From the Director

As reported in a previous column, Marianne Hirsch and I will be playing “IRWaG Director tag” for four years. I would like to begin my term by thanking Marianne for her stellar leadership and exemplary governorship. Not only did she efficiently and deftly administer the Institute and fill the academic year with a variety of critically engaging talks, workshops, and conferences, she helped initiate, with Sharon Marcus (Professor, English), a new graduate student fellowship program. Along with administrative duties, our first four fellows, Jess Fenn, Melissa Gonzales, Jenny James, and Sara Kile, provided intellectual leadership and energy that bridged faculty and graduate student interests to produce a number of exciting and well-attended events (See “IRWaG Graduate Colloquium”). I am delighted to announce our graduate fellows for 2008–09, Musa Gurnis (English & Comparative Literature), Sherally Munshi (English & Comparative Literature), Ariel Rubin (History), and Lisa Uperesa (Anthropology). Marianne was also critical to the vision and shape of the new Center for the Critical Analysis of Social of Difference (CCASD) along with other members of IRWaG, including Lila Abu-Lughod and Jean Howard, and the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, the Institute for Comparative Society and Literature, the Institute for Research in African-American Studies, and the Barnard Center for Research on Women.

I would also like to thank the various members of IRWaG who have agreed to share their intellectual and administrative energies for the current academic year, including the members of the Columbia and Barnard community who teach classes and sponsor events at the heart of our mission; Julie Crawford who is continuing as Director of Undergraduate Studies; Alice Kessler-Harris who will serve as the Director of Graduate Studies; and the members of the Steering Committee: Lila Abu-Lughod, Madeleine Dobie, Eileen Giloody, Ellie Hisama, Laura Kay, Lydia Liu, Christia Mercer, Rosalind Morris, Caterina Pizzigoni, Anupama Rao, Carol Sanger, Neferti Tadiar, Lisa Tiersten, and Karen Van Dyck.

The Institute starts its twenty-first anniversary year with a two-day conference, “What is Feminist Politics Now? Local and Global.” The conference features scholars, writers, and activists from Chile, China, Europe, India, Sweden, and the US in order to examine the changing meanings of feminism, and its goals (intellectual, social and political) in a global context.

In celebration of its 21st anniversary, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender cordially invites you to:

“What is Feminist Politics Now? Local and Global”

September, 19–20, 2008

The conference will explore:

- The changing meanings of feminism, and its goals (intellectual, social and political) in a global context: to examine whether these meanings can any longer be contained within the rubric of common social agendas.
- Emerging social movements within the United States and beyond, including those that foster the collective interests of women across national, class, religious, and racial borders; the common interests of women and men; and those that call for greater individual autonomy.
- Questions about how women within the post-industrial west can effectively relate to, and remain engaged with, issues that arise from diverse locations and affect differently situated women in different ways.

Please see pg. 17 for a full schedule.
Feminist Legacies of Columbia ‘68

By Katie Gradowski

For anyone who attended Columbia during this period, the 1968 protests were an iconic moment in campus history. Set off by widespread anti-war sentiment as well as opposition to the University’s continued expansion into the Harlem/Morningside area, the uprising garnered international attention, resulting in over 700 arrests when the New York City police department was called in to stop the protests.

The uprising was sparked by the discovery, in the spring of 1967, that Columbia University had undisclosed affiliations with the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA), a military think tank involved in weapons research. Tensions were already running high with regard to the University’s plans to construct what many viewed to be a segregated gym on the site of Morningside Park. On April 23, these issues came together in a general protest when students staged an eight-day strike, occupying five buildings on the Columbia campus, including Low Library, and effectively shutting down campus for the remainder of the semester.

At Barnard, these tensions were accelerated by the “Linda LeClair” incident, when a female undergraduate was suspended for violating college rules and living off-campus with her boyfriend. Prior to 1968, Barnard adhered closely to in loco parentis, a policy that required female students to live on campus, strictly limited male visitation, and monitored where female students went after hours. Feminist activist Ti-Grace Atkinson recalls being told, “You have to keep in loco parentis….because there are bushes around Barnard, and men and boys hide in the bushes after a certain hour.” LeClair’s trial, subsequent suspension and eventual withdrawal added fuel to the issues coming to a boil across the street on the Columbia campus, prompting many Barnard students to take a stand. Between April 23 and April 30, over 300 Barnard students joined Columbia students in protesting what they saw as the racist—and increasingly, anti-feminist—policies of the Columbia University administration.

On April 25, IRWaG brought together seven poets, writers, and activists for a panel entitled “Feminist Legacies of Columbia 68,” which sought to reevaluate these events from a feminist perspective as part of a 3-day conference on the legacy of 1968. Some of the panelists had given up

Legacies, Continued on Page 12

The Institute for Research on Women and Gender is the locus of interdisciplinary feminist scholarship and teaching at Columbia University. We administer the undergraduate Women’s Studies major and help develop courses for graduate students that supplement their own disciplinary studies on gender. In addition, we organize workshops, seminars, lectures, conferences, and research projects concerning various issues in feminist scholarship and teaching.

Catharine Stimpson, Elizabeth Diggs, Louise Yelin, and Sharon Olds
Gender and Public Health: Cutting Edge Research
Feminist Interventions: Lisa M. Bates, Wendy Chavkin, Theresa Exner, and Jennifer Hirsch

By Jessica Adler

Four scholars from the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health made their way downtown on February 11 to participate in a dynamic panel discussion on the intersection of public health and gender. Presenting research findings from studies focusing on sex, marriage, and reproduction in various countries, each discussed the impact of social and environmental factors on public health, and linked study findings to policy implications.

The panel, sponsored by the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, was part of the Feminist Intervention series, which highlights path-breaking scholarship from members of the Columbia University faculty.

Lisa M. Bates, a Columbia Postdoctoral Research Scholar in the Robert Wood Johnson Health & Society Scholars Program, set the global tone of the evening with a discussion of the institution of marriage in Bangladesh. There, although marriage ages have risen slightly since over the past two decades, approximately 70 percent of women are still married by the time they are 18 years old. High rates of early marriage lead to high rates of domestic abuse, less consensual sex, and less development of “a young woman’s potential,” according to Bates. She and other researchers conducted approximately 80 interviews in six rural towns between 2001 and 2005 in order to examine the norms, perceptions, and decision-making processes underlying marriage, as well as the role of parental influence on a daughter’s decision to marry. The study was, Bates said, “looking for sources of empowerment.” She and other researchers found, among other things, that “attitudes about early marriage are changing faster than practice.” While many realize its perils, “socio-cultural support for early marriage is intact.” This is especially true for poor families, Bates said, since they are disproportionately saddled with concerns about, among other things, dowry costs, which increase as a woman gets older.

Dr. Wendy Chavkin, Professor of Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology at the College of Physicians and Surgeons and Professor of Clinical Population and Family Health at the Mailman School of Public Health, shifted the focus to polar challenges in the “highly developed world.” In Sweden, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, and other nations, the birth rate has plummeted while the age of marriage has increased, Chavkin said. The trend, she said, began in the 1950s and 1960s, concurrent with the legalization of birth control and the entrance of women into the labor force on a mass scale. Contextualized with those social feats, “biology has another story to tell,” Chavkin said. “The ability to get pregnant and carry to term... decreases with age.” Demographers see this as a worrisome trend given the fact that a population can replace itself when each woman has an average of 2.1 children, Chavkin said. In the United States, “rates are hovering around two”; in Eastern Europe, they have fallen to 1.5; in Scandinavia, they remain “in the high 1’s,” she said. In response to the declines, there has been a sharp increase in the use of Assisted Reproductive Technologies, especially among wealthy whites, Chavkin said, adding that ARTs, have their own risks: a woman is more likely to have multiple births (twins or triplets), or give birth too early or too late in her pregnancy. The situation needs to be discussed on a socio-political level, Chavkin maintained: “There are a whole host of social policies that could tackle how we could have it all,” she said. Such policies need to convey an “understanding of the relationship between gender and the wage gap, the responsibility for domestic life, and the reciprocal relationship between those two factors.” Scandinavia and France have model social policies, Chavkin pointed out, and birth rates in those two countries seem to be increasing.

Public Health, Continued on Page 14
Fear of Flying:
Can a Feminist Classic
Be a Classic?

By Katie Gradowski

Erica Jong’s Fear of Flying has finally matured into middle age. Originally touted as a no-holds-barred sexual satire, the novel has long had a reputation as a raucous feminist text just as likely to be found stashed under your mother’s bed as on the shelves of the university library. 35 years later, Fear of Flying has firmly established its place within the feminist canon, a beloved text—alongside The Bell Jar, Orlando, and A Room of One’s Own—that challenges its readers through its wit, humor, and sheer force of personality.

On March 28, Barnard College and Columbia University celebrated the Columbia University Library’s acquisition of the Erica Jong papers, hosting a joint conference of scholars, authors, and journalists (including Jong herself) to celebrate the 35th anniversary of Jong’s breakthrough work. The symposium was part of IRWAG’s Feminist Classic series, marking the first of a series of events celebrating the Institute’s 20th anniversary. The issue at stake was precisely this question of canonicity: can a feminist classic be an American classic? Does entry into the canon compromise its subversive characteristics?

As many speakers noted, the risk for Fear of Flying is that its notoriety often precedes the text itself: the novel has increasingly become a pop catchword, a text that everyone knows but which few people actually re-read. Author Min Jin Lee stressed that to read the book in this respect—to read it as a cultural artifact, rather than a living feminist text—is to miss the work’s radical potential. Above all, she insisted, Fear of Flying was notable as one of the first feminist works in which the female protagonist made it out alive. “Letting Isidora live…[killed] the idea of the chaste girl, along with the associated concept of domesticity that goes along with it.”

Shelley Fisher Fishkin, writer and critic at Stanford University, echoed this point enthusiastically, citing the joyful exuberance of Jong’s lead character—evading death, embracing sex—as one of the novel’s lasting contributions to feminist literature. “[Isidora] was a bawdy, Rabelaisian female subject,” Fishkin noted. At a time when female writers were all but nonexistent on university syllabi, she says, Fear of Flying initiated a genre emphasizing earthiness, candor, and honesty, resolutely rejecting the double standard that insisted on women’s texts as narratives of sacrifice and destructive self-sacrifice.

Jong herself envisioned her main character as a figure crossing forcefully over into the (largely male) tradition of political satire. “The greatest achievement would be to write something as good as Gulliver’s Travels—that really scourged the world to bring it to its senses,” she said, recalling her original intentions for the book. In his 1973 review, John Updike described Fear of Flying as a literary cannibal of its time, a “luxurious bloom in the sometimes thistly garden of raised feminist consciousness…that hilariously extends the tradition of Catcher in the Rye and Portnoy’s Complaint.” By bringing raunchy language and frank comedy into the realm of high literature, Jong offered a biting satire of normative gender roles, while at the same time tacitly broadening what a feminist novel might be.

Continued on next page
“How long does it take for something ‘new’ to enter literary history? [How long does it take] to become a classic?” asked Nancy K. Miller, writer and critic at the CUNY Graduate Center. “Jong’s novel was among the first to leave behind a past of female heroines and dead wanderers,” she pointed out. “No, you didn’t have to die of shame or madness or ‘credit card debt,’ as Madame Bovary did. [It was] a conscious rewriting of the heroine disaster plot.”

Many speakers ruefully recalled seeking out “the sex book,” reading Jong’s novel surreptitiously in closets or under parents’ noses. Aoibheann Sweeney, a novelist and director of the CUNY Graduate Center’s Center for the Humanities, described it as a titillating companion text to the bestselling Joy of Sex, and recalled discovering it on her mother’s bedside table. Nancy K. Miller described a common trajectory, encountering it first as a dirty book, then rereading it in the context of Showalter, Butler, Cixous, and other major feminist critics. “As a book of its moment, it is subject to the kind of buffeting that the movement itself is subject to,” she recalled. “It’s very difficult to separate our feelings about the book from our feelings about the movement.”

Fear of Flying emerged at a time when women were dramatically underrepresented within academic and literary circles. Columbia University did not admit female undergraduates until 1983—a point not lost on Jong, who earned her B.A. from Barnard College in 1963 and an M.A. from Columbia’s Graduate School in 1965. Jong herself recalled having low expectations for the novel’s success. “When I wrote Fear of Flying, I didn’t think it would ever be published. It seemed to me it would sell 5000 copies, if that,” she said. At the same time, she noted, this created a certain sense of urgency. “[I felt that] if I didn’t write that book, I would go mad or die—is always a sign that it will be worthwhile.”

The novel’s ability to incite controversy has hardly faded with age. Following the opening panel discussion, Erica Jong’s older sister, Suzanna Mann Daou, spoke out forcefully against what she views as the unnecessary appropriation of family material. “I love Erica very much, [but] Fear of Flying has been a thorn in my flesh,” she said, noting how Jong’s thinly veiled anecdotes—in particular, Isidora’s encounter with a lecherous male relative—frequently painted her own life in Lebanon in a less than flattering context. Citing Jong’s chapter entitled “Arabs and Other Animals,” Mann Daou criticized Fear of Flying for maintaining a double standard: on one hand, critiquing guilt and hypocrisy of the patriarchal framework, while at the same time painting a fairly ugly picture of her Lebanese in-laws. “I forgive Erica,” she said, “but I think people should understand that prejudice has many forms.”

Jong refused to comment on this startling outburst. She did insist, however, that Fear of Flying has become more relevant, not less, in lieu of recent political developments. “Feminism is a wave-like movement, and we’ve just gone through a period when feminism has been retracted,” she argued. “I think we’re going through another period of ferment, and it can’t come soon enough as far as I’m concerned.”

Many of the panelists noted that it will likely be some time before readers are able to separate Jong’s novel from its political context. The novel’s continuing influence stands as an example of what Nancy K. Miller called “the test of the future perfect,” the combination of innovation and tradition which continues to draw readers to Jong’s literary work.

Erica Jong is the author of eight novels and six volumes of poetry. Her most recent book, Seducing the Demon, was published in March 2006. The Erica Jong collection at the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library includes a wide range of unpublished material, including correspondence with John Updike, Henry Miller, and Louis Untermeyer. In addition to material on Jong’s novels, it also includes press materials, poetry, and other work, providing a rich backdrop for scholars interested in pursuing Jong’s work and contemporary feminist criticism in the latter part of the 20th century.
Carol Becker: Educating the Next Generation of Creative People
By Jessica Adler

During a career spanning more than 30 years, Carol Becker, who was appointed the Dean of the School of Arts in June 2007, has acted as a public intellectual, a writer, and an institution-builder.

Those identities, according to Becker, are not mutually exclusive. Administrative work, she says, feeds into her scholarly pursuits: “I’m concerned with building institutional structures to support the well-being of the next generation of artists at every level. It’s about practice and theory, and I learn an enormous amount from being in these roles.”

Becker, whose research interests include American cultural history, feminist theory, South African art and politics, and the education of artists, has a clear idea of the improvements she would like to spearhead at the School of the Arts. “There’s a lot to fix—not with the curriculum, faculty and students, but with the infrastructure of the school,” Becker says.

Economic improvements have top billing on her agenda, including the enhancement of school facilities and increased financial support for students, who, Becker says, are “going in to way too much debt.”

Such efforts will require fundraising campaigns, not to mention a collective effort.

“I don’t think you would be a very good dean if you said, ‘This is what we’re going to do now,’ says Becker. “We have a fantastic faculty and I have a lot to learn from them. I never assume that my own orientation is going to be the orientation of the school I’m the dean of.”

Becker, who earned her B.A. in English from the State University of Buffalo in 1968 and her Ph.D. in English and American Literature from the University of California San Diego in 1975, comes to Columbia from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. During her more than 20 years at the Institute, Becker served as the Dean of Faculty and in various other leadership positions, and helped shape a model curriculum that, she says, aimed to “mirror the art world.”

That is a world Becker became acquainted with following her graduate school years in Southern California, a hotbed of the burgeoning feminist movement. In the mid-1970s, Becker ventured to Chicago and helped lay the groundwork for the creation of “In These Times,” a political weekly newspaper. Drawn back to the academy by a desire to “study things deeply,” Becker became an assistant professor at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1978, where she taught American literature.

“It was perfect for me to be in an art school—it was a creative, wacky intellectual environment; there were no boundaries,” says Becker. “I loved that everyone was working in different forms—printmaking, sculpture, film, installation—and I became enamored with this type of environment.”

After the 1987 publication of her first book, The Invisible Drama: Women and the Anxiety of Change, which explored various sources of female anxiety in a gendered society, Becker retained a political focus while taking on the topics of art and culture. Her subsequent books reflect her leadership experiences in the field of the education of artists, and include: The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility; Zones of Contention: Essays on Art, Institutions, and Gender; and Surpassing the Spectacle: Global Transformations and the Changing Politics of Art. Her forthcoming book, Thinking in Place: Art, Action, and Cultural Production, is due out later this year.

Reflecting on her career, Becker says the unifying theme of her work—both as a public intellectual and administrator—has been “the relationship of the individual to society.” Whether examining women, gender, and leadership, or the societal responsibility of artists, she retains a focus on the “tension and relationship between subjectivity and collectivity.”

Becker, who considers herself an essayist “obsessed with writing,” is the author of many published articles and the recipient of numerous grants and awards. She has served as a resident scholar and visiting professor at various universities and centers, including The Ionian University in Corfu, Greece, the Bau Institute in Otranto, Italy, and the Rockefeller Study Center in Bellagio, Italy.

For now, Becker is focusing her efforts on the School of the Arts in her childhood hometown of New York City. “I believe in creativity, innovation, risk-taking and thought-provoking conversation,” she said. “And I want to see the next generation of creative people really well-educated.”

Carol Becker
By Jessica Adler

The Rising Gender Gap in Educational Attainment: Descriptions and Explanations, Feminist Interventions: Thomas DiPrete

Between 1960 and 2001, the gender gap in American higher education has, in some ways, reversed. These days, more women than men earn college degrees.

The consequences of such a development, and how and why it has occurred, were the subject of an April 7 lecture by Thomas DiPrete, Faculty Fellow in Columbia's Department of Sociology. DiPrete's talk was part of "Feminist Interventions," a public lecture series sponsored by the Institute for Research on Women and Gender intended to generate discussion about interdisciplinary research by Columbia University faculty.

DiPrete used population data from sources such as the United States Census to show that "all over industrialized world, women are increasing their (educational) attainment relative to men."

In 1950, DiPrete said, the odds of a 22-year-old woman completing college were 80 percent of a man's chances of doing so. Additionally, he said, the gender gap increased with age: in 1950, the odds of a 28-year-old woman completing college were only about half of those of a man.

By 1970, the trend had begun to reverse itself, and by 1980, it was erased entirely. In that year, the percentage of women with college degrees surpassed that of men at every age level. Similar advances were evident in comparisons of black females to black males, DiPrete said.

The implications of such data vary depending on a researcher's approach, DiPrete noted: "How the question is framed leads to different debates about answers."

For example, he said, the "female catch-up" model, "might imply discrimination against women by parents, schools, or employers." Furthermore, he said, "stable lags in certain areas may imply persistent socio-cultural disadvantages," and "persistent gendered socio-cultural environments."

The data can also be thought of "in terms of female advantage," according to DiPrete. Such an approach would include questions such as "Do females in the United States have a stronger incentive than males to complete more education?" "Do women have biological advantages over males?" "Are women smarter than men?" "In the absence of discrimination, would they do better than men?"

Trends in educational advancements, DiPrete pointed out, vary according to parents' education. The children of highly educated parents maintained rates of college completion during the last half of the 20th century, while rates of college attendance for male children of families in which the father is not present, or in which the father has a high school education or below, steadily decreased.

Studies have shown that, across the board, girls are "more eager to learn" while "boys have trouble paying attention." While girls used to lag boys in math curriculum, they now take classes of the same difficulty level as their male counterparts and perform equally in subjects such as Chemistry and Biology.

Still, DiPrete noted, at the college level, more women than men major in Humanities subjects, where grades are generally higher than in the "hard sciences." The fact that "grade inflation is stronger in female-dominated majors" and that the "likelihood of finishing college depends on grades" is an active, unresolved issue surrounding the rising gender gap, DiPrete said.

Finally, DiPrete attempted to postulate some reasons for the phenomenon. "The obvious explanation"—the changing labor market—"turns out to be wrong," he said. "Deindustrialization in the United States has led to a dramatic increase in the value of a college education, but the number of males and females in higher education has risen "in tandem" DiPrete said.

But, he argued, "the incentives for women to get higher education has risen faster for women than men." In other words, the value of education on a woman's standard of living relative to a man's has changed differentially. Simultaneously, restraints on a woman's ability to complete college, DiPrete said, have decreased.

The notion of education being seen as a bar to marriage for women has "turned around in the last 20 to 30 years," he said. Many marriage rates of women with college education are higher than ever.

Furthermore, he suggested, rising numbers of women with college degrees are a correlate of higher divorce rates: "The best insurance one can have against falling into poverty or near poverty following a divorce is education."

DiPrete's respondent, Geraldine Downey, professor and chair of the department of psychology, and vice provost for diversity initiatives, wondered whether the research indicated that boys were at an educational disadvantage. Arguing that middle school is academically challenging time for boys, and a socially challenging time for girls, she asked whether boys and girls could fare better if they were separated by sex in primary schools.

Simply put, DiPrete said, single sex schools might benefit girls, but not boys. "Women do better in environments with more women," said DiPrete. "It's ironic and interesting that the same kind of thing appeared in the context of male disadvantage; the more girls that are in the classroom, the better boys do."

Following DiPrete's lecture, audience members inquired about the fact that annual salaries of women remain below parity with those of men and discussed the dearth of social policies geared at maternity leave and child care.

DiPrete noted that his research reveals that "There are large parts of the educational system where women are not at a disadvantage." But, he maintained, "That doesn't mean to say there isn't a need to maintain a focus on places where there still is a disadvantage," such as lower comparative salaries prevalent in female-dominated professions. "The interesting question is," he said, "Where does the advantage end?"
Caryl Churchill’s Top Girls
On Broadway and at Columbia

By Katie Gradowski

Caryl Churchill has never been shy about tweaking her art with politics. Taking on colonial politics in her breakthrough work Cloud 9, the Romanian Revolution in her 1990 play Mad Forest, and most recently, Anglo-American relations in the post-9/11 satire Drunk Enough to Say I Love You, Churchill has a penchant for addressing hot-button political topics with wildly experimental drama. Her 1982 play Top Girls was no exception; as a bittersweet postcard (more bitter than sweet) to the Margaret Thatcher administration, the play launched a scathing scrutiny of go-getter feminism, criticizing Thatcher’s brazenly careerist model for its blindness to social inequities among middle and working-class women.

Top Girls enjoyed an eight-week revival at the Biltmore Theater this spring under the direction of frequent Churchill collaborator James Macdonald, featuring an all-star cast including Marisa Tomei, Martha Plimpton, Mary Beth Hurt and Jennifer Ikeda. As part of its ongoing Feminist Classics series, IRWaG hosted a panel discussion entitled “Top Girls: Caryl Churchill and Feminist Performance” to explore the continued relevance of this central feminist text.

As moderator Jean Howard pointed out, Churchill’s work has dramatically increased in popularity since its publication in 1982, with three separate productions produced this year alone. If the growing popularity of Churchill’s work speaks to its resonance; it also begs the question of how well it stands up to translation. “Top Girls [was] a response to aggressive privatization and individualism,” noted Howard. To what extent does the original work—a socialist response to mid-1980’s British conservatism—hold up as a feminist classic today?

In brief, the play follows Marlene, a successful manager at the “Top Girls” employment agency, as she struggles to penetrate the glass ceiling without compromising her own morals and integrity. Marlene largely fails in this endeavor—what she succeeds in doing, by contrast, is embracing an aggressive (and deeply masculine) mindset to claw her way to the top. Top Girls champions Churchill’s socialist values by flaunting social realism, opting instead for absurdity, fantasy, and a healthy dose of satirical wit. Top Girls introduces us to Marlene (the title character) as she celebrates her new position as managing director of the “Top Girls” employment agency with a host of historical and fictional “Top Girls”: Dull Gret, a character out of a Brueghel painting; Pope Joan, Catholic saint and martyr; a thirteenth century Japanese concubine, and others.

As many critics have noted, Churchill’s experimental aesthetics—her fragmented dialogue, her tendency to mix and match characters—often goes hand-in-hand with an oddly earnest political platform. While the play begins with a radical feminist homage to “Top Girls” of all stripes, it ends with a gripping depiction of those who are left behind, its lofty experimentalism giving way to a realistic dramatization of working-class conditions in the second and third sections of the play. Here, the emphasis is less on Marlene than on her sister, Joyce, a single mother struggling to raise Marlene’s daughter as the latter goes off to succeed in the working world.

The risk of creating something so overtly political, of course, is that what is radical one day can be quickly transformed into historical artifact. Barnard professor Shawn-Marie Garrett stressed this point, noting that Top Girls emerged out of Churchill’s association with Monstrous Regiment, a pro-feminist, pro-collectivist organization in the mid-1970s. By contrast, she argued, the 2008 revival emerges out of a “post-feminist” moment, appealing to an audience of third-wave feminists and interpreted by actors with little connection to the show’s original materialist and social context. The play’s resonance as a feminist text, she emphasized, remains contingent on its successful re-interpretation within this “post-feminist” moment, a process that Garrett felt was clearly threatened by the encroaching commercialism of the 2008 revival.

If Garrett stressed the importance of context, Elin Diamond, of Rutgers, pointed to Churchill’s broad transmissibility, and her ability to transcend a limited historical framework. While its politics clearly emerge out of a given historical moment, she argued, Top Girls staunchly resisted the identitarian politics of the day. “There is no feminist in my plays,” she recalls Churchill saying of her own work. Instead, Top Girls uses cross-cutting and time variation to reframe the play as a dramatic puzzle, unfixing and interrupting the historical markers that attempt link the play to its original political context. This ambiguity allowed...
Undergraduate News

By Katie Gradowski

IRWaG Essay Prize Winners

Every year, IRWaG awards prizes to outstanding essays in queer and feminist theory. This year’s Queer Studies Prize was awarded to graduating senior Daniel Altabef for his essay “Private Sex—Public Performance.” Senior Emma Kaufman won the inaugural Women’s and Gender Studies Award for her essay “The Politics of Feeling: Bodies at the Intersection of Philosophy and Feminist Theory.” Kaufman and Altabef met with Feminist News to discuss their research, their work with IRWaG, and their future plans in women’s and gender studies.

Emma Kaufman

(Philosophy and Women’s and Gender Studies, ’08)

*Title:* The Politics of Feeling: Bodies at the Intersection of Philosophy and Feminist Theory

*Summary:* Kaufman’s thesis explored the relationship between ethics and embodiment in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler. Taking as her starting point Merleau-Ponty’s notion of attunement, Kaufman traced the concept of embodiment through Levinas’ ethical framework into Butler’s model of performativity, exploring how conceptions of the body (as it relates to affect and perception) prompt us to reconsider feeling as an ethical imperative in contemporary feminist theory.

FN: Can you give a brief overview of your paper? What was the basic idea behind your project?

EK: I looked at the relationship between conceptions of embodiment and ethics in the work of three philosophers, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Judith Butler. I was interested in how a particular understanding of the body—of how our bodies shape experience—affects a normative ethical framework. So on a large scale, this was a project about the exchange between metaphysics and ethics. Getting more specific, it became about how a feminist ethic informs and is informed by a phenomenologist picture of the body.

FN: What led you to choose this topic?

EK: The philosophers, really. I was completely taken by Merleau-Ponty’s work on embodiment, first because of his prose, and then because his ideas seemed like they would take real flight in a feminist frame. Levinas added the ethical part of the story a bit later, about half a year into thinking about my thesis. It was when I started reading Levinas that I realized this would be a paper about ethics. So it unfolded slowly, from Merleau-Ponty’s writing, a commitment to asking feminist questions, and a lucky discovery of Levinas’ essay “Meaning and Sense.”

FN: Can you give a brief summary of your argument?

EK: I can try! The argument works on two levels. The first is about the interaction between my disciplines. On that level, the argument is that we need to be asking feminist questions about gender and race if we’re going to do ontology at all, which I’m not convinced we should be. The second level of this paper—and ultimately, the more interesting one—is about Judith Butler’s theory of performativity. I advocate a re-reading of Butler that emphasizes the affective element of performativity. This shifts the frame of a normative ethic. The project becomes performing

Senior Theses Presentations

IRWaG and Barnard Women’s Studies majors work all senior year to produce a senior thesis on their topic of choice. They meet together in Barnard and Columbia senior seminars and they present their theses publically at the end of the year. On May 7, 2008, 7 majors presented their theses to a lively audience of fellow students, faculty and family members. Three Columbia majors were among them.

Paula Cheng

“Work-life Balance in Corporate America: Are Work-life Balance Programs Feminist?”

Paula Cheng’s thesis addressed an ongoing concern for feminist scholars and activists: namely, how are women doing in the workplace? A graduating senior in Women’s Studies, she looked at the success of work-life balance programs that aim to facilitate women’s advancement in the corporate world. “Many corporations have always painted a perfect picture...” Cheng explained. “They offer work-life balance programs and how they are able to retain many happy female employees,” she explained. “I wanted to see if they really do work for women.”

Work-life programs refer to a host of initiatives—including part-time work options, flex time, maternity leave, and child care referral services—that allow women to continue working despite changing life circumstances like pregnancy and childbirth. Cheng noted that these programs are still relatively scarce in the corporate world, and that little research exists to test their overall effectiveness. To help remedy this gap, she compared work-life balance programs at two large corporations, Xerox and IBM, both of which actively use their work-life balance programs to recruit female employees.

For Cheng, a key issue was whether these programs actively worked to facilitate women’s advancement in the workplace. “I came up with a set of criteria to determine whether [these] programs are feminist,” Cheng explained. To qualify, “the program [had to] further the goal of increasing the number of breaking glass ceilings [and enabling] equal access to pay and career opportunities.” Cheng’s conclusions were encouraging: at both Xerox and IBM, she found that work-life balance programs largely corresponded with higher numbers of women in executive positions. “Both programs have resulted in a high number of women within the ranks,” she said. “They offer work-life balance programs that seem to really benefit women.”

At the same time, she pointed out, there is room for improvement. Although women now
help spread the word

IRWaG offers Ph.D. students the opportunity to earn a certificate in women’s studies. Two courses are required as part of the certificate, so interested students should register their intention to pursue the certificate while doing coursework.

Professors: please tell your students about it.

Students: please contact the Director of Graduate Studies, Alice Kessler-Harris, ak571@columbia.edu, for more information, or visit www.columbia.edu/cu/irwag/programs/main/graduate/

Graduate News
By Jess Fenn and Jenny James

IRWaG Graduate Colloquium
2007–2008 Events

This academic year witnessed an expansion of the IRWaG Graduate Colloquium into a dynamic collaborative environment for graduate students. IRWaG Graduate Fellows Jess Fenn, Melissa Gonzalez, Jenny James, and Sara Kile served as co-organizers of the Colloquium. Thanks to Graduate Director Sharon Marcus’s important initiative to expand graduate student programming in the Institute, the Colloquium gained more support and interest from faculty and students alike. Additional thanks to Marianne Hirsch for her leadership, and especially to Pagé Jackson and Vina Tran, without whom none of this could have happened.

Over the course of the year, the Graduate Fellows worked to offer a breadth of activities, including workshops focusing on professional advancement and academic requirements such as oral examinations and dissertation chapter and prospectus writing. In addition to more practical service to the graduate community, the Colloquium also presented two sessions on current topics in gender and sexuality studies, the largest of which was an Interdisciplinary Faculty Panel in March. The Colloquium started off the Fall semester with an IRWaG Graduate Information Session, which drew an unprecedented number of graduate students from many disciplines who plan to pursue gender and sexuality-related work. Graduate Director Sharon Marcus spoke about the Certificate in Feminist Studies, and three graduate students who have earned the certificate described their experiences and took questions from attendees. The information session also introduced students to IRWaG’s Feminist Pedagogy course, Teaching Fellowships, and the activities of the Graduate Colloquium. In November, the Colloquium held a session on Reading in New Scholarship, and met to discuss Lee Edelman’s No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive. In this radical work, called a “polemic” by the author himself, Edelman addresses the “reproductive futurism” inherent in mainstream political discourse and argues that the potential of queer oppositional politics lies in its future-negating figure of the death drive.

We began the Spring term with a Dissertation Prospectus Workshop in early February, led by Sharon Marcus, which was specifically intended for graduate students planning to write their prospectuses in the coming year. Professor Marcus discussed the basics of prospectus-writing, as well as how to incorporate gender and sexuality into the disciplinary prospectus. In addition to this overview, the group workshoped prospectuses by two students who had recently defended them. Julie Golia acted as a respondent for Jenny James’ prospectus for the Department of English and Comparative Literature, and Melissa Gonzalez responded to Carolyn Johnson’s prospectus for Teacher’s College. In March, the Colloquium organized an interdisciplinary faculty conversation entitled “Speaking the Body,” with Jenny Davidson (English), Geraldine Downey (Psychology), Coco Fusco (Spanish and Portuguese), Eugenia Lean (East Asian Languages and Cultures), and Beth Povinelli (Anthropology). The speakers addressed a range of topics, including the significance of the body as a site of meaning, the body’s potential for interdisciplinary analysis, the boundaries of the body, the role of medical discourse and technology in the conceptualization of the body, and whether the human body is always already gendered. This panel drew a number of new faces to the Institute and was a wonderful way to bring about conversation across so many different disciplines and areas of specialization within the field of gender studies. Finally, in April, the Colloquium held a Dissertation Chapter Workshop, where we workshoped chapters by Derrick Higginbotham (English) and Nadia Guessous (Anthropology). Jess Fenn and Lisa Estreich acted as discussants for the chapters. To suggest ideas for future events or to request additional information and notices of upcoming events, please email the Graduate Fellows at irwag@columbia.edu.

IRWaG Graduate Fellows
2008–2009

Musa Gurnis
Sherally Munshi
Ariel Rubin
Lisa Uperesa

IRWaG Graduate Colloquium presents:
Speaking the BODY
An Interdisciplinary discussion featuring:
Jenny Davidson (English)
Geraldine Downey (Psychology)
Coco Fusco (Spanish and Portuguese)
Eugenia Lean (East Asian Languages and Cultures)
Beth Povinelli (Anthropology)

March 7th, 4–6 pm
614 Schermerhorn Hall
New Center Launches with “Rites of Return” Symposium

For scholars working in critical theory, conducting research in a global context increasingly means stepping outside the boundaries of programs dedicated to the particularized study of race, gender, and ethnicity and into the realm of interdisciplinary and intersectional work. More and more, theorists and historians are challenging what it means to pursue cultural research within discrete disciplinary boundaries, opting instead for collaborative work that studies particular problems within a wider social or cultural frame of reference.

This spring, IRWaG proudly participated in the launch of the Center for the Critical Analysis of Social Difference (CCASD), an interdisciplinary center for advanced study with a global agenda. Spearheaded by IRWaG in conjunction with Institute for Research in African-American Studies, the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society and the Barnard Center for Research on Women, CCASD aims to explore crucial issues of inequality and social difference, connecting scholars, artists and practitioners across a range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. The goal, according to IRWaG director Marianne Hirsch, is to provide a collaborative and interdisciplinary space that allows center fellows to meet and share ideas on race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity with an eye to their broad historical precedents and transnational manifestations.

The launch of CCASD was announced as part of a symposium entitled “Rites of Return: Poetics and Politics” bringing together a diverse group of scholars, writers, and artists to address the current interest in origin, genealogy and cultural memory. Collaboratively sponsored by Columbia and the CUNY Graduate Center, the symposium spanned two days and covered a wide range of topics, from sites of return and the new tourism to identity politics in the age of DNA. Speakers traced some of the obsession with return to the ubiquity of the internet and the wealth of information now available on lost or abandoned sites. Writers Daniel Mendelson, Saidiyah Hartman and Eva Hoffman discussed their memoirs of return, and photographers Susan Meiselas, Keith Calhoun and Chandra McCormick showed the images through which they documented traumatic histories in Nicaragua and New Orleans. From these rites of return, the conference turned to issues of rights of return in Israel/Palestine with the keynote address by journalist and writer Amira Hass.

In initiating CCASD “[we were] looking at how scholars focus on the intersections of contemporary problems, and coming up with solutions to those problems comparatively and transhistorically,” said founding director Jean Howard. The goal was “to look at how present problems are illuminated by thinking comparatively, thinking across national borders.”

Unlike other programs of this type—many of which are focused on graduate or undergraduate education—CCASD fosters advanced scholarship, hosting faculty workshops and sponsoring ongoing multi-year projects. “[We] had for a long time felt the need for a place for faculty to share their work, where it would nurture them,” Howard explains.

The Center is currently sponsoring four new multi-year projects, all of which touch on issues addressed in the symposium. Anthropology professors Claudio Lomnitz and Beth Povinelli are launching a three-year project entitled “Borders and Boundaries” that explores the hardening ethnic tensions between the United States, Mexico, and Central America (also France and the Middle East) at a time when national boundaries are becoming increasingly permeable. Other topics include a project on Black Women’s Intellectual History, as well as an ongoing project on neoliberalism and social difference as it relates to global reform movements.

Looking ahead to the fall semester, CCASD has a series of events on the horizon, including a fall conference for the “Borders and Boundaries” project, ongoing discussions on the black women’s history (directed by Farah Jasmine Griffin and Mia Bay) and frequent public talks relating to essays and works in progress. One significant area of research focuses on “Engendering the Archive,” an ongoing project that will gather an active working group of scholars, artists and archivists to examine how archives are created and authorized, and how issues in gender, sexuality, and race are imprinted on the physical and ideological structures of memory. Directed by Saidiya Hartman, Jean Howard, and Marianne Hirsch, the project will host talks in conjunction with CCASD and IRWaG throughout the upcoming semester.

For information on these and other events, check the IRWaG website periodically for updates. For more information on upcoming events of CCASD, check their website at socialdifference.org.
Legacies, Continued from Page 2

the radicalism of their youth; others had professionalized their politics, still working as activists or feminist writers. Arranged and moderated by Louise Yelin, professor at SUNY Purchase, the discussion served as a reunion of sorts—a feature that was hard to miss, given the heady tension in the room. The room buzzed with anticipation, as old friends greeted one another, fists raised, to relive the glory days of an older, more revolutionary time.

For many, the Columbia protests suggest a less cynical period of political involvement, taking place eight days before Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated and a month before student strikes and protests swept the Sorbonne in Paris. They stand as a unique moment of political solidarity, a time when white students joined together with Black Power protesters, when Barnard women joined the (at that point) largely male constituency of the Student Democratic Society to occupy campus buildings.

At the same time, the protests revealed deep rifts between constituencies on the Columbia campus. The Harlem issue, in particular, divided the student body; black protesters from Hamilton Hall expelled white protesters, and many students launched counter-protests (at times, verging on violent) in opposition to the student strikes. Many of the panelists questioned whether the protests had been successful in its goals, voicing skepticism—if not outright disappointment—at the long-term success of the 1968 protests.

For the most part, though, the panel captured a lost sense of hope and anticipation, a sense that it was still possible to take to the streets, even if it was just for old time’s sake. This sense of nostalgia was palpable in the room, mixed at various points with equal parts skepticism and excitement. Mostly, though, it was mixed with optimism, as the panelists spoke to the lasting impact of 1968, the incendiary issues of the time, and how those issues continued to shape their lives today.

Elizabeth Diggs
Playwright, Associate Professor of Dramatic Writing, New York University

“In 1968, I was a Ph.D. candidate in comparative literature here. I was dazed, confused, depressed, and divorced. I wanted to be a playwright but I couldn’t figure out how to do that. So I opted for studying dramatic literature here in a gigantic department that was churning out dozens of Ph.D.s for jobs that didn’t exist, and that I didn’t want.” Diggs recalls walking across campus with Sharon Olds in 1968 and seeing a group of SDS students [members of the Student Democratic Society] walking in a circle. “I turned to Sharon and said ‘Oh my god, what do we do?’ and Sharon said, ‘We join the line.’” Diggs recalls the event somewhat ruefully, saying “Thank god for that moment, thank god for Sharon. I was 29 years old and SDS had just decreed that anyone over 30 shouldn’t be listened to.”

Sharon Olds
Poet and Professor of Creative Writing, New York University

While Sharon Olds recalled that particular memory with glee, her own recollections of spring 1968 were also compromised by her changing situation. A self-described activist since the age of 14, Olds described the uprising as a bittersweet moment of closure. “The issue that night had to do with the citizens living in the neighborhood being able to cross back and forth on the campus,” she recalls. “Looking up at the stars, I realized that I was pregnant—it was the end of my involvement in an active way that could get me arrested.”

Grace “Linda” LeClair
Co-founder of Calvert Social Investment fund and Executive Director
NARAL Pro-Choice New Hampshire

Grace LeClair’s expulsion from Barnard marked a turning point in the 1968 protests, providing an important avenue for female students to voice their anger over the broad gender disparities between Barnard and Columbia students. LeClair recalls the experience being sequestered at an all-girl’s college while anti-war protests were raging across the street: “They locked us in at 4:30pm on a Sunday afternoon—because we didn’t yet know where it was safe to go.” In March 1968, LeClair was “outed” by a New York Times article on student cohabitation and put on trial for having lived with her then-boyfriend in off-campus housing. The case became a substantial media event, and LeClair was alternatively lionized and vilified for her role in the scandal. LeClair was suspended from campus events and later dropped out of the College; her boyfriend suffered no such consequences and successfully graduated from Columbia shortly thereafter.

Recalling the negative press coverage, LeClair points out that being known as “the sex girl” has both positive and negative effects. “It helped me to understand this sense of objectification—how inconveniently disconnected this is from our identity.” After thirty years, she argues, this sense of self-awareness is an important lesson she’s taken from the event. “That’s the gift of that experience for me, [and] what I’ve tried to pass on in the best way that I can….that sense of being used as an object for some purpose, rather than being free, rather

“...the poems from our identity.” After thirty years, she

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than being able to choose….That’s what we share with people who have different struggles, [not just] with the women’s struggle.”

Rosalyn Baxendall
Chair of American Studies and
Distinguished Teaching Professor,
SUNY College at Old Westbury
In 1968, Rosalyn Baxendall was a sociology graduate student at Columbia, working on a doctoral program while nursing a one-month old child. She recalls taking frequent breaks to breastfeed in Fayerweather while attending debates and walk-outs, as part of a broader effort to include a women’s liberation course in the Columbia program. The petition was ultimately successful, with Baxendall tapped to teach the women’s course. The class often included a rotating stream of visitors, with different people dropping into the course every day.

For Baxendall, teaching the course was a personal revelation. “I realized that I knew very little about women’s history, and that I wanted to know more…I consider it the beginning of my teaching career—because I realized how little I knew.”

Catharine Stimpson
Dean, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences,
New York University
Catharine Stimpson credits the protests of 1968 with launching a decisive pattern of political change. “Teacher’s College, Barnard, the College of Social Work [were all] spaces of alternative energy,” she recalls. Stimpson herself saw the results of this energy first-hand, having taught the first black literature course at Barnard, followed shortly thereafter by the first Women’s Studies course. Neither of these would have happened, she stressed, were it not for the radical events of spring 1968.

Ti-Grace Atkinson
Feminist Activist and Author
Looking back on her graduate education, Ti-Grace Atkinson describes years at Columbia with light-hearted chagrin. “The philosophy department made me a radical feminist,” she recalls. “The sexism was unbelievable, especially coming from an undergraduate [program] in art history.” She recalls the 1968 protests as a moment of social and academic cataclysm—not only challenging the university’s administrative policies, but also fundamentally attempting to change the outlook of the department itself. “In the philosophy department, we voted that no philosopher should be taught whose work did not apply now.” She laughs as she retells the story. “This really shocked the faculty, who viewed politics as being ahistorical, not useful.”

For Atkinson, what is striking about the events of 1968 was the degree to which sex and sexuality came to stand for other issues. “The two big issues in the women’s movement were abortion and lesbianism,” she recalls. “These appear to be sexual issues, but I don’t think they really are. The abortion issue was about women being abandoned, broke, in desperate need of help….It was a kind of terrorism. Even if it wasn’t happening to you, you knew it was happening to your kind.” What impressed her about the strikes at Columbia, she recalls, was the emphasis on democratic action. “At the time, students and women had been infantilized…[we needed] these hierarchies in order to be told what to do….We saw it as a goal of women’s groups to break this down through participatory democracy.”

In a rare breach of solidarity, Atkinson took issue with Stimpson’s rosy characterization of the movement’s success. “In the history of the women’s movement, you notice that women usually get going when there is a lot of ferment preceding it—it opens up the air…but what about the 30 or 40 years in between? How do you maintain enough momentum to consolidate those gains?” She described this, quite frankly, as the problem of permanent revolution. “If you’re going to be in a permanent state, pressing for change, that’s going to interfere with that picture. How do you get around that? I think we’ve lost ground, and if we have to reinvent the wheel every time, I don’t see how we’re going to get there.”

Christine Clark-Evans
Associate Professor of French,
Penn State University
In the midst of disagreement and heady nostalgia, one speaker offered a measured summary of the events of 1968. Speaking from prepared notes, Christine Clark-Evans recalled the uprising with eloquent brevity. “What were the feminist legacies of 1968? I consider them more than the outnumbered and shouted women at CU and Barnard—more than that, Barnard Women of Color risked arrest, beatings, ostracism, and professional futures, and they risked them for the defense of the black communities of Harlem and oppressed people of color elsewhere.”

Evans was the only one of the few speakers to link the feminist cause to the broader series of racial, class-based, and political issues that swept Columbia that year, a controversial point that is often overlooked in retrospective discussions of the protests. Stressing that the movement was hardly an isolated one, Evans linked the feminist cause at Barnard with broader issues: the ecological movement, the anti-war movement, and the movement for civil rights, to name just a few. Her comments resonated with an overarching concern in the discussion: the question of whether the 1968 protests actually succeeded in fostering a broader coalition for social change between men and women, between black students and white students, and between the older generation of feminist activists (the 1968 generation) and their younger counterparts at Columbia today.

This latter issue seemed particularly relevant in the panel discussion, which took place in a room filled largely by members of an older generation. Amidst the sea of gray and graying heads, it was easy to imagine that 1968 was indeed little more than a transient historical moment. One current student in attendance—a graduate student at the Columbia business school—stood up to voice this concern, noting the pervasive question—“What can we do now?”—that often plagues young feminists today. Today’s generation of feminists, she pointed out, often feel alienated and set apart from the radical legacy of the 1968 generation, and tend to be unsure of how to apply these principles within a contemporary context, where the political lines are rarely so clearly drawn.

For Evans, the 1968 uprising remains a cause for optimism. She recalls it as a time when “Barnard women found their voice in solidarity with others,” extending a feminist program to incorporate a broader platform of dignity and social justice. Feminism exists today, she argues, “because we dared to go beyond the bequeathed legacy [in favor of] the one that we claim now, when we stand for feminist principles through action in public and private life.”
IRWaG Travel Grant Awards

IRWaG is pleased to announce a new opportunity for graduate students. Students doing the IRWaG certificate can apply for small matching travel grants to conferences in which they plan to give a paper on gender/sexuality/feminist theory.

Travel grants were awarded to Sara Kile, Sherally Munshi, Ariel Rubin, and Christine Varnado. Awards will be given on a rolling basis, so please apply as soon as your paper has been accepted. IRWaG awards will be matched by GSAS. For more information, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies, Alice Kessler-Harris, ak571@columbia.edu, or visit the GSAS website, www.columbia.edu/cu/gsas/pages/cstudents/std-ser/trv-grts/

The evening’s final two speakers maintained a focus on the notion of how gendered norms are rendered in health and society. Theresa Exner, an Assistant Professor of Medical Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia, presented study findings on why the female condom “is still sitting on the shelf” as rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections remain high. The female condom offers women a unique opportunity to be in control yet it is largely un-prescribed through clinics and rarely discussed by practitioners and patients. Exner presented the results of her National Institutes of Mental Health-funded study, which aimed to increase awareness of the female condom.

Dr. Jennifer Hirsch, Associate Professor of Sociomedical Sciences at the Mailman School of Public Health and the Interdisciplinary Research Methods Core Co-Director at the HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies, discussed her research on the intersection of love, marriage, and HIV in rural Mexico. Through interviews and field work focusing on the impetus behind and characteristics of sex outside of marriage, Hirsch found, “extramarital sex is a fundamental element of social organization; not a product of individual moral failings, and not a product of uncontrollable male urges.” Hirsch’s research is part of a collaborative, multi-national study, which also features research conducted in Papa New Guinea, Vietnam, Nigeria and Uganda. All five sites, she said, are united by three concepts: the presence of an “extra-marital opportunity structure,” such as a vast migrant labor force; “the idea that there are spaces that incite extra-marital sex” (in rural Mexico, public plazas and strip clubs served as such spaces); and a discrepancy between “social risk” and “viral risk” associated with extra-marital sex.

Hirsch said her work focuses on the goals of both men and women, and emphasizes the notion that “men also have gender.” As a public health scholar, she tries to avoid focusing too heavily “between the knees and the belly button,” and attempts to go beyond the common representation of women as victims, which, she said, “obscures (their) sexuality and social agency.” In so doing, she—like Bates, Chavkin, and Exner—presents a multi-dimensional overview of the intersection of the physical, the historical, and the ideological.

Top Girls, Continued from Page 8

Churchill to create “metaphors instead of identities,” Diamond argued, giving her free rein to play within a given set of political constructs without limiting it to a particular time and place.

Many of the panelists questioned the use of big-name actresses in the revival, arguing that the use of celebrity stars—in particular, American actresses like Marisa Tomei—ultimately detracted from the egalitarian framework that Churchill sought to promote. Garrett, in particular, pointed out the marked contrast between the glitzy revival and the original production, which emerged out of a collective political project (the Monstrous Regiment) that emphasized collaboration over individual star power at every turn.

In a refreshing turn away from politics, Joseph Roach, of Yale, took a more textual approach, looking at Churchill’s use of double plots as a counterpoint to the well-made play—the linear/progressive plot development of crisis and denouement (and which has typically been aligned with the male sexual response). Churchill’s play, he argued, offers a much more complicated framework, providing numerous of entry, more nodal points, effectively situating its feminist critique at the level of form as well as content.

While the jury is still out on the transmissibility of Top Girls’ political message, the critical consensus on the revival was overwhelmingly positive. Reviewers have consistently praised Macdonald’s sensitive direction, proffering widespread acclaim for the cast of celebrity actresses. Above all, its success speaks to the ongoing resonance of Churchill’s work, and its continued appeal to feminist and mainstream audiences alike.
Prizes, Continued from Page 9

feeling toward others as an ethical and political stance, exploring how norms of behavior take root in how we feel, and, to return to philosophy, performing feeling in an attempt to displace an autonomous notion of the self. So the intervention is about how we do philosophy, and about feminists’ emphasis (for me, overemphasis) on the discursive.

FN: What makes this a political project, in your mind?

EK: The third chapter of my thesis is a critique of the discipline of philosophy—how philosophers talk about topics like embodiment without talking about gender. That critique crystallizes in the Butler section, not surprisingly, as she becomes a figurehead for this debate. Philosophers have real concerns about things getting muddled or overblown by politics, and gender studies has real concerns going the other way. My thesis works with both.

FN: What is the major intervention you see this paper making?

EK: I started with Merleau-Ponty because I knew that he would straddle philosophy and feminism, and that there were gaps to follow in his work. Merleau-Ponty does political theory (and aesthetics), but it’s not particularly engaged with his metaphysics. That didn’t make sense to me, because his metaphysics struck me as inherently political.

I remember being surprised that Merleau-Ponty wasn’t drawing the political conclusions that seemed to be jumping off his pages. So I looked at two of the most prominent feminist critics of Merleau-Ponty, Irigaray and Levinas. I decided not to follow the sexual difference vein of Irigaray’s critique, which made Levinas the obvious choice. And as I read, I became completely entrenched in his ethical framework. That’s when my thesis became about ethics—it didn’t start out about ethics.

Danny Altabef
(American Studies ‘08)

Title: Private Sex/Public Performance

Summary: Altabef’s thesis examines the relationship between sexuality and citizenship, using Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s notion of triangulation to discuss how non-normative sex (gay or otherwise) is consistently privatized and consigned to the private sphere. Major topics include the Larry Craig scandal, the U.S. military’s policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” and the ongoing debate over gay marriage as it has developed over the past ten years.

FN: Your thesis explores a similar set of issues, but in a very different context. What were major problems that you were interested in addressing in your paper?

DA: I was interested in the contemporary moment as it relates to a lot of the things that I was studying in critical and queer theory. I was reading a lot of Eve Sedgwick—I’m really interested in the issue of closet and homosociality, and I was seeing all of these things happening in the contemporary moment that intersected her two founding works. I wanted to move it out of the English novel paradigm and go into something that’s consistent with more recent queer theory, which is talking about society, cultural studies, etc.

FN: What contemporary issues drew you to this project?

DA: I’ve always been really critical of identity politics as a notion in itself, especially after 1979, when it became clear that there were particular pitfalls with preserving notions of subjectivity. I wanted to know, since sodomy isn’t illegal and strides are being “made,” what are the consequences and advantages of these things? I saw that certain things, certain freedoms were being granted, and I wanted to know, under what auspices are they being granted?

What I argue is that gender performance is becoming increasingly important in promoting a certain understanding of national membership that subordinates sexuality and must be consistent with a particular sexuality. Gender norms are inevitably patriarchal. There are often critiques within queer theory of gay rights movements, and how they ignore the inherent patriarchy and inherent whiteness of those things. I wanted to extend that critique further into more concrete examples after 2003.

FN: One of the things you talk about is the intense privatization of sexuality in contemporary political discourse. What is at stake, for you, when pleasure is confined to the private sphere?

DA: I think implicit in the consignment of pleasure to the private sphere is its correlation with a certain normative gender performance. Pleasure can only be discussed or understood in terms of its normative consistency with something else. Clearly Larry Craig: given the state’s assumption of what he wanted to do, you have this moment where he taps his foot, and that gesture toward that pleasure is seen as criminal. The proximity to pleasure seems so remote that we can’t even approach it.

FN: It seems like there are really two parts to your argument—the first, consigning pleasure to the private sphere, but also the mandated moment of confession, where confession is normalized and depoliticized. What is your sense of how those two work in tandem with one another?

DA: Well, confession is inherently subordination, right? The fact that the only requirement of sexual disclosure resides in non-normative sexuality—you don’t have to confess to being heterosexual. Therefore, when you can make that confession, you’re subordinating yourself to a heterosexual example. That’s how they’re related, I think, because there’s a subordination of certain sexual practices, which also desexualizes it.

FN: (to both Kaufman and Altabef) How do you see these projects overlapping? What issues do they have in common?

EK: They’re both very Foucauldian. For me, it became a move toward how we do theory, and an emphasis on affect. Literature is maybe one of the places where affect can work—where affect bubbles up and starts making sense (or nonsense) of these normative narratives. It’s sort of the obvious place to go, and I think it makes a lot of sense for both of us.

DA: I think one of the things we both found is that it’s very hard to write about affect, because your realize that there are certain places that have yet to be explored—and that exploration is really exciting. Pleasure falls into the realm of affect, and both of us recognize that and are wary of that in a way.

Emma Kaufman will be studying criminology and criminal justice at Oxford University next year on a Marshall Scholarship. Daniel Altabef will be working as a paralegal at a law firm this year. He hopes to pursue graduate work in English or History, with a focus on gender and sexuality studies.
constitute 46% of the workforce, their earning power still lags behind men, in part due to the pervasive difficulty of balancing work and life choices. Cheng stressed the need for continued vigilance in this regard. “More feminist work-life balance programs should be implemented,” Cheng noted. “There is definitely more work that needs to be done.”

Grace Iona A. Jama-Adan

Grace Jama-Adan looked closely at the rise of women’s health initiatives during World War II, examining how federally funded nursing programs helped to promote “self-help” practices a full 30 years before the term would be popularized by the feminist movement. “The primary responsibility of the female public health nurses during World War II was to save domestic health here on the home front,” Jama-Adan writes. In response to widespread concerns over disease outbreaks on the home front, the federal government educated thousands of U.S. Cadet nurses, sending them into American homes to educate the public about cancer, sexually transmitted diseases, and other domestic public health issues.

“...The 1970’s served as the peak of widespread self-help practices, when many American women gave other women abortions and vaginal examinations within the confines of the home.” Jama-Adan notes. “My goal [was] to demonstrate that practices mirroring self-help existed before the 1970’s, in the form of health education given to public health nurses employed by the federal government.”

As Jama-Adan points out, these programs also played a key role in bringing women into the medical workforce, educating them in disease prevention and treatment services. Particularly through the U.S. Nurse Cadet program, she argues, these practices cemented the concept of women’s health not only as domestic practice, but also as a viable professional avenue for women within the medical field.

Grace Jama-Adan is entering a graduate program in public health at Emory University.

Emma Kaufman
“The Politics of Feeling: Bodies at the Intersection of Philosophy and Feminist Theory”

Emma Kaufman described her senior thesis as the culmination of a four-year process, begun in the fall of her freshman year. “As a double major in philosophy and women’s and gender studies, I spent the better part of four years trying to reconcile feminist critiques of the subject with the potential for a normative ethical frame for relations between selves and others.”

The result of this process is her senior thesis, a three-way conversation that explores conceptions of embodiment and ethics in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Judith Butler. In particular, Kaufman’s paper examines how a feminist ethic informs and is informed by a phenomenologist critique of the body, tracing a trajectory from Merleau-Ponty’s notion of attunement, through Levinas’ ethical framework, and finally ending with Butler’s explicitly political rendering of the body as the key site of performative action.

In looking at Butler’s more “political” treatment of embodiment, Kaufman stresses that the weight of Butler’s argument is not in the discursive shift of identity, but in the importance of feeling as tangible affect. “Emphasizing the affective aspect of gender performance—rather than ‘rearticulation of the symbolic’—pushes us to explore how norms of behavior take root in the way we feel.” Performativity, she argues, remains key to this project, but is not an end in itself. Instead, Kaufman suggests “we might perform feeling toward others as an ethical and political stance, asking how our lives are touching others, how we might be touched, and how discourse shapes the politics of what we feel.”

Emma Kaufman, a Marshall fellow, will be studying feminist criminology at Oxford.

Institute for Research on Women and Gender
at Columbia University in the City of New York invites you to celebrate its 21st anniversary:

WHAT IS FEMINIST POLITICS NOW?
LOCAL AND GLOBAL
Friday, September 19, and Saturday, September 20, 2008

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19
Columbia Law School, Jerome Greene Hall
9:30-10:00am Welcome & Introduction to Conference
Lee C. Bollinger, President, Columbia University
Alice Kessler-Harris, Conference Coordinator
Elizabeth Povinelli, Director, IRWaG

10:00am-12:30pm Genealogies of Feminist Politics
What does feminism mean to you? What constitutes a feminist politics? How is politics enacted? How does feminism matter today?
Farah Griffin, Columbia University, Moderator
Katie Cannon, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va
Janet Halley, Harvard Law School
Nivedita Menon, Jawaharlal Nehru University
Luise Passerini, University of Turin
Ai Xiaoming, Zhongshan University

2:00-4:30pm Who is the Subject of Feminism?
What is the place of ‘women’ in feminist work? In local and global contexts, can feminism bridge divides? To whom does Feminism matter?
Marianne Hirsch, Columbia University, Moderator
Dorothy Allison, Writer
Judith Jack Halberstam, University of Southern California
Uma Narayan, Vassar College
Sara Ruddick, Faculty Emerita of The New School

4:30-6:00pm Keynote Address by
Radhika Balakrishnan, Marymount Manhattan College
Introduced by Alice Kessler-Harris, Columbia University

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20
Columbia Low Library, Faculty Room
9:30am-12:00pm Is Feminism Translatable?
How is feminism understood across cultural space and time — as a social movement and/or as a set of understandings about women’s experiences?
Dorothy Ko, Barnard College, Moderator
Madhu Kishwar, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
Lydia Liu, Columbia University
Afsaneh Najmabadi, Harvard University
Obioma Nnaemeka, Indiana University

2:00-4:30pm Liberalism and its Others
A World Leaders Forum Event
How do problems and solutions within feminism get their meaning?
Lila Abu-Lughod, Columbia University, Moderator
Lara Deeb, University of California, Irvine
Inderpal Grewal, University of California, Irvine
Yvonne Hirdman, Stockholm University
Wang Zheng, University of Michigan
Teresa Valdes, Centro de Estudios de la Mujer (Santiago, Chile) and Stanford University

4:30-6:00pm Closing Session: Linkages
Katherine Franke, Columbia Law School, Moderator
Temma Kaplan, Rutgers University
Juanita Maria Rodriguez, University of California, Berkeley
Neferti Tadiar, Barnard College

6:00pm Closing Reception

To register for the event or for more information, please visit:
www.columbia.edu/cu/irwag

Co-Sponsored with the Columbia Law School Gender and Sexuality Law Program, the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, and the Barnard Center for Research on Women
institute for research on women and gender
fall 2008 events

September

16
Co-sponsored Event: Adriana Cavarero speaking on “Feminine Ancient Icons of Horror: Medusa and Medea”
Time and location TBA. This lecture will deal with the lexicon of violence, war, terror, and horror.
Co-Sponsored with the Hellenic Studies Program.

19
Conference: "What is Feminist Politics Now? Local and Global"
9:30am-6pm, Columbia Law School, Jerome Greene Hall and Columbia Low Library, Faculty Room.
In celebration of IRWaG’s 21st Anniversary!

October

2
Center for the Critical Analysis of Social Difference: Engendering Archives Roundtable Discussion on Torture and Truth with Gitanjali Gutierrez, Nicholas Mirzoeff, and Diana Taylor
6-8pm, 612 Schermerhorn Hall. For more event details, please visit www.socialedge.org.

8
Co-sponsored Event: Lynne Segal, speaking on “Who Do You Think You Are: Feminist Memoirs”
Time TBA, Heyman Center Common Room, 2nd floor, East Campus. Co-Sponsored with the Heyman Center.

30
Center for the Critical Analysis of Social Difference: Engendering Archives Event on Reading Race
6-8pm, 612 Schermerhorn Hall. For more event details, please visit www.socialedge.org.

December

5
Center for the Critical Analysis of Social Difference/Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics: Afternoon Roundtable on “Archiving Performance”
Time and location TBA. For more event details, please visit www.socialedge.org.

Please check our website for updated events information:
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/irwag/events/main/one/
Support the Institute:

Become a Friend of IRWaG

The Institute for Research on Women and Gender at Columbia celebrates its twentieth anniversary this year. All of us here at IRWaG are especially eager to share this milestone with our friends, colleagues and IRWaG alumnae/i, each of whom has helped to make IRWaG such a dynamic and intellectually exciting center of interdisciplinary feminist scholarship.

Our anniversary celebration begins on September 19–20th, when IRWaG will host a landmark two-day conference exploring the question “What Is Feminist Politics Now? Local and Global” featuring:

Lila Abu-Lughod, Columbia University (moderator)
Dorothy Allison, Writer
Radhika Balakrishnan, Marymount Manhattan College
Katie Cannon, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va
Lara Deeb, University of California, Irvine
Katherine Franke, Columbia University School of Law (moderator)
Inderpal Grewal, University of California, Irvine
Farah Griffin, Columbia University (moderator)
Judith Jack Halberstam, University of Southern California
Janet Halley, Harvard Law School
Yvonne Hirdman, Stockholm University
Marianne Hirsch, Columbia University (moderator)
Temma Kaplan, Rutgers University
Alice Kessler-Harris, Columbia University (moderator)
Madhu Kishwar, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

Please support the Institute by becoming a “Friend of IRWaG.” We need your help to continue developing innovative public programs, lectures and conferences, and to support the kind of cutting-edge feminist scholarship that has been a hallmark of the Institute throughout our twenty-year history. As a friend of IRWaG, you will receive our newsletter in both print and electronic form, you will be invited to special events at the Institute and at Columbia, and you will be involved with New York City’s leading center for the scholarly exploration of women and gender.

Please send your tax-deductible donation of $25, $50, $100, or $1000, along with the form below to:

IRWaG
Columbia University
763 Schermerhorn Extension MC5508
1200 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, NY 10027

Your checks or money orders should be made payable to Columbia University, marked “IRWaG.”

Name: _________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Address: _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
Phone: __________________________________________ Email: __________________________________________
Connection to IRWaG: ____________________________________________________________________________________________
Fall 2008 Undergraduate Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Call#</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Instructor(s)</th>
<th>Day</th>
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<tr>
<td>V1001</td>
<td>Intro to Women's &amp; Gender Studies</td>
<td>02215</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A. Kessler-Harris &amp; N. Tadiar</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>10:35–11:50am</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion Section</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC1050</td>
<td>Women and Health</td>
<td>05986</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>R. Young</td>
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<td>4:10–5:25pm</td>
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<td>V3111</td>
<td>Feminist Texts I</td>
<td>13505</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>L. Czolkowski</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>11am–12:50pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>V3112</td>
<td>Feminist Texts II</td>
<td>07309</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>L. Tiersten</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC3121</td>
<td>Black Women in America</td>
<td>06039</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC3136</td>
<td>Asian American Women</td>
<td>02467</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>C. Cynn</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>2:10–4pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>V3311</td>
<td>Colloquium In Feminist Theory</td>
<td>09866</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>R. Young</td>
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<td>BC3518</td>
<td>Studies in U.S. Imperialism</td>
<td>03012</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N. Tadiar</td>
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<td>V3521</td>
<td>Senior Seminar I</td>
<td>27998</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>E. Povinelli</td>
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<tr>
<td>V3522</td>
<td>Senior Seminar I</td>
<td>03661</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N. Kampen</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>4:10–6:00pm</td>
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Fall 2008 Crosslisted Courses

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<tr>
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<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>83400</td>
<td>Greek American Culture</td>
<td>87003</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>K. Van Dyck</td>
<td>TR</td>
<td>2:10–4:00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>83660</td>
<td>Gender, Culture &amp; Human Rights</td>
<td>54279</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>L. Abu-Lughod</td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td>83930</td>
<td>Early Modern Women, Premodern Sexuality</td>
<td>67798</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>J. Crawford</td>
<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>83985</td>
<td>Film Narrative: Masculinity and American Film</td>
<td>55030</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>M. Blount</td>
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<tr>
<td>84040</td>
<td>Women &amp; Buddhism in China</td>
<td>63048</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>C. Yu</td>
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<td>84480</td>
<td>Gender &amp; Applied Economics</td>
<td>41851</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>L. Edlund</td>
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<td>84548</td>
<td>American Social Policy from the Progressives to the Present</td>
<td>21202</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC4861</td>
<td>Body Histories: Footbinding</td>
<td>01934</td>
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<td>D. Ko</td>
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<td>P8709</td>
<td>Seminar on Sexuality, Gender, Health, and Human Rights</td>
<td>68206</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C. Vance</td>
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<td>3:00–4:50pm</td>
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Fall 2008 Undergraduate/Graduate Courses

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<td>Advanced Topics</td>
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<td>Venus in Chains</td>
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<td>Writing the Lives of Anonymous Women</td>
<td>51029</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>S. Hartman</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>11am–12:50pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>W4307</td>
<td>Sexuality and the Law</td>
<td>04398</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P. Ettelbrick</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6:10–8:00pm</td>
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Fall 2008 Graduate Courses

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<td>Theoretical Paradigms in Feminist Thought:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Subject of Rights</td>
<td>72996</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>L. Abu-Lughod</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>4:10–6:00pm</td>
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* For more gender-related courses that do not have WMST call numbers, please consult the IRWaG courseguide on our website.