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Women in the Curriculum and Women's Studies Program



The University of Maine 2006–2007

WIC News: 2005 Recipients

Each year WIC offers a number of grants to faculty members interested in doing research on women or revising existing courses in order to create a more gender-balanced classroom experience. In 2005, nine faculty members received summer grants. Projects funded included a speakers series to improve the academic climate for women in the earth sciences and the development of a new course on Hispanic women filmmakers. For information on WIC grants, please call Ann Schonberger at 581-1229, stop by the Women in the Curriculum and Women's Studies Program office at 101 Fernald Hall to pick up guidelines, or visit us on the web: www.umaine.edu/wic.



Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Plenary Speaker at the Maine Women's Studies Conference.

Maine Women's Studies Conference

The 21st annual Maine Women's Studies Conference was held at the University of Maine on Saturday, November 18th. The conference was sponsored by the Women in the Curriculum and Women's Studies Program and the Maine Women's Studies Consortium. The conference topic—Globalization, Immigration and Borderlands—was widely interpreted in a total of 27 presentations throughout three breakout sessions. Some of the topics included art, culture, pedagogy, activism, work, sexuality, history, literature, immigration, migration, and domestic violence.

The first plenary was "Telling Somali Women's Stories: A Readers Theatre" and was presented by Mazie Hough, Nasra Mohamed, Safia Nur and Carol Toner. The Somali Narrative Project is an interdisciplinary, community-based research group that involves students and faculty at the University of Maine in coalition with members of the Somali community. The goal of

this project is to document the experiences of Somali immigrants in Lewiston, Maine. The Readers Theatre was based on the songs, oral histories and literature of women throughout Somalia and the diaspora.

The second plenary, "Global Black Feminisms" was presented by Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Director of the Women's Research and Resource Center and Professor at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. The presentation consisted of historical and contemporary contexts for exploring the activist and academic work of black feminists worldwide.

Tapes/DVDs of plenaries are available by calling Angela Hart at 581-1228.



(Left) Lyn Mikel Brown presents a workshop on "Packaging, Selling, and Selling Out Girls." She recently co-authored a book with Sharon Lamb entitled Packaging Girlhood. (Right) Nasra Mohamed reads during the morning plenary on Somali women's stories.

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WIC Grant Project Reports:

Alice Kelley, Brenda Hall and Laura Brothers: Speakers on Women in Earth Sciences

Alice Kelley (Instructor in Geology), Brenda Hall (Assistant Professor of Earth Sciences & Climate Change Institute) and Laura Brothers (Graduate Student in Earth Sciences) received a WIC academic climate grant to establish a speakers program on women in Earth Science. Kelley stated, “the goal was to bring women in various stages of their careers in Earth Sciences to the department to give a department-wide talk and to have an informal lunch with graduate and undergraduate students.” Kelley continued that “over the last few years the speakers have been predominantly male and we have a number of female graduate students, so we thought that it would be nice to have a little bit more equal representation.”



Left to Right: Laura Brothers, Alice Kelley, and Brenda Hall.

Within the Earth Sciences Department at the University of Maine, Hall is the only woman on the tenure track. Kelley noted that the numbers of male and female students are fairly even at the undergraduate and masters levels, but at the doctoral and faculty levels numbers drastically change, and the academic setting becomes very male dominated. It was very important, Brothers maintained, to “bring in females who would be role models for their different professional interests and different things they have achieved.”

Gail Ashley, Professor of Geology at Rutgers University, opened the speakers program with an academic talk about her work in East Africa and a presentation to graduate students on women continuing professionally in science. (As part of the Geological Society of America, Ashley was part of a focus group about where women go beyond the undergraduate and masters levels.)

Throughout the semester the speakers series brought seven professional women geoscientists to campus. Dr. Sandra Barr, Professor of Geology at Acadia University in Nova Scotia, presented research she has done on the geological evolution of the Northern Appalachian Mountain Belt. “She is about ten years into her career and quite a star in her field of climate change,” Hall noted. A University of Maine at Farmington professor, Julia Daly, discussed both professional and personal endeavors, as she is working toward tenure as a mother of twins.

“After each talk everyone was saying how good that talk was,” Brothers mentioned, and all of the presentations were well attended by both faculty and graduate students. “I would really like to see a concerted effort to try and bring one or two women each year because I think it’s just the exposure and the chance to meet informally that is important to all students,” Kelley said.

All three women wanted to give a special thanks to administrative assistants Dianne Perro in Earth Sciences and Angela Hart in the WIC Program for all of their hard work. In addition, they wanted to thank Women in the Curriculum for initial financial support, which led to additional support from the Earth Science Department, the Climate Change Institute, and the Canadian-American Center.

Maria Tijan-Wieck: Women Directors of Hispanic Cinema

Maria Tijan-Wieck, a lecturer in the Department of Modern Languages and Classics, received a curriculum transformation grant. The result of the WIC grant was a class entitled “Beyond the Bombshells: Women Behind the Camera in Hispanic Cinema” (SPA 420). The WIC grant was used to buy the films used to create the course. “The idea for the course came from Gisela Hoecherl-Alden, Assistant Professor of German, who suggested it, and I eagerly accepted it and ran with it,” Tijan-Wieck said. The goal of the course was to acquaint the students with what a difference women’s perspectives bring to the films, Tijan-Wieck said.

Viewing films from Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Spain, the class studied the way the directors “look at problems of their own country.” One of the amazing things, Tijan-Wieck said, is how little money the women have to direct films and the ways they use networks throughout Latin America to gain support for film production. Now many of the countries have film schools, so they can learn the craft of film and then work independently.

Although governmental funding is available, Tijan-Wieck states that it is a very difficult process to receive financial support. In most cases, Tijan-Wieck notes, the women write the scripts, produce the films, or have friends who can produce the film, because the industry is very small. One of the consistent themes of the course was “the political awakening of women and the ways in which they participate in the struggles of their countries.” Topics such as domestic violence, friendship, abortion, poverty and economic status were portrayed in the films.

One example is Ecuadorian director Viviana Cordero. Cordero was “a revelation,” Tijan-Wieck exclaimed. She directed a film in 2002 entitled “Un Titan en el Ring”

(A Titan in the Ring) about a new priest who comes to a small Andean village and changes the lives of the people there. “This woman and her brother, the two



of them are the whole film industry in Ecuador,” said Tijan-Wieck. In addition to making films, Cordero is also a playwright, novelist, and poet.

The class was originally going to be offered in both Spanish and English to attract more students, but the class decided that they wanted to speak Spanish in the class. With both large and small group discussions, the class of 26 students was very complimentary in evaluations. One student commented, “Maria Tijan-Wieck is very knowledgeable about the subject... I learned a lot about different Hispanic cultures through the films. Excellent class.” Another student wrote, “I appreciated the class more and more. I think the next time it is taught it will be even better.”

“I was just delighted to be able to do this... and especially to focus on women,” Tijan-Wieck said. She believes that the films used in the class and the films she used in a film class taught in Fall 2006 are useful for anyone who is interested in film, women’s issues, Latin American studies, international affairs, sociology, or anthropology, among others. The films that she acquired through the grant are all now housed in the Women in the Curriculum and Women’s Studies office for students and faculty to use.

Nancy Fishwick: Using the Case-Study Method

Nancy Fishwick, Associate Professor of Nursing, received a WIC grant to prepare and apply the case-study method to NUR 420, Women’s Health. “Case studies have been used as a pedagogical technique in many fields of study; case studies develop students’ skills in critical thinking and group learning and they provide a focus for classroom discussion,” Fishwick said. Fishwick attended a day-long seminar, given by the University of Maine Center for Teaching Excellence in March 2005, on the case-study method where she learned new techniques. She used them as a way of approaching the topic of women and heart disease.

The grant money was used for time to create the case-study module and to buy books. “My goal was to pull together several different topics using the case-study method, as I have always felt that the course was fragmented in the past.” The topics that Fishwick discussed using case studies included women and tobacco and gender disparities in biomedical research.

One of the aspects that caught Fishwick off guard was the innovation that was being done in the area of her research. Many of the materials she had purchased were already out of date in some aspects. “While I happen to be doing this right on the cusp of

Directors and Film Titles

- Maria Luisa Bemberg
I Don't Want to Talk About It (1993)
- Lucrecia Martel
La Ciénaga (2001)
- Paula Hernández
Herencia (2001)
- Viviana Cordero
Un Titan en el Ring (2002)
- Fina Torres
Oriana (1985)
- Maricarmen de Lara
En El País de no Pasa Nada (2000)
- Eva López Sánchez
Francisca, ¿De Qué Lado Estás? (2002)
- María Novaro
Sin Dejar Huella (2000)
- Pilar Miró
*Gary Cooper Que Estás en Los Cielos (1980)**
- Iciar Bollaín
Flores de Otro Mundo (1999)
- Te Doy Mis Ojos (2003)
- Angeles González Sinde
La Suerte Dormida (2003)
- Patricia Ferreira
Para Que no me Olvides (2005)
- *Film does not have English subtitles*

the newest results, the Women's Health Initiative said that estrogen is bad for women and heart disease."

Previously, all the research praised estrogen as being protective and vitally important.

The development of the case-study method was well received by students the night it was implemented. To assure the integration of Nursing and Women's Studies majors, Fishwick had students count off to assign groups. Then each of the groups was given a scenario with discussion questions based on the issue of women and heart disease. "I was really excited that night to see so much activity and to see the students exchanging ideas," Fishwick said. This course is unusual as it is upper level and open to both Women's Studies and Nursing majors. "It was very useful to have the Nursing students with the Women's Studies students because the Nursing students were able to explain terminology, tests, and new understandings in the field. The Women's Studies students, of course, have a very good handle on things like gender bias in biomedical research—sort of the history of women getting the short stick."

Some of the students were outraged with the information they were reading about women and heart disease. "Once we started talking about heart disease, and smoking, and the risk factors... they were immediately concerned about their mothers. For me," Fishwick noted, "because the class is mostly young women, I am wanting them to pay attention to their own health as well." (According to the Stanford University Medical Center, cardiovascular diseases are the number one killer of women. These diseases currently claim the lives of more than half a million females every year—more than the next 16 causes of death combined. <http://www.stanfordhospital.com>)

With the success of the case-study method, Fishwick would like to try it with topics "where there are intersections," such as women and HIV or women and violence. Women's Health is offered every fall and includes frequent guest speakers such as Lori Eddy, Eastern Maine Aids Network; Sharon Barker, Women's Resource Center; and Ruth Lockhart, Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center.



Joline Blais: Cyberfeminism, Gender, and Technology

Joline Blais, Assistant Professor of New Media Programs, received a reading grant to purchase materials for a small library of resources on cyberfeminism. "My goal was to think about the ways feminism intersects with new media and to propose both course and curriculum changes to reflect these insights." The knowledge and resources gained from the grant have been used to incorporate examples and concepts throughout the courses Blais teaches. Additionally, Blais hopes to develop a course that deals specifically with gender and body issues in new media.

Prior to the reading grant Blais was hesitant to celebrate cybertechnology despite Donna Haraway's path-breaking text, "*A Cyborg Manifesto*," which discussed a "cyborg" as a liberating figure. "Many people wrote about the freedom from a gendered body in cyberspace, but that always made me nervous. I would rather have that freedom in real space, where my gender does not limit what I can do with my body," said Blais.

The readings of the grant helped her to see how women through new media were able to challenge concepts of the body and the influence of technology. In addition to exploring cyberspaces, women artists were asking questions and discussing fears about cyberspace as "they used virtual space to 'reconfigure' the ways we negotiate the body in our culture," Blais said.

The reading grant has been useful in addressing gender issues in multiple ways. First, Blais noted, "it has enabled me to articulate gender issues as they relate to new media. Second, it has helped me understand the context in which the women students find themselves. Third, it has helped me open up questions toward curricular development."

Throughout the readings there emerged a series of themes and questions surrounding gender and technology. One of the themes addressed was whether bodies are or are not gendered in virtual spaces. Another is whether or not software/hardware is gendered and how it can accommodate differences. A third theme questioned the differences in the use of the Internet by both women and men. Blais mentioned



that one article revealed that although men have more contacts in virtual space than women, the contacts women have are more intimate and sustained over time.

The most important part about the Internet, according to Blais, is that it creates opportunities to connect with people locally and globally. Rather than attempt to transcend the body, we need to re-center around the body and explore the ways in which the body is gendered in our culture. Whether a person is interacting in real space or virtual space, she is within her body, Blais said.

One of the areas of focus for Blais is the way in which indigenous cultures function through networking. "So the real question for me is not how do we get equal pay for women in a patriarchy; but rather how can we create alternate, grass-roots, emergent cultures that place women, children, the environment, life, and earth at the center instead of placing 'Man' at the top," Blais said. "My hope is that young women interested in this question will come to new media to look for answers."

Anette Rodrigues: Hessian Women during the American Revolution

Anette Rodrigues, an adjunct professor in the German Department and a volunteer at the Bangor Historical Society Museum since 1980, received a WIC reading and research grant to study Hessian women who came to Maine with their military husbands during the American Revolution. Gisela Hoecherl-Alden, who is the language coordinator for the German wing of the Department of Modern Languages and Classics, had previously asked Rodrigues to write about immigration for German 203 and 204. Rodrigues commented that Hoecherl-Alden was just wonderful for encouraging her research and suggesting that she apply for a WIC grant.

The WIC grant was used for three main purposes. The first was to acquire books on Hessians, many of which were out of print. Rodrigues visited three state archives (Wolfenbüttel, Nürnberg, and Marburg) in Germany, using WIC funds to travel to each archive since she was already traveling to Germany. She also became a member of the Maine Historical Society in Portland and the Johannes Schwalm Historical Association in Pennsylvania.

Rodrigues had previously studied the Hessians but had not focused on the women. Immigration of German men, such as Carl Schurz and Levy Strauss, has been well documented, yet the women have

remained unknown. Rodrigues set out to paint a more balanced picture in researching immigrant women during the American Revolution. Thousands of Hessian soldiers came to America to fight for Great Britain, and Rodrigues wanted to know more about their wives.

With the WIC grant Rodrigues has gone back to focus on the women, as she believes this will "give a more encompassing understanding of the men and women who came to America." "They [the women] are a big part of the reason the soldiers stayed," Rodrigues said. Although the statistics on the number of immigrants who came as soldiers with their families and stayed varied, Rodrigues believes over 7,000 men and women did immigrate.

The research, focused on Hessian women who came to the New World with their husbands, asked three main questions: who were the women (social class, background), what were their official roles, and did the Hessians who remained in Maine intend to emigrate all along.

"They [Hessians] very often immigrated as a unit, as a family unit, because the women who came were not unattached women; they were part of a family. They were the wives of the husbands who were the soldiers," Rodrigues said. The statistics she found showed that many of the women were pregnant at the time they were traveling.

While there is little evidence on what the women's roles were once they were here, one of the stories Rodrigues told was about a woman who volunteered to get water for the soldiers and wives. They needed water, but every time German soldiers went to the Hudson River to get some, they were being shot at. "So here is this German woman, a sergeant's wife, who volunteered to go to the river knowing full well that she might be shot too, but she was never shot. After the surrender at Saratoga they found out that the Americans said specifically that they would never shoot a woman."



In terms of social roles and jobs, the women may have been recruited to do specific jobs, but little information was found. While combing the archives, she did find a sentence that women in a prisoner of war camp were mending soldiers' uniforms.

In Germany there were no first-hand accounts of women who were not of nobility. Beginning in the early 1700s education was compulsory for both boys and girls, so Hessian women most likely were able to write. One of the remaining questions was what the women who were not of nobility were doing in the United States and why they did not have time to write. Primary documents and written contracts were found in the archives, but the women were not documented as the men were with job titles and additional information.

The one diary Rodrigues did find was that of Baroness Frederika von Riedesel, the wife of Friedrich von Riedesel. Rodrigues mentioned that she was a fascinating woman; she would be interested in completing more in-depth research on Frederika as she was of nobility, yet she was a leader and a provider for many of the soldiers' families. Rodrigues stated that she did not think that Frederika was a woman who walked five steps behind her husband but was "equal in her own right."

There are three main purposes for which Rodrigues will use this research: to incorporate information in the redevelopment of the German classes; to continue research with a contact made at the historical society in Castine; and to write and publish an article in *Maine History Magazine*.

Mary Tyler: Creating Films on Prominent Women in Cell and Developmental Biology

Mary Tyler, Professor of Zoology, has been a developmental biologist for over 20 years and has been working on the production of educational films for 11 years. She received a research grant to assist with the development of an educational film on Dr. Elizabeth Hay of Harvard University as part of an ongoing series about women biologists. The money from the WIC grant was used for salary and supplies for the creation of the film. In the past Tyler states, "no teaching videos existed that present the life and work of women scientists in the field of developmental and cell biology."

Her goal, with the assistance of the WIC grant, was to create a film that focused on the influence of Dr. Hay. Tyler commented on the importance of this film to show students the significant contributions that have been made by women from various backgrounds. Hay

"almost single-handedly focused the attention of the scientific world on the importance and functions of the extracellular matrix in the formation and maintenance of tissues and organs." The stories of discrimination within the field were present for Hay, but Tyler noted with admiration that she did not see it as a handicap to her. Instead it was a matter of approaching things with her vision and expertise, despite potential barriers.

The first educational film Tyler created, one on Nicole Le Douarin, was published by Sinaver Associates in 2003. They have also published the film on Dr. Hay since the completion of the research grant. After spending two years researching the life of Dr. Hay, Tyler used the WIC grant to hire student help in the final production and compilation of the materials. The video consists of interviews, educational multimedia materials, and a supporting website.

Tyler spoke with passion about her students and the work she does to show them that they can be great scientists if they believe in themselves. "It is important to all students to see that the significant advances in science are made by ordinary people doing extraordinary things." Part of this process, Tyler says is creating the space in the lab for students to ask their own questions and test them. Tyler also creates her own lab materials so that students have open-ended lab questions that stimulate critical thinking. She noted that she does extensive research on materials used in the lab to find the safest possible choices for students to work with.

Tyler mentioned three assistants who helped her throughout this project whom she wanted to recognize. Ryan Cowan, a graduate student in her research lab, provided critique and analysis of the education materials and video. Ronald Kozlowski, a research associate with Tyler on previous projects, provided expertise in computer technology. Tyler also gave a special thanks to her son, Matt Tyler, who "has critiqued all of my films, and I keep getting better and better because of him." Additionally, Matt wrote and played the music for the Hay video.



Tyler ended with grateful remarks about the work that the Women in the Curriculum Program continues to do to ensure that women's roles are being appreciated. "This was one of the first times I felt so appreciated for what I was trying to do." Often, she said, educational videos are viewed as secondary in academia, but for Tyler "it is utterly important and with WIC I didn't have to justify that. I was just understood."

Nancy Ogle: Composer Jan Gilbert's Residency on Campus

Nancy Ogle, Associate Professor of Music, was awarded an academic climate grant from Women in the Curriculum to bring internationally recognized composer Dr. Jan Gilbert to campus. Gilbert visited the University of Maine for a week of teaching, mentoring, and overseeing performances of her work. She was on campus November 7 - 13, 2005, meeting with students in Music, Honors, Women's Studies, and New Media. Gilbert rehearsed and performed with both students and faculty throughout her residency.



Dr. Jan Gilbert has received many prestigious fellowships and awards, including ones from the Jerome Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. In previous years, she has taught composition at Middlebury College, St. Olaf College, and here at the University of Maine. She currently teaches courses at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

"Women were almost completely excluded from classical musical composition until at least the 1970s," according to Ogle. "I completed my Master's Degree in Music in 1975 without ever having seen a published score by a woman in any class. This experience, though unfortunate, was typical at that time," she said. "Jan Gilbert's success as a composer is remarkable, especially for a woman. She is an excellent role model for young women in the field."

Gilbert coached performers for a concert of her works presented in Minsky Recital Hall Friday night, November 11th. To celebrate her residency, Gilbert

wrote a piece for the University Singers, *Circling Katahdin*, based on a text by Maine poet Kathleen Ellis. The University Singers premiered the song at the Friday performance.

Gilbert's visit brought local musicians onto the campus. Dr. Gilbert's most recent composition, *Gitanjali*, a song-cycle based on poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, was performed at the center of the concert. This work was accompanied by the Orono String Quartet and featured Ogle, singing, and South Indian dancer, Raneer Ramaswamy, who was brought in for the performance. Ms. Ramaswamy, who directs the Ragamala Dance Company in Minneapolis, also gave a dance master class for UMaine students.

Support for this exciting week came from many sources. "The academic climate grant from the Women in the Curriculum made it easier to seek supplementary funds from other sources," Ogle said. "The Honors College was particularly generous, and others gave what they could; the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Music Department and New Media Studies all helped. The cooperation that came forward to make this residency a success was, in itself, splendid."

Reflecting on the residency and the academic grant Ogle said, "A project as multi-faceted as that week was certainly changes the academic climate. In the music department we were especially aware of it."

An audiotape of the November 11th concert was made by Barry Darling of MPBN and is available at Fogler Library's Listening Center.

Kristin Langellier & Carol Toner: Reading Somali Women's Lives

Kristin Langellier (Professor of Communication and Journalism) and Carol Toner (Coordinator of Maine Studies and Research Associate in History) are two of the members of a research collaborative called the Somali Narrative Project, which focuses on the narratives of the immigration experiences for the Somali community in Lewiston. Also part of the project are Mazie Hough, Associate Director of the Women in the Curriculum and Women's



Kristin Langellier

Studies Program, and Kim Huisman, Assistant Professor of Sociology.

Langellier and Toner received a WIC reading grant to acquire books and materials to share with the collaborative and three Somali students: Safia Nur, Nasra Mohamed, and Ismail Warsame. Although a permanent location has not yet been determined, the collaborative would eventually like to place copies of the books in the

public library in Lewiston and also in the Women in the Curriculum office or Fogler Library. “In working with the students it has been interesting to talk with their families and the community to find out what is important to them and what they would like to know more about.



Carol Toner

They know what they have heard about Somalia, but they have never read about or studied their culture,” Langellier said. Providing copies of books for the Somalis and the rest of Lewiston is one of the ways the collaborative wants to give back to the community.

Throughout the summer, faculty and Somali students gathered as a collaborative reading circle to discuss both historical and contemporary readings. Collaboration is a key word for both Langellier and Toner as they emphasized the importance of the students to the project. Langellier said that the students mediate and negotiate cultures, as they are our connection to the Somali community.

The reading grant was used for three main purposes, Toner explained. First, the grant was used to acquire materials for each of the four faculty members who had minimal knowledge about Somali history and culture. Second, it provided a link between the reading group and the students. Third, it was used to put together a readers theatre to share the literature with others.

The reading circle acquired various literature about Somalia including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. There were four threads that the readings focused on: traditional Somali culture, the civil war, living in refugee camps, and their refugee experience in Maine. After living in refugee camps in Kenya or Ethiopia, Somalis left and relocated around the world. Although

the collaborative also read about diasporic experiences of refugees in Italy, Sweden, Canada, United States, Britain, and Switzerland among others, ultimately they wanted to learn about the stories and experiences of Somali immigrants in Lewiston.

Women’s voices were woven throughout the literature, especially at the major turning points of war and immigration. One theme focused on how the war and the diaspora have changed traditional Somali gender roles. There are more Somali women than men living in Lewiston, which is characteristic of most diasporic communities, Toner said.

After many readings and discussions over the summer, the collaborative created a readers theatre script and performance. The students were involved in each step of the process from choosing what to read to deciding what excerpts would be included. The collaborative has performed the script four times since its creation. It was first showcased by the four faculty at the Maine Women’s Studies Conference in the Fall 2005. In the spring, the three Somali students joined the collaborative to perform the script as part of the Women in the Curriculum lunch series. The third performance took place this summer (2006) at “Women’s Immigration, Transnational Immigration,



Picture Taken at the Halifax Conference.

Front: Safia Nur; Left to Right: Alison Heinbach, Nasra Mohamed, Mazie Hough, Carol Toner, Ismail Warsame, and Kim Huisman with her daughter Madeline.

and Public Policy,” a conference held at Mt. St. Vincent University in Halifax. A fourth presentation was made at the Maine Women’s Studies Conference, Fall 2006.

Since the creation of the readers theatre script, the research collaborative with the students as co-researchers have been recording the experiences of the Somali community both in Somalia and here in Maine. Both Toner and Langellier stated that they felt privileged to be invited into the community and into people’s homes. The students have been such a

big part of the project, and as Toner notes, “getting to know the students and how open they have been with us and how knowledgeable they are has been such an important experience for me.”

Benjamin Friedlander: American Women’s Poetry in the Age of Dickinson

Benjamin Friedlander, Associate Professor of English, received a research grant to study nineteenth-century women poets. Friedlander identified the eleven most

significant women contemporaries of Emily Dickinson in the field of poetry for his research.

“Because of scholarly neglect and changes in popular literary taste, no modern editions exist for

the majority of these poets, and those editions that do exist are mere selections,” said Friedlander.

In preparation for the grant, research was done to identify eleven women to study, ten of whom were located through the Bibliography of American Literature by Jacob Blanck. (See list of names and dates of the lives of each woman.) Each of these women was part of what is known as the Sentimental Tradition, although the Cary sisters and Sarah Piatt are most notable for their critical attitudes toward aspects of this tradition. Two poets that Friedlander deemed particularly important were Sarah Piatt and Lydia Sigourney. Piatt was one of the few women who had contemporary poetry published, and Sigourney was a rival of well known poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

To assist in the research process the WIC grant funded the purchase of books and photocopies, travel expenses to the Library of Congress, and a research stipend. To uncover the legacies of many of these women required access to rare book collections, microfilm, and archived material. The



research is not only about the texts themselves, but it is “also necessary to recover some of the sense of the literary culture in which these women participated,” Friedlander emphasized. Part of this process for Friedlander was working with the original books and looking at the pages as they were printed during the time they were written.

The works of many of the poets were well read publicly by both men and women for pleasure. Some of Friedlander’s questions in approaching the literature were why the literature, was read, what the expectations were of the literature, and how this has changed in the way poetry is currently read. Friedlander emphasized the importance of his approach in “trying to understand the period in its own terms.” Some of these poets have been read by feminist scholars, and for Friedlander rereading these texts to appreciate them in new ways was important in reimagining the women’s lives and what it meant to be a feminist at that time.

There were many different topics that women were writing about during this time period. Much of the poetry expressed how they felt about grief, consolation, and religion. Poetry was often written for particular occasions or events in people’s lives and was very formulaic. Many of the women also wrote about nature, especially the weather and flowers. Many of the women were social activists who participated in public life and whose call to action was often in relation to morality. For example, one poet wrote about the mistreatment of the Indians during that time. Some of the poets also wrote other types of literature. As an example Friedlander mentioned that Lucy Larcom wrote novels and how-to books for women.

Poets and Dates of Birth and Death

Lydia Huntley Sigourney (1791 - 1865)
Maria Gowen Brooks (1794 - 1845)
Frances Sargent Osgood (1811 - 1850)
Alice Cary (1820 - 1871)
Phoebe Carey (1824 - 1871)
Lucy Larcom (1824 - 1893)
Rose Terry Cooke (1827 - 1892)
Celia Thaxter (1835 - 1894)
Sarah Morgan Bryan Piatt (1836 - 1919)
Emma Lazarus (1849 - 1887)
Louise Imogen Guiney (1861-1920)

Upcoming Conferences:

17th Annual "Thinking Gender" Graduate Student Research Conference

February 2, 2007, 8am - 5pm
UCLA Faculty Center
Los Angeles, CA
<http://www.csw.ucla.edu/thinkinggender.html>
thinkinggender@women.ucla.edu

Situating Gendered Violence Within a Global Context

February 16th & 17th, 2007
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT
www.womens.studies.uconn.edu

Interdisciplinary Conference in Women's Studies at Middle Tennessee State University

February 22 - 24, 2007
Murfreesboro, TN
womenstu@mtsu.edu

8th Annual Women's History Month Conference: "Women at War: Soldiers, Sisters, Survivors"

March 2 - 3, 2007
Sarah Lawrence College
Bronxville, NY
<http://www.slc.edu>

The 15th Annual Conference on Men and Masculinities: "Engaging Boys and Men: How Are We Doing?"

March 30 - April 1, 2007
Kansas City, MO
<http://www.mensstudies.org/>

Mid-Atlantic Women's Studies Association: "Creative Forces: Women, Art, Science"

March 31, 2007
Bucks County Community College, Newtown, PA
<http://www.bucks.edu/MAWSA/2007>

Women Writing and Reading: Past and Present

May 4 - 6, 2007
University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada
Proposal Submission Date: February 28, 2007
http://www.crcstudio.arts.ualberta.ca/wwr_conference

Writing & Design: Jlynn Frazier
Technical Assistance: Angela Hart
Editors: Mazie Hough, Associate Director
Ann Schonberger, Director

The 28th Annual National Women's Studies Association Conference: Past Debates, Present Possibilities, Future Feminisms

June 28 - July 1, 2007
Pheasant Run, St. Charles, IL
www.nwsaconference.org

Faculty Accomplishments:

Rhea Côté Robbins: Exhibit at the Hudson Museum

Rhea Côté Robbins, Adjunct Professor and Instructor in Women's Studies and Franco-American Studies, had an exhibit titled *Maman Disait*. Through the creation of mixed media collages Robbins explored

proverbs and sayings—spoken in both English and French—of her maman (mother). This exhibit provided insight into daily life and family traditions. The exhibit was held in the Hudson Museum July 10 - November 27, 2006.



Ann Schonberger: Women Making a Difference Award

Ann Schonberger, Director of the Women in the Curriculum and Women's Studies Program, received the Merle Nelson Women Making a Difference Award. This award was presented at the statewide annual meeting of Women, Work and Community on May 1, 2006 in Augusta.



New WIC Videos and Materials:

Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price

This film takes you behind the glitz and into the real lives of workers and their families, business owners and their communities, in an extraordinary journey that will challenge the way you think, feel...and shop. (2005, 97 minutes, VHS)

An Oral Historian's Work

Accompany Professor Sandy Ives through a series of tape-recorded interviews with woodsmen and riverdrivers who worked in the Maine woods in the 1920s. This film explains and demonstrates all you need to know to complete a successful oral history project. Whether your interest is folklore, local history, business history, or genealogy, the basics are the same, and this tape will take you step by step through each phase. (1987, 33 minutes, VHS)

Living With Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100

A documentary with vivid narrative recreations about the life and times of Ruth Ellis. Born July 23, 1899, when she died in 2000 she was the oldest "out" African American lesbian. In addition to exploring her rich past, the film offers a rare opportunity to experience a century of our history as lived by one inspiring woman. By example, Ruth Ellis showed us what is possible and what can be realized, if one lives long, ages well and also lives with pride. (1999, 60 minutes, VHS)

Adio Kerida (Goodbye Dear Love)

Anthropologist Ruth Behar returns to her native Cuba in search of the country's remaining Sephardic Jews and her family's ties to them. Her grandparents were Jewish emigrants to Cuba and hoped it would be their promised land. But like most Cuban Jews, they left Cuba after the revolution and resettled in the United States, with only a small number of Jews remaining on the island. Haunted by the Sephardic love song, "Adio Kerida" (Goodbye Dear Love), Ruth Behar's filmic memoir is a lyrical journey into Cuba's Jewish past and present that is filled with painful goodbyes and a passionate belief in the possibility of return. A bittersweet and often humorous portrait emerges of the exotic tribe of Sephardic Jews left in Cuba, as well as of the Jewish Cubans living in the United States. (2002, 82 minutes, VHS)

American Porn

It's one of the hottest industries in America. Easier to order at home than a pizza, bigger than rock music, it's arguably the most profitable enterprise in cyberspace. AT&T is in the business. Yahoo! has profited from it. Westin and Marriott make more money selling it than they do snacks and drinks in their mini-bars. And with estimates as high as \$10 billion a year, it boasts the kind of earnings every American business envies. It's pornography, and with adult movies, magazines, retail stores, and the growth of the Internet, business is booming. FRONTLINE reports on the forces behind the recent explosion of sexually explicit material available in American society and the pending political battle that may soon engulf the multibillion dollar pornography industry. (2002, 60 minutes, VHS)

Hildegard von Bingen in Portrait (Ordo Virtutum)

The Ritual of the Virtues is the oldest surviving European music-drama, and the greatest musical work by the visionary mystic, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). Hildegard left a treasury of writings and music expressing the passionate intensity of her mystical experiences. Although she lived almost her entire life as a cloistered nun, she was deeply involved with the world on many levels—observing, writing, preaching and organizing a community. Through her many writings, she tells us that help is always at hand, both from the world we know with our senses and from the world we discover through our hearts and intuition. (2003, 70 minutes, DVD)

Ugly Ducklings Documentary & Community Action Kit

This educational film focuses on the core message portrayed in *Ugly Ducklings* and highlights the deeper, more immediate realities of the play's subjects, who tell the story of those seeking asylum from the oppression of bias-based harassment in our communities and schools. The purpose of the film and community action kit is to educate both adults and youth about bias-based harassment and to aid families, schools, and communities who wish to openly support LGBTQ youth by initiating honest dialogue and creating safe and supportive environments. (2006, 52 minutes, DVD)

**** If you would like to borrow these materials please contact Angela Hart @ 581-1228 ****

Summer 2006 Grant Recipients

Six individual faculty members and one faculty team received summer grants from WIC for the summer of 2006. Grants funded curriculum development and transformation for Women's Studies and departmental courses, research and creative work on women's contributions locally and globally, projects to improve the academic climate for women students at the University of Maine, and reading grants.

Elizabeth Allan, Associate Professor in Higher Education Leadership,
"Examining the Status of Women in Higher Education." (A research grant)

Amy Blackstone, Assistant Professor in Sociology,
"A Comparative Investigation of Workplace Sexual Harassment over the Life Cycle." (A research grant)

Rebecca Eilers and **Sandra Sigmon**, Professors in Psychology,
"Fibromyalgia in Women: Causes, Experiences, and Consequences." (A reading grant)

Pauleena MacDougall, Associate Director, Maine Folklife Center & Faculty Associate in Anthropology,
"Oral Histories and Folklore of Women in Maine's Pulp and Paper Industry (1920 - present)."
(A research grant)

Shannon Martin, Professor in Communication and Journalism,
"Communication Law Courses, Restructured to Integrate Women's Contributions."
(A curriculum transformation grant)

Maria Sandweiss, Lecturer in Spanish,
"Course Preparation for a Course in Latin American Popular Culture." (A reading grant)

Marli Weiner, Professor in History,
"My House has been an Hospital': the Experience of Illness in the Antebellum South." (A research grant)



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