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## The Comittee on Women and the Curriculum-April 1982

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# NEWSLETTER

## The Committee on Women in the Curriculum

Vol. II No. 3

APRIL, 1982

### A CALL FOR ESSAYS

*Starting with this volume of the Newsletter, each one will include a short essay on sex equity issues of particular concern to people in the University. It would be helpful to everyone concerned if we could use the Newsletter as a public forum for clarification of a variety of assumptions and reservations about sex equity. Clearly, our move toward a balanced curriculum and a truly coeducational university will be unnecessarily partial unless there is careful and varied discussion of the relationship between sex equity and excellence in the university. PLEASE LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK IS IMPORTANT BY SUBMITTING AN ESSAY OR A SUGGESTED TOPIC.*

Among the topics people might choose to discuss are:

- \*\*women in the curriculum;
- \*\*the need for role models;
- \*\*institutional manifestations of unconscious sex bias;
- \*\*the notion that men and women have different aesthetics;
- \*\*the notion that objectivity is an impossible goal if men and women are not given equal opportunity to define it;
- \*\*how to get more equal representation for women given economic constraints in higher education;
- \*\*the status of women on this campus;
- \*\*combining parenting and professional activity;
- \*\*women's studies courses.

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### SCHEDULE FOR TUESDAY LUNCHEONS

- March 30—Gender Differences in Solving Math Problems Among Community College Students, Ann Schonberger
- April 6—The Work of Julia Kristeva, Emily Markides
- April 13—The Ambivalence of Ralph Waldo Emerson Towards Margaret Fuller, Marie O. Urbanski

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### JUST IN CASE YOU'RE TEMPTED TO SAY, "BUT THERE AREN'T ENOUGH MATERIALS ABOUT WOMEN..."

A quick trip to the reference room in Fogler Library will convince you that there are indeed a sufficient number of articles and books on women to make it possible to include women in courses. The large number of bibliographies is a testimony not only to the availability of information, but also to how hard people have worked to make information readily available. Listed below are the titles and call numbers of bibliographies available in the reference room at Fogler:

- Sourcebook on Canadian Women,*  
Ref Z7964 C36 H38
- Women: A Bibliography of Bibliographies,*  
Ref Z7961 A1 B34
- Women: A Bibliography on Their Education and Careers,* Ref Z7963 E7 A86 1974
- Women and British Periodicals 1832-1867: A Bibliography,* Ref Z7962 P29
- Women and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Women Writers,* Ref Z7963 A8 W6 1976
- Women and the Labor Movement, 1825-1974: An Annotated Bibliography,* Ref Z7963 E7 S635 1975
- Women and Urban Society: A Guide to Information Sources,* Ref Z7961 D55
- Women in America: A Guide to Books, 1963-1975,* Ref Z7964 U49 H3
- Women in American History: A Bibliography,* Ref Z7962 H37
- Women in Medicine: A Bibliography of the Literature on Women Physicians,* Ref Z7963 M43 W65
- Women in Perspective: A Guide for Cross-Cultural Studies,* Ref Z7961 J33
- Women of South Asia: A Guide to Resources,* Ref Z7964 S65 S23
- The Women's Rights Movement in the United States 1840-1970: A Bibliography and Sourcebook,* Ref Z7964 U49 K75
- Women's Studies: A Recommended Core Bibliography,* Ref Z7964 U49 K75

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## WOMEN IN THE CURRICULUM AND LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATIONAL EQUITY PROJECTS:

Two of the four funded projects announced in the last *Newsletter* have been delayed until next semester. The speakers for the Natural Resources project were not available for this semester, and the date chosen for the history conference was not suitable to enough members of the department to make it worthwhile.

Nonetheless, many activities connected with the Women in the Curriculum project will occur on campus during April. Keep your eyes open for the Women as Audience brochure that will describe the four events scheduled for Wednesday nights in April.

The date for the Political Science workshop has been changed to April 17. After the two visitors spend a day working with members of the Political Science faculty, they will be leading an informal discussion in the Honors Center Lounge from 7-10 p.m. on Saturday, April 17. There will be wine and cheese. Everyone is invited.

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## RECENT ACQUISITIONS IN FOGLER LIBRARY

*Blue Collar Women: Pioneers on the Male Frontier*, by Mary Lindenstien Walshok. HD 6095 W19

*The Domestic Revolution; The Modernization of Household Service*, by Theresa M. McBride. HD 8039 D52 G777

*The Grand Domestic Revolution; A History of Feminist Designs*, by Dolores Hayden. HQ 1426 H33

*Handbook of Nonsexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*, by Casey Miller and Kate Swift. PN 218 M5 1980

*Two-Career Couples*, by Francine Hall and Douglas Hall. HQ 536 H3

*Unsung: A History of Women in American Music*, by Christine Ammer. ML 82 A45

*Women Have Always Worked; A Historical Overview*, by Alice Kessler-Harris. HD 6095 K45

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## MAY SYMPOSIUM

The tentative dates for this year's May Symposium are May 18 and 19. When we finish making plans for a keynote speaker we will be able to get more specific about what we can expect to accomplish at the Symposium.

Though we will make every effort to use the particular expertise of the keynote speaker, the participation of UMO faculty, administrators, staff and students will determine the success of the Symposium.

So far, our program tentatively includes:

\*\*Presentations from people who are involved in recent or ongoing Women in the Curriculum projects;

\*\*Short presentations from people currently involved in research on women;

\*\*A panel and open discussion of an issue that is very pertinent to sex equity efforts: the relationship between socialization and choice;

\*\*A series of workshops, probably on the following topics:

Identifying and Compensating for Sex Bias in Course Materials

Identifying the Relationship Between Classroom Dynamics and Sex Roles

Using Library Resources on Women's Studies

\*\*A series of discussions on the relationships among analyzing the structure of institutions, implementation of sex equity, and classroom content;

\*\*If there is enough interest and expertise, a discussion of the conceptual relationships among interdisciplinary education, women's studies and mainstreaming.

Everyone involved in the Symposium will be making a special effort to combine theory and practice so that we can leave the Symposium with ideas that will prepare us for thinking of things to do in the future and with specific suggestions about what can be done immediately.

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## HOW DO WE IMPROVE QUALITY AND EQUALITY IN EDUCATION?

### What Is Sex Equity?

"Sex Equity" is a recently coined phrase that describes a multiplicity of purposes and efforts. Its parameters include the more familiar concerns of affirmative action. In response to exposure of discrimination against minorities and women during the 1960's and 1970's, legislation and policies were created and staff hired to protect people against bias. As the limits of the conventional understanding of affirmative action became obvious and understanding of the repercussions of discrimination became more complex, many people collaborated to define creative ways of providing a congenial environment for girls and women and making it possible for people of both sexes to work together for common goals.

Unfortunately, and predictably, legislation and increased general awareness of routine exclusion of women paved the road to equal opportunity but by no means removed all of the obstructions or prepared women to pass them. *Sex equity involves integrating a variety of approaches to solving the problems that arise when one realizes that equal opportunity is not possible without equal representation—and women are very far from being equally represented in institutions of higher education.*

It is not surprising that women do not have equal representation in universities. The premises of the education women are offered and the institutional structure in which they work were developed before young women made up half of the student population. As a consequence, women are not represented in the curriculum and are often inadvertently constrained by the implicit values and actual and unspoken policies of universities. Historically women and men have lived in separate spheres that sometimes complement one another or merge, but sometimes encourage misunderstanding and polarization. Sex equity efforts are needed to make educational institutions more responsive to the increased participation of women in the public world and the desirability of allowing women to change the university as well as be changed by it. People who work for sex equity

are often motivated by a controversial presumption: universities will improve if they accommodate women and men who actively practice the virtues and characteristics traditionally prescribed for women and proscribed for men.

### The Feminist Criticism of the Curriculum

With both hubris and humility, sex equity leaders around the country have pointed out and requested the following:

We need to revise a curriculum that until recently has been designed almost completely by males raised within a tradition that is characterized by an unexamined contradiction. For a long time people have taken for granted assumptions about the differences between the sexes and the appropriateness of highly differentiated social functions for the sexes. Nonetheless, many people assume that women are included in the tradition of thought developed by males who by and large knew they were supposed to enlighten and persuade other males. How could the masculine tradition include women?

*Women are excluded from the definition of the universal and the human; examples from political theory:*

When the term "universal suffrage" is used to refer to the 19th century European democratic program for males of all classes, it becomes clear that there is general acceptance of the notion that women are not included in our conception of the universal.

Many scholars have criticized Plato's recommendations for the structure of mating and family in the ideal state, balking at the inhumanity and unnaturalness of people having their mates chosen for them and being obliged to reproduce. Their assumptions about what is human are offended, but it does not occur to them, even though they have the information, that these inhuman circumstances characterized

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the lives of women in the actual Athenian city. Once again, women are not thought about when the subject of what is human and universal comes up. In fact, much of the thought we honor, in the humanities at least, constitutes, as Susan Moller Okin writes, "a continuing attempt to justify the unequal treatment of women." The ambiguous "use of supposedly generic terms like 'man' and 'mankind', and of the allegedly inclusive pronoun, 'he',...enables philosophers to enunciate principles as if they were universally applicable, and then to proceed to exclude all women from their scope."

The contradiction between claiming that women are included in our notions of what constitutes the human and perfunctorily noting that they are usually treated as a special and inferior category has been a major convenience for scholars and teachers. It has allowed those who assume women are not worth thinking about to nonetheless avoid making their assumption explicit. It has allowed those who are neither invested in injustice against women nor invested in changing injustice to preserve an attitude of neutrality. Unfortunately, neutrality does not resolve contradictions or heal the wounds imposed by injustice.

*An example from literature:*

Only active efforts can compensate for and remove injustice. For instance, we can choose to alter our ideas about what makes a novel worth teaching when we attentively read a domestic novel written by a 19th century American woman. We can allow ourselves to discover that the morals and interpretations offered by the female narrator are frequently interrupted by the tears or prayers of the female protagonist, whose gestures of submission and programmatic dependence mirror the author's compulsion not to push her thoughts into concerns defined as male. Our sense of the value and complexity of such a book changes if we see it as a conscious representation of the passions, fears and circumstances of large numbers of middle-class Christian women whose consciousness is not imagined in detail in the works of men. We can see such a book as particularly pertinent for women today and as a previously devalued contribution to the literary tradition of representing the relationship between the individual and society.

*What do female students need to learn?*

Women's studies classes are essential to the development of knowledge about women and the investigation of the possibility that women think differently from men when they identify with the history, traditions and cultivated inclinations of women. There are, however, several reasons why it is important not to limit information about women to the women's studies classroom and the occasional integrated class. One is that a curriculum that excludes women is so thoroughly biased that it limits the truths and connections we can even begin to imagine. Another is that the exclusion of women is a preference or habit that may be very damaging to female students in particular.

If gender identity, however flexible it is, is one of the primary ways people define themselves, women have a considerable disadvantage in their educations. Young men are given the opportunity to identify with the achievements of men who have grappled with the human condition and the natural and social worlds. Young women, on the other hand, are deprived of information about accomplished women. They are not educated about the tradition of women who have struggled to define themselves as multi-dimensional in a culture in which they are credited with only two achievements: beauty and motherhood. Young women generally are not offered complex books and discussions that will challenge them to think independently about the contradictions that are particular to female existence, nor are they offered the means by which to decipher the stereotypes about women recited or interpreted by canonized authors.

As a consequence, many young women today may be caught between stereotyped notions of new possibilities (dress for success and erase the past) and stereotyped images of women that they blithely and often unconsciously apply to themselves. These new possibilities will result finally in debilitating rather than thought provoking confusions unless young women are offered appropriate general educations. Their educations should encourage female self-knowledge and the ability to make choices about what aspects of traditional

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