department of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she will also receive a graduate certificate in Cultural Studies. She has completed a Graduate Certificate in Women’s Studies at Duke University. In addition to the Women’s Studies Fellowship at Duke, she is the Critical Speaker’s Chair for the Association of Graduate English

Students at the University of North Carolina. Her research and teaching is centered within nineteenth and early twentieth-century American literature, and within theories of genre, novelization, and feminism. Her dissertation research is centered within the cultural logic of chance as it operates through and upon the expression of race and gender in novels and other forms of narrative in the American literatures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century. Current holds an M.A. in English from the University of North Carolina and a B.A. in English from the University of Louisville.

## LINKING THE CLASSROOM TO THE COMMUNITY:

*"The New Chicana, Gender, Immigration, and Labor Issues in the 21st Century"*

Duke students are doing research-service-learning through interaction with often undocumented Chicano families in the Durham community, one of the fastest changing communities in the U.S. This spring, Kathy Rudy (Associate Professor, Women's Studies) taught the Senior Seminar on "The New Chicana, Gender, Immigration, and Labor Issues in the 21st Century." According to Rudy, "Latinos will soon be the largest minority population in the United States. While many U.S. white feminists have been eager to embrace the discourse of "race" and engage in the study of Black feminisms, Chicana and Latina feminisms are often overlooked or amalgamated into the category of "ethnic feminist studies." Yet, Latina and Chicana women and feminists have a long history of political struggle both within their own cultures, and/or in many U.S. contexts as well. Their organized efforts are often quite different in nature than U.S. white, liberal feminists."

The course explores recent influxes in immigration, including all aspects of everyday life and work for immigrant families. Sustained involvement with the community surrounding Duke comprises a major component of the class experience. Students were matched with a newly immigrated family, with the goal of helping the newcomer families to flourish in the community and the student to better understand the immigrant experience. Students shared their experiences through weekly email and class discussion, including revelations about poverty, language barriers and hardships associated with working and living conditions, adjustment to school and the power relations within the families and the community. The families were also exposed to the culture at Duke when they were invited to a reception in their honor sponsored by the students in the seminar.

Patricia Agustin, a sophomore double majoring in Biology (Genetics concentration) and Women's Studies, with a minor in chemistry, is taking the course. "Coming to Duke from the Washington D.C. metro area is truly a big culture shock," she admits. "I was born in Guatemala and came to the U.S. when I was seven, and have lived in the Northern Virginia area most of my life. When I first stepped onto the Duke campus, the first thing I noticed was that most of the Duke community is composed of Caucasians; the Hispanic population within campus is really tiny compared to what I was used to back home. I joined Latino Life Connection as a freshman because I wanted to get to know more Hispanics that were native to the area, and Latino Life Connection was the bridge between Duke and Durham. Although I was helping Latinos in the community, mostly kids, I wanted to do more."

Patricia has given as much as she has received from the course. She notes, "I am not Chicana, but I really wanted to take the course to find out what the Chicanos went through as they immigrated to the U.S." She "completely fell in love with" the family with whom she was matched and has helped them translate papers, run errands, and more recently assisted their extended family. Patricia mentions that the family often doesn't have money for food, but that Mrs. Lopez made a special treat for her: atol de elote, which is a delicious drink made out of corn "that takes forever to make." She visits the family two or three times a week, sometimes taking the children out for ice cream. "This family truly reminds me of my family back in Guatemala," she says, "and helping them gives me so much personal reward."

"I come from a poor background, and most of the things that the books have talked about, I've seen first hand," Patricia says. She claims that some of the class readings are not entirely accurate. "For example, from my experiences, the Hispanic population is not united. It's as if we compete against each other, and when one gets ahead, the others are waiting and hoping that that person will fail." While the family Patricia works with most is very welcoming, she finds that some of the families express resistance to accepting help, "especially from someone who comes from their own background." She believes that in contrast to her experience as a student, members of the large immigrant community in Durham "don't feel alienated— there are plenty of financial troubles, and there is a language barrier, but they keep their culture alive within their families." But, "as the kids grow up, they tend to pick up the American culture, which is hard for the parents."



Patricia Agustin and community children.

As co-president of Latino Life Connection, Patricia is starting a program called "Juntos" (together/united), because she worried that the families would have come to depend on students who would then drop out of their lives at the end of the semester. She wanted to give the families ongoing support throughout the year. Students will be paired with a family in Durham, beginning with those who participated in the course. Juntos will start in Fall 2005. There are also plans to teach a Duke house course in spring 2006 where students will learn through first-hand accounts and secondary materials about the immigrant experience. A research-service-learning component to the course will also match students to families that are willing to participate in Juntos.

**TWO NEW  
WOMEN'S  
STUDIES  
COURSES**

## FEMINISM AND ECOLOGY

By Ariana Sutton-Grier

For several decades now we have known about environmental problems, such as nuclear or chemical pollutants, and we have made only limited progress while other problems, such as global climate change, seem to multiply. So, a chance to discuss environmental issues, to look back at environmental history and to think about a different paradigm that may involve gender and social justice and equality were exciting components of this class. I had several reasons for wanting to teach "Feminism and Ecology." First, I really wanted to get actual teaching experience while doing my Ph.D. Women's Studies' offer to sponsor classes by graduate students gave Melissa Kenney (Nicholas School Ph.D. candidate in Environmental Sciences and Policy), and me that opportunity. I was also interested in teaching a class that considered gender issues, which increasingly interested me since coming to Duke. It has been an incredibly rewarding and useful experience to design and develop a course from scratch.

The course was cross-listed in the Nicholas School with sections on the Environmental History movement and the role women have played and continue to play in shaping environmentalism. We were interested in understanding the theories/movements of ecofeminism, bioregionalism, deep ecology, and social ecology, how they differ and what they have contributed to our understanding of the environmental crisis, and a Feminist analysis of environmental problems with a focus mainly on environmentalist, Joni Seager's work.

Joni Seager's visit to the class was an exciting element of the course. Her book *Earth Follies* incorporates the thesis that, for the most part, a male model operates in current government, military, business, and environmental organizations and that this male model is responsible for the current environmental crisis. She suggests we cannot fix the problems using the same model that promoted them in the first place and suggests that an alternative model is necessary. However, her book and talk only hinted at an alternative model, which perhaps our students will eventually develop. Our class time with Dr. Seager was devoted to the way environmental organizations focus on overpopulation and what this means for women and women's bodies around the world. It was a very provocative topic which engaged the students. They were surprised by the history of population control and the connection to eugenics. The students were quite concerned about the potential links between population control and the domination of women, especially in developing countries and whether it should even be one of the top environmental issues (versus developed nations' consumption, for example).

In talking about environmental health and environmental justice, we discussed how environmental problems are not proportionately distributed throughout the population. We visited a Duke Toxicology lab to understand how Environmental Health research is performed. We also had a guest lecture from Professor Marie Lynn Miranda about her work on Environmental Justice issues here in North Carolina.

A feminist analysis of environmental problems was a new approach for our students. The consensus was that a feminist analysis of environmental problems is important, but that helping the situation of women around the world and having more balanced power relations between genders is not automatically going to solve environmental problems. But better representation of minorities, women, ethnic and cultural groups will help ensure that problems are considered from multiple perspectives and hence, perhaps enable better, more comprehensive solutions to environmental problems.

Ariana Sutton-Grier is a Candidate for Ph.D. in Ecology at the Nicholas School of the Environment

**Charlotte Pierce-Baker** (Research Professor, Women's Studies and English) participated in "Writing a Feminist's Life: Academics and their Memoirs," a conference held February 11-12 at Columbia University in honor of Carolyn Heilbrun. Pierce-Baker says Heilbrun "has been one of my muses for quite a time — especially in the writing of my book, *Surviving the Silence*. Our titles for the conference were the titles of our memoirs. [We] offered remarks on how writing a memoir had impacted, shifted, or informed our research and teaching in the university setting— how one remains an 'academic feminist' with 'activist leanings,' I suppose." Pierce-Baker shared the roster with Eve Sedgwick, Deborah McDowell, Gayatri Spivak, Leila Ahmed, Nancy Miller, Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, and Mary Ann Caws. The resulting papers will be published by Barnard College.

**Martha Reeves** (Assistant Professor, Sociology and Women's Studies) was selected to serve on an advisory board for the North Carolina Office of State Personnel to investigate pay equity for female state employees. The advisory group conducted a qualitative and quantitative study of state employees and produced a report that was delivered to Governor Easley's office. Among the findings of the study was the following: females make up 48.9% of the total state workforce and comprise 71.5% of low wage occupations. Female occupations are often paid less than male dominated jobs even if they require the same or a greater amount of education, experience or responsibilities. For example, a Paralegal I (a female dominated job) earns less than a Maintenance Mechanic V (a male dominated job), even though the paralegal requires more education. Overall, African American females experience wider disparities in pay than white females.

**Priscilla Wald** (Professor, English and Women's Studies) will teach "The Genome Age," a Women's Studies fall graduate and faculty seminar designed to accomplish several goals. In general, Women's Studies graduate and faculty seminars are designed to help provide graduate students with an advanced course in specific areas of feminist studies and to offer faculty interdisciplinary instruction, which can help to extend feminist intellectual community to other departments of the university. Through the speakers series associated with the course, as with the "Across the Disciplines" series in general, the conversation also can be extended to the community. Dr. Wald's research concerns the cultural, rhetorical and ethical dimension of scientific hypotheses and discoveries, especially as they are presented in the specialty and popular press and in popular fiction and non-fiction. She is also concerned with questions of assimilation and immigration, and in this course will address the controversy surrounding the Human Genome Diversity Project. She has been part of the Genomes@4 series offered by the Institute for Genome Sciences and Policy, where her April talk was on "Blood and Stories: How Genomics is Rewriting Race, Medicine and Human History." The series offers the policy, legal and ethical implications of genomics for an interdisciplinary audience.

## ON FEMINIST SCIENCE STUDIES

By Jenny Reardon

In an age where human beings increasingly make decisions in technical and scientific idioms, it is incumbent upon scholars in the academy to develop the critical capacities needed to understand the formation, meanings and effects of the sciences and their attendant technologies. Women's studies is uniquely positioned to engage in this critical work. Illuminating the formation of science and knowledge, and their inextricable entanglements with social life, requires interdisciplinary approaches pioneered by feminist theorists. One notable example is Donna Haraway. Haraway's three decades of critical writings on technoscience provide not only invaluable conceptual tools for understanding the formation of technoscience, but also critical skills for actively engaging and transforming it. Beginning her journey in the academy as a biologist (she received her Ph.D. in biology from Yale in the early 1970s), Haraway never lost her commitment, indeed love, of the sciences. Her work is invaluable for showing how one can maintain these deep engagements with scientific ideas and practices while also demonstrating how they embed and enact particular understandings of what it means to be 'human'—understandings that support some lives, while rendering others unlivable. We must, she argues, do both: retain "a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts" of the world, and show how these accounts enact particular human beings' desires and choices. Haraway insists that we should also be cognizant of and accountable for these desires and choices (Haraway 1988, 187).

This semester, students in my graduate seminar, "Critical Genealogies: Donna Haraway on Science and Knowledge," are learning the power and promise of such an approach that neither condemns science as merely a form of social power, or celebrates it as a clear road to human enlightenment and progress. For the students, many of whom have very little background in the sciences, what is unique is the chance to learn critical approaches to science while learning science. For example, we first learned about the contested boundaries between nature and nurture, and feminist approaches to these boundary problems, while reading central texts in developmental genetics. The developmental geneticist Conrad Hal Waddington's concept of "genetic assimilation" and his "epigenetic landscapes" proved rich terrains on which to explore critical approaches to concepts of agency and control central to feminist engagements with nature/nurture debates. Later in the semester, we learned about contestations over the boundary between nature and culture while reading central texts in primatology, and visiting

Duke's Primate Center (where we also experienced 'love of nature;' the lemurs are quite the charmers!). Many of the students have reported surprise that they were able to understand so much of the highly

'technical' pieces we have read. I—and I think they would agree—believe that this is because these 'technical' pieces become much more legible once they are situated in the broader context of debates over agency, power, and the nature of 'the human.' Far from threatening scientific literacy projects, feminist approaches to technoscience might just bring these so-called technical expert discourses alive for students who might otherwise pass them by.

Engaging seriously with scientific ideas and practices, while rendering visible their inextricable entanglement with consequential choices about who will live and who will die, is also the goal of my recent book, *Race to the Finish: Identity and Governance in an Age of Genomics* (Princeton University Press, 2005). The book follows controversies raised by an effort to characterize human differences at the genomic level, the Human Genome Diversity Project. In the early 1990s, I was about to go off to UC Berkeley to be a graduate student in the laboratory of one of the main proponents of this Project. I was compelled by this organizers' commitment to fighting racism (she believed that genomic data would undermine social theories of race) and to social justice. Quite to the surprise and horror of its organizers, the Project would later come to be known as "the Vampire Project," a racist project more concerned in collecting the blood of human beings than in their well-being. The central question of my book is: How did this happen? How did an initiative whose leaders included some of biology's most respected, socially conscious scientists become so stigmatized? My goal in recounting the controversies sparked by the Project is to understand what went wrong, and how scientific practices might be reworked so that scientists can achieve their own self-professed goals of fighting racism, and working for social justice. As the book shows, this will require novel conceptual tools that do not oppose science and power, truth and ideologies, but rather draw into focus their mutual constitution. Feminist theory, and Women's Studies programs, will be important players in the crafting of these vital tools needed for worldly survival in this technoscientific age.

“As the book shows, this will require novel conceptual tools that do not oppose science and power, truth and ideologies, but rather draw into focus their mutual constitution.”



Jennifer Reardon received her Ph.D. in Science and Technology Studies from Cornell University in August 2002. From Fall 1999–Spring 2002, she was a Fellow in Science, Technology and Public Policy at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She has taught in the History of Science Department at Harvard University and in science studies and the sociology of health and medicine at Brown University. Her book, *Race to the Finish: Identity and Governance in an Age of Genomics*, was published by Princeton University Press in early 2005. She is currently Assistant Research Professor of Women's Studies, and was the first person to be named Institute of Genome Sciences & Policy Scholar at Duke University.

## "Women and the Political Process" in an Election Year

By Niambi Carter

"Women and the Political Process" is an undergraduate Women's Studies course taught periodically at Duke through a generous donor grant. Teaching the course is exciting and challenging at any time, but especially during an election year. When I was first presented with this opportunity, I was ecstatic. My euphoria, however, was short-lived. I do not have a formal background in Women's Studies and the topic seemed quite unwieldy. Women have made tremendous strides and still have far to go, but how to encapsulate all of these accomplishments in a single semester? So it was a learning experience for everyone in the class, including the instructor!

It's important to look at the totality of women's lives, which are complex. Issues of race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, parenthood, among other factors, all inform women's interactions with the political system. The fact that the students and instructor were women did not necessarily make us more sensitive to each other's lives.

While we spent a great deal of time talking about women as voters and representatives, we also considered what it means more generally to be active participants in the political system. Our task was not only to think critically about what these labels- women representatives and women voters -mean, but what it means to be creators and participants in a republic. Because many of the students were first time voters, we devoted time to what we mean by "women's issues;" whether men represent women effectively; what type of woman is "fit" to bestrepresent women; should women always vote for women candidates? Our discussions of the political behavior of women in American politics produced more questions than answers. Issues of race and ideology resulted in divisions and convergences, depending on one's point of view, and became more complicated in the weeks leading up to the election.

The election offered us a unique opportunity to revisit gender issues, including how popular ideas about women and femininity were expressed in candidates' stances and in our own evaluations of those candidates. Students learned who their Congressional representatives are and their positions on the issues, which influenced the way they evaluated the presidential candidates. They shared information with their classmates and some volunteered with political organizations on campus. Many in the class were disappointed with the election outcome and saw that voting is a great and underutilized opportunity, but that change requires more than voting every four years.

I hope students take from the course an understanding that we have to interrogate our assumptions about the political system and think critically about the political future we want to foster. I believe the course instilled a realization that all women are not the same and that we have to continually address the complicated, and often uncomfortable, issues of "otherness" in the United States, including nationality, race, class status and sexuality. The project of greater equality for women must incorporate all of these factors. This was a great learning experience for all of us. While we did not always agree on the specifics, the class was committed to participating in the political process and not only during presidential election years.

Niambi Carter is a Duke Ph.D. candidate in Political Science who expects to graduate in 2006.

"It's important to look at the totality of women's lives, which are complex."

## Graduation

This year's graduation ceremony will feature guest speaker, Jennifer Fitzgerald, 2004 Ph.D. in Music and Women's Studies Graduate Certificate holder. Jennifer is currently Administrative and Development Director of pulsoptional, North Carolina's Band of Composers, a music ensemble and composer's collective presenting experimental contemporary music in many venues and commissioning new music by emerging American composers.

Congratulations to the following students who have majored and minored in Women's Studies or earned the Graduate Certificate.

Two students have completed theses and will graduate with high distinction: Elizabeth Clift ("Revolutionary But Gangstah': An Aesthetics of the Self in Rap's Queen of Controversy") and Eileen Kuo ("Agency in the Skin Trade: Choice v. Coercion for Thai Sex Workers Trafficked to Japan"). Graduation with distinction requires a presentation of the thesis in a public forum to the Women's Studies community and a minimum A- grade.

**1st Majors:** Allison Grace Brim, Tristan Nicole Byrd, Elizabeth Aull Clift, Alexandra L. Miller

**2nd Majors:** Daniel Joseph Avissar, Mary Ellison Baars, Adianez Castillo, Jennifer Susan Hainsfurther, Tamaron Gloveshia Houston, Eileen Kuo, Ami Prakash Patel, Candace Michelle Tingen, Mary-Margaret Ware.

**Minors:** Megan Lynch Carroll, Melissa A. Cohen; Kendra Breanne Ferguson, Katherine Lee Hendren, Brynne Cherise Holt, Jennifer L. Kindman; Christine D. Scott, Christopher Eugene Goerdts Scoville, Kristen R. Spencer.

**Summer II 2005:** Tiameka Rankin (1st major)

**Fall 2005:** Emilie Sara Dahod (1st major); Sumati Gupta (2nd major); Christina Lozada (2nd major)

**2005 GRADUATE CERTIFICATES:** Leah Comeau (Divinity); Lili Hsieh (Literature); and Susanne Sreedhar (Philosophy, UNC).

## On Duke/Harvard Dignity & Shame Conference

By Jimmy Richardson

Over a late November weekend, the Duke Program in Women's Studies and the Program on Law and Social Thought at Harvard Law School, collaborating with the Northeastern University School of Law, held their second joint conference: "The Law of Dignity/The Politics of Shame: An Inquiry into the State of Our Art on Sex, Sexuality, Gender, and the Family." Following the success of 2003's "Injury and Distribution" conference, the 2004 event provided a meeting space for scholars spanning disciplinary and national boundaries. Given the strong consonance between this scholarship and Duke Women's Studies own mission, the Program saw to its being well represented by director Robyn Wiegman, professors Karla Holloway and Ranji Khanna of English, Kevin Haynes of the UNC law school, and ten graduate students from across the university, whose attendance was generously supported by the program.

"Dignity is overrated; shame is underrated," proclaimed Harvard Law Professor Janet Halley at the opening of the conference, before inviting participants to join her in "celebrating the relationship between dignity and shame." The purpose of the conference was to understand the ways in which dignity and shame function through laws and other cultural mechanisms to form and affect various aspects of personhood. This goal was largely precipitated by recent events—like the 2003 Lawrence v. Texas Supreme Court decision

declaring sodomy statutes unconstitutional and debates over the legalization of gay marriage—that had raised questions about how shame and dignity may be deployed in our ongoing negotiations of citizenship, sexuality and gender. Further, contemporary human rights discourses have increasingly been framed around notions of human dignity, making it a pressing concern that conversations take place over what is meant by "dignity" and "shame" as these concepts become more and more prominent in legal, scholarly, and other discourses.

The conference included a broad array of talks and activities that drew on the different interests and disciplinary backgrounds of the assembled group. The first day was "dignity day," opening with a workshop on the "Powers of Dignity" that included papers on European law, Indian sex workers, and the Lawrence decision, among others. Following the workshop was a screening of the film *Secretary*, which incited a lively conversation over dinner regarding the film's representation of the dynamics of dignity, shame, and the erotic. Day two focused primarily on issues of shame, beginning with a workshop on the "Productivities and Deployments of Shame" that featured talks examining both the explicitly legal regulation and deployment of shame and broader political issues as well. Lunch was the setting for a discussion of selections from *The Scarlet Letter and Portnoy's Complaint*, which, as with the discussion of the previous night's film, was an opportunity to break away from narrowly defined legal and political questions and to explore how the themes at hand play out in other cultural texts. The conference closed that night with a final workshop on "Rationality, Irrationality, and the Shame of Critique" and a discussion of possibilities for future inquiry. After the fascinating cross-disciplinary exchanges that came out of this conference and its predecessor, many partici-

pants left eagerly looking forward to a next.

Cross-disciplinarity was certainly one of the most important aspects of the weekend's interactions. The nearly eighty participants included scholars of the law, women's studies, literature, political science, history, and several other fields. While there was an inevitable degree of intellectual disconnect between these disparate fields, most parties made a strong effort to translate between each other's modes of thinking and to incorporate other perspectives into their own approaches. Many of the talks that were given were themselves cross-disciplinary in nature, moving back and forth not only between the law and subjects like literature, but also between the tools of legal analysis and literary criticism, for example. And of course, there was the added benefit that conference participants had the opportunity to make friends with colleagues from "the other side of the campus" with whom they rarely have contact.

Certainly among those who took away the most from the conference were the Duke Women's Studies graduate students in attendance. Many of us are working on projects that look at some intersection between gender, sexuality, and the law and were eager to witness firsthand the dynamics of this new and rapidly developing site of cross-disciplinary inquiry. Long conversations inspired by the conference have been common since November as we consider our own roles in seeking answers to the kind of new cross-disciplinary questions to which Women's Studies scholars bring a unique and evermore relevant perspective.

*Jimmy Richardson is a Ph.D. candidate in the department of English at Duke University. His research explores science studies, queer theory, Buddhism, and alternative modes of interpretation.*

"Certainly among those who took away the most from the conference were the Duke Women's Studies graduate students in attendance."

# Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women

By Janelle Blankenship

One might say I was initiated by fire into the interdisciplinary circles of the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women. In August I was in the throes of finishing my dissertation. Shortly after defense, however, I began a new life as a postdoctoral fellow and although the transition could have been smoother (boundary issues with Providence flat mate), I soon embraced the academic vibrancy that greeted me with open arms at the Pembroke Center and Brown in general.

It has been incredibly useful for my research to interact with leading feminist scholars such as Rey Chow, Elizabeth Weed, Elizabeth Grosz, and Mary Anne Doane, whose feedback has suggested new angles for exploring the media intersection of nature and modernity. The theme this year that structures our research seminar at the Pembroke is temporality. Our seminar meets throughout the academic year and brings together Pembroke Center Postdoctoral Fellows, Faculty Research Fellows, Graduate Fellows, other interested Brown faculty and selected students, affiliated Visiting Scholars, and distinguished guest lecturers.

Rey Chow, the preeminent theorist of Chinese cinema and third world politics, is leading the group in stimulating discussion involving time. We are exploring how thinking and writing on temporality have informed the constructions of gender, class, culture, ethnicity, religion, and other important social divisions, and, conversely, how such social divisions themselves are implicated in time.

In early September I gave the first presentation of the year on the time-space language of visuality that Walter Benjamin calls the "optical unconscious." Other postdoctoral presentations focused on time and ruins in late antiquity, US popular feminism, and the persistence of vernacular language and temporality in Colonial India. While working on feminist film theory and the use of time-lapse and slow motion in scientific film at Brown, I have enjoyed interactions with faculty and students in Modern Culture and Media.

A hidden gem on the Brown campus is the MCM cinematheque film series. Last semester's screenings included Disney WWII propaganda films, Peter Wollen's "Friendships Death" (1987) and Ulrike Ottinger's "Ticket of No Return" (1979). This semester I have worked with Rey to integrate film material into the seminar itself, for example, Charles and Ray Eames' study of scale and relativity, scanning the body as epistemological act. A fascinating book which has been very useful for my work this year is Rey Chow's *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*.

The seminar has enriched my understanding of temporality from both a film studies and a history of science perspective. Peter Galison's talk on Einstein's clocks and Henri Poincaré's maps included a fantastic image, an attempt at sovereignty over time and space, a late nineteenth century cabinet specially designed as shock-proof storage for the new universal standard time and space measurements. In the seminar we are challenging such sovereign edifices, critiquing the rational based epistemologies of Western philosophy (which at one point led to a collective clapping experiment!).

This semester the postdoctoral fellows have organized a roundtable discussion that will include the perspectives of Mary Anne Doane and Hanna Landecker, an anthropologist who works on scientific film at Rice. Needless to say, we were all excited about Robyn Wiegman's

guest lecture at the Pembroke this Spring! For more information on the postdoctoral fellowship program, the interdisciplinary goals of the Pembroke Center or their leading publication *Differences*, please visit Brown University's url: [www.pembrokecenter.org](http://www.pembrokecenter.org)

Janelle Blankenship received her Ph.D. in German Studies from Duke in December, 2004.



As a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women at Brown University, she is currently writing two books: "Scientific Film and the Invention of Nature" and a monograph on the German film pioneer, Max Skladanowsky. At Duke she won the Anne Firor Scott Research Award and a P.E.O. Endowed Scholarship, and participated in Women's Studies Graduate Scholars group. This summer she is looking forward to the NEH Institute "German Studies and European Studies" at University of Massachusetts-Amherst,

which will evaluate questions of multiculturalism, racism, sexism, and hybridity which have resurfaced in considerations of German and European identity construction. Duke Women's Studies Professor Tina Campt will lead a session on Black German feminism.

## CONGRATULATIONS MERIT AWARDS WINNERS!

Each spring, Women's Studies at Duke gives merit awards to students doing research, service or continuing education focused on gender. We are grateful to the Friends of Women's Studies and the individual donors who have supported our students' efforts through these awards.

### *The Ernestine Friedl Research Award*

For advanced graduate students working on the cultural, social, and biological constructions of gender

- Abigail Salerno (G'08, Literature)
- Adrienne Williams (G'08, Psychology/Social and Health Sciences)
- Alvaro Jarrin (G'10, Cultural Anthropology)
- Rachel Meyers (G'06, Classical Studies)

### *The Gender and Race Research Award*

For undergraduate and graduate students doing work at the intersection of race and gender

- Vijay Varma (T'05, English)
- Kinohi Nishikawa (G'08 Literature)

### *The Dora Anne Little Award Winners*

For undergraduate or graduate students, who excel in service to the campus and community

- Allison Brim (T'05, Women's Studies)
- Sarah Becker (G'10, Psychology/ Social and Health Sciences)
- Tamaron Houston (T'05 Political Science and Women's Studies)

### *The Anne McDougall Memorial Award*

For Duke women undergraduate or graduate students doing human service in psychology and related fields.

- Phyllis Laney Bryant (G'06 MALS)
- Amy Noll (G'06, Psychology/Social and Health Sciences)

*We love hearing from our alumnae/i about their lives after Duke. Please keep Women's Studies posted about your academic careers, job opportunities, honors and other accomplishments*

**Lili Hsieh**, (2005 Duke graduate in Literature and Women's Studies Graduate Certificate holder) received four postdoctoral offers from University of Pennsylvania, Johns Hopkins, UCLA and University of Washington-Seattle. She has accepted the offer from Pennsylvania, a two-year Mellon postdoctoral program in Humanities and Social Sciences, affiliated with the Humanities Forum and the English Department there.

**Jaya Kasibhatla** (2005 Duke Graduate in English and Women's Studies Graduate Certificate holder) recently accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor in the English Department at Vanderbilt. Her dissertation is entitled "Constituting the Exception: Law, Literature and the State of Emergency in Postcolonial India." She will be teaching classes on postcolonial literature, 20th century critical theory and global feminism.

**Brooke Lenz**, (UNC graduate and 2002 Duke Women's Studies Certificate Holder) has accepted a tenure-track position beginning in August in the English department at St. Mary's University of Minnesota in Winona, Minnesota.

**Miriam Peskowitz** (1993 Duke graduate in Religion and Women's Studies Certificate holder) read from her book *The Truth Behind the Mommy Wars: Who Decides What Makes a Good Mother*, at the Regulator Bookstore in Durham in April. After leaving Duke, Peskowitz taught at the University of Florida, published *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender and History* (California) and *Judaism Since Gender* (Routledge). She received tenure in 1998, before leaving to work at Emory, at Temple University, and to write.

**Carolyn Sattin** (2003 Duke Public Policy graduate, Women's Studies Minor) is now Assistant to the Director of Curriculum, New York City Schools, and was the first lecturer in last fall's lecture series organized by African and African American Studies Institute for Critical U.S. Studies. Carolyn spoke on "The Pressures and Politics of Policy Making in the New York Public Schools" about reforming urban schools (and school systems).

✂ Cut along dotted line.

## Become a Friend of Women's Studies

Your gift of \$50 or more makes it possible to publish this newsletter and report on Women's Studies scholarship. Contributions to Friends and other endowments also support on-campus and regional Women's Studies events and help to continue our outreach to alumnae/i.

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**We want to know what you think!** Send your comments on past issues of the newsletter and ideas for upcoming issues to: Women's Studies, Duke University, Box 90760, Durham, NC 27708 or email your comments to [phoffman@duke.edu](mailto:phoffman@duke.edu).