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Women in the Curriculum and Women's Studies Program

University of Maine 2000 - 2001

WIC News: 1999 grant recipients

Each year WIC offers a number of grants to faculty members interested in revising or expanding existing courses in order to create a more gender-balanced classroom experience. In 1999, seven faculty members received summer grants. Among those profiled in this newsletter are Sandra Caron, who developed a course on women's sexuality; James Artesani who researched women in the field of disability; and Susan Cockrell who developed the course "Women and Nature." For information on WIC grants, please call Ann Schonberger at 581-1229, stop by the WIC office, 101 Fernald Hall, to pick up guidelines, or visit our website at www.umaine.edu/wic.



June Jordan, poet and Professor of African American Studies at Berkeley, was the closing speaker for the Fifteenth Annual Maine Women's Studies Conference held here on November 18th. There were 260 registrants and many visitors in attendance. Amrita Basu, a political science professor from Amherst College, was the keynote speaker. Videos of the plenary sessions and speakers are available in 101 Fernald Hall.

James Artesani Women and Disabilities



James Artesani, Assistant Professor of Special Education, found little mention of women's contributions in textbooks for special education and disability studies. Artesani used a WIC reading grant in the summer of 1999 to seek out women who have had an impact on the development of interventions and services for people with disabilities. "The lack of reference to the

contributions of women in our texts as well as in my own preparatory reading is particularly apparent," Artesani notes, "when I consider that approximately 80% of the undergraduate students and 90% of the graduate students enrolled in the courses that I teach are women. Nationally, the majority of undergraduate and graduate students in special education programs are women."

There have been women of historical import who have made contributions to the development of services and to improving cultural attitudes toward people with

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disabilities. These women have tended to be social reformers such as Dorothea Dix, Helen Keller, and Maria Montessori. But Special Education is a more recent field and its texts are methods-oriented, so they do not spend much time on historical figures. "The few historical figures they do discuss are typically male," says Artesani.

While the resources on women in the field of service development are limited, Artesani did find more recent feminist perspectives on disability. "This was a new area for me, another take on disability and what it means." He taught two courses using this information: a course on theories of exceptionality and a seminar on abortion, euthanasia, and health care. "In both courses, feminist perspectives took students away from the medical model of disability. They gave another foothold on seeing disability as a political and social phenomenon, not just a medical phenomenon."

Artesani and his students have also considered body image issues and disability. Now he also plans to look at the issue of what it means to be a caregiver, usually a female role. He continues to look for more recent contributors. "The feminist perspective is a different lens. It gives different ways to show disability as not just an objective phenomenon, it's not just a matter of I.Q. tests."

Renate Klein

Violence in Intimate Relationships

Many surveys that assess the extent of violence in intimate relationships repeatedly report that women and men score equally in self-reported violence against a partner. However, domestic violence hotlines, emergency rooms, and police records report more frequent and more serious violence perpetrated by men against women.

Renate Klein, Assistant Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, explored the reasons for this in the summer of 1999. Analyzing data collected from her classes, she examined students' "lexicons" of concepts and ideas associated with intimate violence. For example, does it mean the same thing when a woman says she "shoved" her partner as it does when a man says he "shoved" his partner?

"Most surveys fail to assess the meaning of violent action," says Klein. "Research indicates that 'male shoving' is rather different than 'female shoving.' If women use violence against a male partner, they do so more often out of self defense, to escape violence and to end emotional or physical attacks against themselves. In contrast, batterers use violence in order to punish women for challenging

male authority or privilege. However, says Klein, this meaning gets lost when respondents to surveys have to "funnel their answers" into response categories that allow no room to express different meanings.

Klein created her own questionnaire that specified the gender of the actor and the respondent and worded

questions in such a way as to obtain open-ended responses. For example, a survey question would be "What would a man get out of choking his partner?" and then she followed up with "What would a woman get out of choking her partner?" Klein found that the responses she received showed both similarities and differences in the meaning of male and female violence, but also "nuances in



seemingly similar outcomes." Answers to the questions about choking indicated that male choking, for example, is seen as a means to gain "ultimate" control over the partner with no indication of risk to the man, whereas female choking "emerges as a means to release anger and frustration that carries a high risk of reciprocal violence and injury."

Typical survey questions co-opt respondents' meanings into an already established, yet rarely examined, system of meanings, in which researchers define all interpersonal events labeled 'choking' by different respondents as equal. "This diverts attention from male violence, discounting the damage caused by male violence or justifying that more resources be put into services for 'battered husbands.'"

Klein presented her work at two international conferences and the Maine Women's Studies conference, and she will be incorporating it into her courses. She believes the work will be a powerful teaching aid. "It becomes clear how important the agent of violence is, how misleading it is when the agent is ignored or downplayed."

Klein has recently received a grant for \$302,256 from the Department of Justice for a "safe campus" project which will use some of the WIC-funded research.



Pauleena MacDougall
The Work of Fanny Hardy Eckstorm

Pauleena MacDougall, Associate Director of the Maine Folklife Center and Faculty Associate in Anthropology, is currently working on a book about Fanny Hardy Eckstorm, a Maine historian who did extensive research on Maine folklore and ballads. MacDougall embarked on the venture at the encouragement of Professor Emeritus Sandy Ives. The research for her book



is designed to explore the question of whether or not gender affected Eckstorm's research questions, to learn more about her collaboration with some of the leading male scholars of the time, and to detail the considerable impact Eckstorm's writing had on Maine history and folklore. "I have been working with Eckstorm's papers for years as part of my research in Penobscot Indian language and

culture," says MacDougall, "and during the course of my investigations I realized that she was responsible for more scholarship than she ever received credit for."

Fanny Hardy Eckstorm was among the first generation of women to attend college in the 1870s. She was also one of the few intellectually gifted women in the late nineteenth century to be supported and encouraged by her family. Her father took her along with him on explorations of the Maine woods. It was during these trips that she began to collect folktales and folksongs from the Maine lumbermen, hunters, and Indians who were her father's friends. She became actively engaged with the work of studying balladry in 1924. She saw the creation of songs as "sport among those who work hard at manual labor." "Her recognition of the importance of the local song-making tradition," says MacDougall, "resulted in the preservation of many songs which otherwise might have been lost."

Most of Eckstorm's work took place outside of academia. She published six books, some of which were reprinted several times, including *The Penobscot Man*, *Old John Neptune and Other Indian Shamans*, and *David Libbey: Penobscot Woodsman and River Driver*, but the bulk of her work can be found in "reams and reams" of

notes and letters. "She wrote thousands of letters," says MacDougall. "She must have worked 12 hours a day." She corresponded and worked shoulder to shoulder with scholars such as Phillips Barry, William F. Ganong, and Mellinger Edward Henry, all products of Ivy League schools. She also collaborated with women who shared her interests, such as Mary Smyth, Helen Hartness Flanders, and Mary Cabot Wheelwright, as well as her own mother and sisters.

Eckstorm was aware of the limitations of women in her culture and accepted them as a reality. "She didn't push her way into places she wasn't welcome," says MacDougall. Because she is considered an amateur in the field, some scholars "tend to look down on her work." But Eckstorm's work has "had a considerable impact on Maine history and folklore," says MacDougall, "especially Maine's Native folklore and language." Currently, MacDougall is considering how to frame the story so that it has broad interest. "I hope," she says, "I will be able to present her story in such a way that it will genuinely represent her contribution to folklore and history."

Be sure to visit us in 101 Fernald Hall, the space shared by the Women in the Curriculum & Women's Studies Program and the Women's Resource Center.

Our library includes over 2,500 volumes, audiocassettes, and videos, as well as a number of periodicals, some of which are not available at Fogler Library. Most materials may be signed out on loan or photocopied here.

While our collection is growing, our library is manageably sized and inviting, enabling both serious research and comfortable browsing.

We have an attractive new library flyer which we can send you to distribute in your classes. Just ask Christine Halsted at 1-1228 for the number you need.

Susan Cockrell
Natural Resources and Women's Studies

"Our mother is sombre.
She is thinking.
She puts her big ear
against the sky
to comfort herself.
Do this. She calls to us.
Do this."

-Susan Griffin

Susan Cockrell's course, "Women and Nature," explores the idea that women and nature are intimately connected. Cockrell, Instructor in Women's Studies, spent the summer of 1999 reading for and developing "Women and Nature," using a WIC reading grant. The course examines nature writing by women, searching for ecofeminist patterns and, as suggested by Adrienne Rich, "a smell of the earth." Cockrell describes ecofeminism as "both theory and a call to action," because the ideologies that oppress on the basis of gender, class, race, and sexuality also oppress nature. "And," she says, "because we understand that all life is connected, any attempt to liberate humans must also seek to liberate nature or ultimately fail."

Cockrell developed the course after teaching a class which was designed to help women who had chosen careers in natural resources deal with issues of being in a field not traditionally welcoming to women. While she focused on theoretical issues in the class, she found that the students enjoyed reading from women's nature writing more. She created "Women and Nature" from this experience, a course that engages the natural world and women's connection to it at an emotional level as well as engaging it at the level of theory. She places the ecofeminist theories of Carolyn Merchant and Susan Griffin alongside nature poetry, fiction, and nonfiction by women. "I think women's nature writing is an excellent way to give life and breath to rather abstract ecofeminist theories," says Cockrell. In class, she had students draw a nature map of where they lived, locating the trees, water, entrances, and traffic, in order to give them a sense of place. Some students found that they had never really taken notice of their surroundings. She also had them work with partners to describe a place in nature that they had lost through urban development, their own moving, or some other means. For many students, this was the first time they had confronted this loss. Many found it an emotional experience.

As she explored the material while preparing for the course, she noticed that the women writers had different responses to nature, which she divided into three "frontiers": confronting nature as adversary, appreciating

nature as a place of beauty, and protecting nature when it is threatened. The journals of frontier women and "captive narratives," for example, describe nature as the enemy, while the writings of Sarah Orne Jewett portray nature as beneficial. And, says Cockrell, the frontiers cannot be defined chronologically. "The struggles of Native American women on reservations in the 1990s are often as desperate as those of New England women in the 1700s, while delicate musings on a New England garden by a Victorian lady elicit a sense of place as palpable as a rock-climbing, river-rafting naturalist's description of the glare of a Utah sun off canyon walls written ninety years later." She read writing from "desert women," such as Joy Harjo, Pat Mora, and Linda Hogan. Black writers read included Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, and Lucille Clifton. (Videos on Lucille Clifton, Joy Harjo, Linda Hogan, and Alice Walker are available in 101 Fernald.)

The class was well received and Cockrell taught it again last fall. "My highest hope for the course is that the participants will make new connections with the natural world and ecofeminism through reading these beautiful and sometimes painful writings and then become vigorous activists on behalf of the earth and its inhabitants." The importance of ecofeminism cannot be overemphasized, Cockrell believes. "It transcends all other issues that affect women's lives, because the destiny of humankind is inextricably tied to the well-being of the natural world."



Women's Studies on the Web

Visit the Women in the Curriculum and
Women's Studies Program on the internet!
www.umaine.edu/wic/

Also be sure to visit the
National Women's Studies Association
www.nwsa.org

NWSA supports and promotes feminist/
womanist teaching, learning, and research
and serves as a locus of information about
the interdisciplinary world of
Women's Studies.

Sandra Caron
Women's Sexuality



While there is a proliferation of books on sexuality, the topic of women's sexuality is minimally addressed, according to Sandra Caron, Professor of Family Relationships. She spent the summer of 1999 developing a course on women's sexuality, which expanded on information offered in her "Human Sexuality" course. "This new

course is based on the belief that women's sexuality is a powerful source of energy and pleasure, but the paradoxical way women's sexuality is constructed in our society makes it difficult for women to feel at home in their own bodies and comfortable with their sexuality."

Caron wanted to look beyond sexual function into how sexuality and women's lives intertwine. "Women's sexuality exists in a world with so many conflicting messages. What is the impact of this on women's lives?" She chose to examine this from a developmental perspective to see what issues women faced at different stages of their lives. "During early childhood, girl children display a healthy curiosity and pleasure in their bodies. Yet normal interest is often discouraged by parents and other adults as being immodest and inappropriate, and girls internalize the negative messages they receive." These messages continue into adolescence and adulthood. Menstruation is viewed as a "hygiene crisis;" later, motherhood becomes an issue, especially if a woman chooses not to have a child. In midlife, women become "invisible, and the elderly woman is stripped of her sexuality."

Caron also looked at women's sexuality cross-culturally. In the Netherlands, she says, women tend to say that their first experience is good and consensual. In the U.S., women describe it as "painful and uncaring." "Sexuality is not celebrated in our culture, sex isn't celebrated as part of ourselves. And when you lack the appropriate language from the start, it's easy to understand how you would reach adulthood feeling negative and shameful."

Caron had a "great experience" with her class. Students could clearly identify with the readings and they

were able to engage in conference calls with the authors of the books they read. "Students had a chance to question the source. It was one of the best aspects of the course. I designed a course I wish I could have taken in college." The course was first offered in the Spring of 2000 and is being offered again in the Spring of 2001.

2000 Grant Recipients

Seven individual faculty members received summer grants totaling \$10,500 from WIC for the summer of 2000. Funded grants included curriculum development and transformation for Women's Studies and departmental courses, research on women's contributions and gender issues, projects to improve the academic climate for women students, and reading grants.

Carolyn Bennett, Assistant Professor of Journalism, "Mary McLeod Bethune's Columns in The Chicago Defender: Historical Contexts." A research grant.

Steven Evans, Assistant Professor of English, "Specific Issue of Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, on the Emergence of a Feminist Avant-Garde." A research grant.

Benjamin Friedlander, Assistant Professor of English, "The Centrality of Women's Experience in 'The Culture of Sensibility'." A reading grant.

Karen Horton, Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering Technology, "Developing a Loom Room in the School of Engineering Technology." An academic climate grant.

Naomi Jacobs, Professor of English, "Course Development for Women's Studies 401, Feminist Theory." A curriculum grant.

Phillip Silver, Assistant Professor of Music, "The Life of Alma Rosé, (who formed and directed the women's orchestra at Auschwitz)." A research grant.

Nathan Stormer, Assistant Professor of Communication, "Revision of a Course in Rhetorical Theory: Increasing the Presence of Women in the Tradition." A curriculum grant.

Women's Studies Status Report

Women's Studies is thriving at UMaine! We offered five sections of WST 101 last fall, all full by mid summer. We will offer that many again in the spring, and they are full to overflowing. Naomi Jacobs had 16 students in Feminist Theory in the fall and Ann Schonberger will have that many in the senior seminar in the spring. Topics courses of all kinds have healthy enrollments. In Spring 2001 Laura Lindenfeld Sher, Instructor in Women's Studies, and Sandra Berkowitz, Assistant Professor of Communication, will offer our first course in Jewish Women's Studies. Although it is difficult to keep an accurate count, there are more than 35 majors (including double majors) and more than 45 minors.

The interdisciplinary graduate concentration in Women's Studies was approved in January, 2000. Cynthia Robinson Dean earned a masters in English with a concentration in Women's Studies last May. Our first doctoral degree, an individualized Ph.D. combining Education, Girls' Development, and Women's Studies, was awarded to Mary L. Madden in December. Madden's dissertation topic was "The Good Girl/ Bad Girl Dilemma: Exploring Rural Maine Girls' Sexual Desires, Behaviors and Relationships." Constance M. Perry, Professor of Education, was her major professor.

Sheila Pendse

Women and Microenterprise

Sheila Pendse, now in public affairs, used a 1999 WIC summer reading grant to explore microenterprise's relevance to economically disadvantaged women to prepare for teaching a course in public administration. "Literature on socio-economic development," says Pendse, "does not necessarily deal with issues pertaining to women. Women are 'studied' in a separate section or subsection of a work as though they were some kind of extra appendage or anomaly."

What she found was that women are among the people most likely to operate a small business. They are more likely to receive food stamps or to participate in such programs as TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) or WIC (Women, Infants, and Children). She

quotes Lois Stevenson, contending that "women do two-thirds of the world's work, earn one-tenth of the world's income, and own one-hundredth of the world's property."

She says that more women are getting involved in self-employment activities as a means of supporting their families. But this may not earn them sufficient income to



raise them out of poverty. "Women often lack the technical know-how, capital, access to credit and markets, and other resources to make any significant improvement in their economic condition," says Pendse. Drawing from the innovative programs created by the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, organizations such as

Incubator Without Walls have been developed in the U.S. to support women in microenterprise through loans, education, technical assistance, and peer support. (The WIC library has two hour-long videos on the subject of women in microenterprise: "To Our Credit: Part 1- Bootstrap Banking in the World, and Part 2- Bootstrap Banking in America.")

In the United States, a microenterprise is defined as a sole proprietorship or family business that has fewer than five employees. It is small enough to benefit from loans under \$25,000 and generally too small to access commercial banking services. Maine has been a leader in the development of microenterprise support nationally. Evaluations of programs that provide such support in some cases show 53% of the program participants have moved out of poverty, and reliance on public assistance has declined both in dollars and in the number of clients receiving public assistance.

"Women are America's poorest citizens," says Pendse. "There are many unfounded myths and stereotypes that connect men to the business world and women to the household. These organizations help women achieve self-sufficiency through the creation and ownership of very small businesses."



Sandy Butler Aging Women



Sandy Butler, Associate Professor of Social Work, spent six weeks during the summer of 1999 using a WIC reading grant to examine literature on social welfare policies, programs, and issues that affect old women. "The School of Social Work is very interested in developing its capacity in the area of aging," says Butler. With the changing demographics

of the country (the proportion of elderly in the U.S. population will increase to 20% by the year 2050) "it is imperative that social workers be well trained to meet the needs of elders."

Butler says she has always wanted to work on aging, especially the experiences of aging women. When she first arrived in Maine, she did research with colleague Elizabeth DePoy on rural old women and their conceptions of health and well-being. She has also studied the health experiences of late middle-aged and old rural lesbian women. And, she says, "I have always been passionate about women in the welfare system. It's always been a hot topic for me."

In her current research, she is studying social welfare policy and how it affects the lives of old women. She found that women, on average, do not receive the same social security benefits as men because they tend to earn less in their lives due to lower wages and/or having primary responsibility for raising children. Additionally, some women might work in jobs that do not contribute to social security. Women in minority groups tend to be in even lower wage jobs. "Women are not getting the same advantages from policies based on the white male model," says Butler. As an elderly woman, especially if you are divorced or widowed, "you are more likely to be poor, be alone, and have chronic illnesses."

While aging had not previously been the primary focus of her research, Butler is giving serious thought to changing her emphasis to the area of aging. She believes there is a need to build a curriculum around issues of aging, given the increasing proportion of elderly in the U.S. However, students, she says, are generally less interested in the aged. "We are a youth-oriented culture, and working with families, there is more hope for change. With the elderly there is less possibility of a turn-around."

Butler plans to use the information she gathered in her classes and to share it with her colleagues. She is also using this literature review as a foundation for further research and applications for external funding. "It has been wonderful to receive support on campus for feminist research and curriculum transformation," says Butler. "It makes being a scholar in this area more comfortable."



Upcoming Conferences

For additional conference information, contact the WIC office at 581-1228.

Global Perspectives on Women in Postcolonial Societies

April 28, 2001

Proposals due February 15th, 2001

Colby College, Waterville, ME.

email jmoss@colby.edu or s_diacon@colby.edu

Pan-American Women's Leadership Conference

"Human Rights for Women:
A Pan American Dialogue"

May 18-20, 2001

Buffalo, NY

www.panamwomen.org

National Women's Studies Conference 2001

"2001.WOMEN'S STUDIES.COM?"

June 13-17, 2001

University of Minnesota

Minneapolis, Minnesota

www.nswa.org

2002 Berkshire Conference on the History of Women

"Local Knowledge<-->Global Knowledge"

June 6-9, 2002

University of Connecticut in Storrs

www.berkshireconference.org

8th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women

July 21-26, 2002

Makrere University, Kampala, Uganda

www.wgs.or.ug

New WIC Videos

WIC has over 36 new videos to offer this year. The following is a partial list. For a complete video catalog with more extensive descriptions, call the WIC office at 581-1228, contact Christine Halsted on 1stClass, or see them on our website. You can check out videos for preview and reserve them for specific dates to show in classes by contacting Chris.

The Color Purple: Based on Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. Stars Whoopi Goldberg as Celie, a black woman living in the rural, 1930s South. Two remarkable friends teach her self-worth and the power of forgiveness. (1985, 154 min.)

Eleanor Roosevelt: The American Experience: Drawing on interviews with her closest surviving relatives, friends, and biographers, combined with rare home movie footage, this video explores the life of one of America's most influential women. (2000, 150 min.)

Lavendar Limelight: Lesbians in Film: This video goes behind the scenes to reveal America's most successful lesbian directors. (1997, 57 min.)

Regret to Inform: Venturing to Vietnam twenty years after her husband was killed there in a mortar attack, filmmaker Barbara Sonnenborn finds a mesmerizing landscape filled with the psychic remnants of war. (1998, 72 min.)

The Vagina Monologues: A play performed in February 2000 by UMaine students and staff that discusses the stereotypes surrounding women and how the stigma surrounding the word "vagina" has created problems for women.

Killing Us Softly 3: Jean Kilbourne updates her analyses of how advertising oppresses women with current material and reflects on changes over the 20 years since she made **Killing Us Softly** and **Still Killing Us Softly**. (1999, 34 min.)

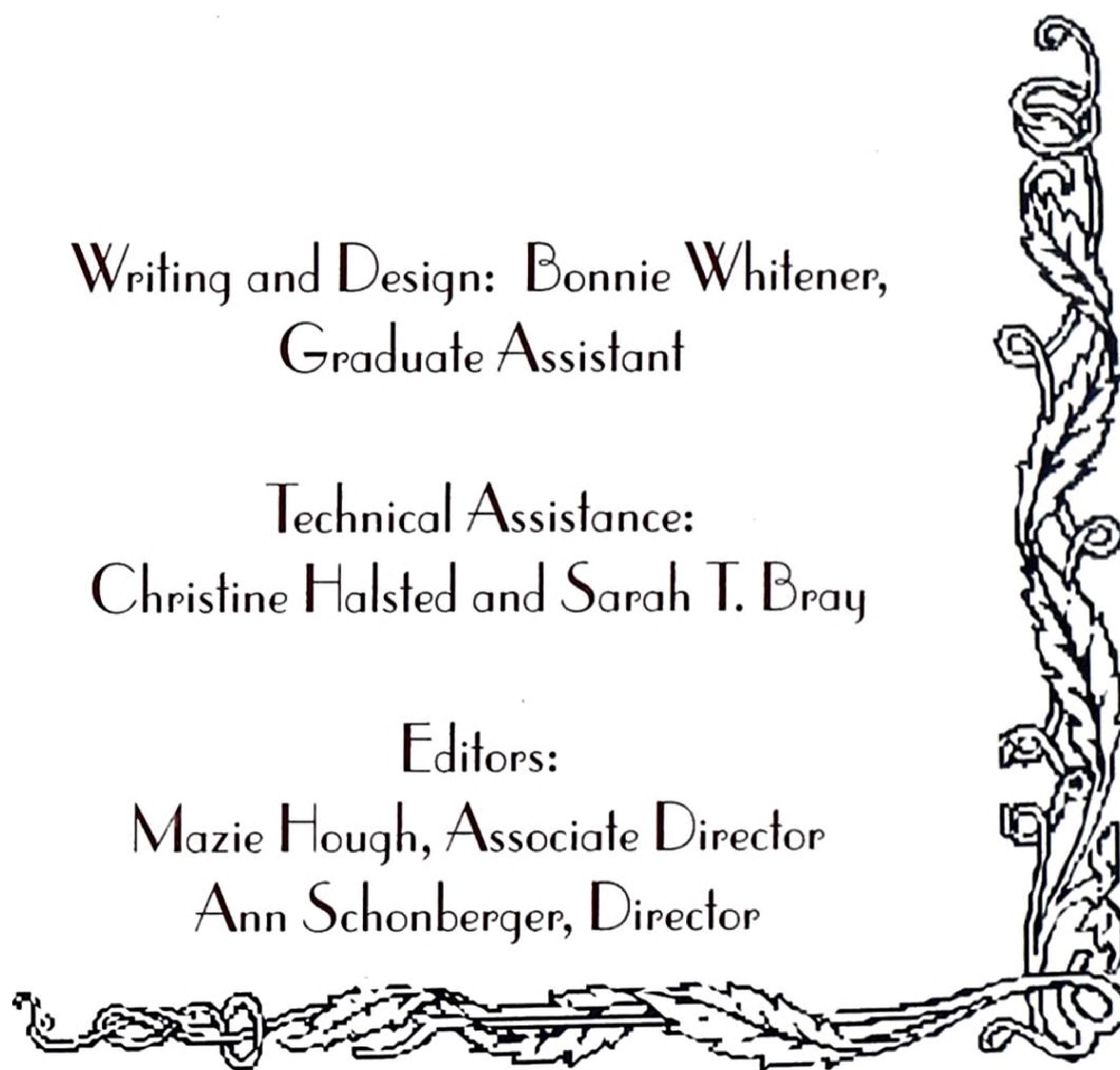
Learning Circle Grant

The Women's Studies Pedagogy Group has won a Learning Circle 2001 grant titled "Teaching for Everyone: A Handbook for Internationalizing the Curriculum." The group meets every other week to discuss different aspects of teaching that arise in Women's Studies classes; this spring they will explore such issues within an international framework. The group will produce a handbook available to all faculty members. For more information about the group or the book contact Mazie Hough on 1stClass or by phone at 1-1225.

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