Kathryn Gravdal Becomes The Institute’s First Graduate Director

The Evolution of a Feminist Consciousness

Kathryn Gravdal, Associate Professor of French and the Institute’s first Director of Graduate Studies, dates her feminist awakening to a time before she was able to give her thoughts a name. “I think I was touched early by the idea of feminism because I have four sisters, and I could not help noticing the ways in which the five of us were positioned in the world. Even before I heard about “women’s liberation” I had many opportunities to reflect on (and experience) the arrangement of men and women around power.”

As a graduate student at the Sorbonne in 1975—a time when theorists such as Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva, and Wittig were publishing their groundbreaking work—Gravdal found herself in the eye of the French feminist hurricane. “The Mouvement Liberation des Femmes was demonstrating in the streets and the women’s publishing house ‘Des Femmes’ had just opened. It was an exciting moment to be a feminist and a student in Paris. We read, we met, we marched.”

The irony, she states, is that though France was the birthplace of her commitment to feminism, France is no longer an encouraging or accommodating environment for such ways of thinking. “Feminism died overnight sometime around 1977. Now it is considered déclassé even to mention it. My friends who teach at French universities are still waiting for me to outgrow this ‘phase,’ in which I have languished, in their minds, far past the point of decency.”

Though she received her first doctorate in French from the Sorbonne (where she received training as a medievalist in the “philological and formal” tradition), Gravdal returned to the U.S. to embark on her second Ph.D. at

Gravdal, continued on page 2
Columbia University. The atmosphere of Columbia in the early '80s, as she describes it, was marked by an openness to new ideas—especially to feminist scholarship, which was, at that time, considered “a very real and important thing to pursue.” This was the period just prior to the onset of the “feminist backlash”—an ideological phenomenon Gravdal thinks has had a profound effect on the shape and attitude of American universities in the ’90s. “The women graduate students I know today have and will have a much tougher time than I did. The repressive atmosphere of the backlash is powerful. As the French say, ‘plus ça change...’”

From the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century

Though originally trained as a medievalist with a focus on social class (her first book examined representations of social class in parody), Gravdal moved away from notions of class to notions of gender and the study of sexual violence while teaching at Columbia. Her second book, *Ravishing Maidens*, was a study of rape in medieval France. Currently, she is preparing a book on representations of incest in the Middle Ages, which focuses less on the male/female diad or heterosexual victimization and much more on the power relations between child and parent, what she describes as “the suffering of the child and the erasure of that suffering by the adult.” Her choice of these topics of study is, she explains, “made possible by certain late-20th-century discourses. They originate in my response to the way abuses are represented in the world in which I live, and symbolize my commitment to challenge those constructions rather than let them go unquestioned.” She labels her particular approach interdisciplinary in nature and scope, and stresses that it considers not just literary texts but texts and discourses from all institutions: legal, religious, and governmental.

Goals for the New Position

Gravdal first became involved at the Institute in 1991, when she directed the Senior Seminar. In 1992-93 she served as the Institute’s Program Director. Of her new role as Graduate Director, Gravdal comments that “this is a good time for someone to devote full attention to building a program for Columbia graduate students interested in feminism. The creation of the ‘Paradigms’ course [G6001 “Theoretical Paradigms in Feminist Scholarship”] and the graduate Certificate were the first important steps toward the creation of a space in which students could receive academic training as well as a political community providing intellectual stimulation and sanctuary. Now we must ask how to develop the program, how to expand the course offerings, how to improve communication between the Institute and Columbia students, and how to allow students to participate in the Institute in a range of new ways.” She insists that as this is a pilot year for the position, she wants to implement new programs and plan for the future, but at the same time she encourages students to offer their ideas and suggestions. “At the Institute,” Gravdal concludes, “we are uniquely situated to be both flexible and creative, in order best to respond to the needs of the students, the faculty, and the Columbia community at large.”

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“The Gendered Nation” Series A Great Success

There was not even standing room at the Institute on October 13, when world-renowned lecturer and Columbia scholar Gayatri Spivak delivered her talk, “North and South: The Cairo Conference.” This event marked the first in a year-long series of lectures sponsored by the Institute entitled “The Gendered Nation: Feminist Perspectives on Nationalism and the Nation State.” Spivak initiated the series with her highly-charged critique of the United Nations Population Fund Conference held in Cairo last September—an event which not only she but a number of women in the audience had attended. Spivak expressed particular concern about the influence of Northern (her term for what has commonly, and problematically, been known as the “first world”) non-governmental agencies over population control and abortion issues, and the ways in which these interests ignore the concerns of women elsewhere. Marnia Lazreg of Hunter College was the series’ second speaker, delivering a paper titled “Freeing the Nation of God and Man: A Reappraisal of Algerian Nationalisms.” Lazreg focused on how feminist theories addressing women and nationalism (particularly in the third world) incorrectly assume that women’s participation in nationalistic movements comes from following men’s ideals. She also explained that the fundamentalist Islamic movement in Algeria today is not a nationalist movement but a political struggle using women to demonstrate its power. Finally, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Professor of History and Women’s Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, presented a paper called “Black Gothic: Constituting the American Middle Class.” This paper located the emergence of the Euro-American middle class identity fifty years prior to the Industrial Revolution, during an agitated period of commercial development. Smith-Rosenberg used novels of the period as case studies to show how the construction of this hegemonic model of American identity—defined around the white middle class male—depended for its existence and coherence upon the category of the “other” (composed of women, African Americans, and American Indians).

“The Gendered Nation” series continues this spring, featuring four more scholars whose work explores issues of gender and nationalism. The spring portion commences January 26 with Asfaneh Najmabadi of Barnard College speaking on “Female Sun and Male Lion: The Gendered Tropes of Iranian Modernity.” On February 16, Mervat Hatem of Howard University delivers a paper called “Thinking the Unthinkable: The Egyptian Islamist Discourse as a Stepchild of Modernity and the Nation-State (1970-1990).” Katherine Verdery of Johns Hopkins University will be at the Institute on March 23 to give a paper entitled, “From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe.” Finally, on April 6, Columbia Professor of English Anne McClintock will present her paper called “No Longer in a Future Heaven: Race, Gender and Nationalism.”

The series will conclude with a mini-conference scheduled for Friday, April 21. In a morning workshop session, graduate students working on themes related to gender and nationalism will present their work, commented on by Ann Stoler and other scholars. In the afternoon, Stoler, who is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan, will speak about power, gender, colonialism and nationhood, referring to her current work on Foucault. Students interested in presenting work should contact Victoria de Grazia by February 15.

For those who were unable to attend the fall events, written summaries of all the lectures are kept on file at the Institute. They are also available on the Internet by sending a request to hs115@columbia.edu.

Spring Lecture Series Highlights Feminist Legal Theory

This spring, the Institute is sponsoring a lecture series entitled “Feminist Legal Theory.” Organized by Graduate Director Kathryn Gravdal and Columbia Law School professor Kendall Thomas, the series, according to Gravdal, “is a way to introduce people in disciplines other than law to the work being done in the area of feminist legal studies. Some of the most ground-breaking feminist work today emerges from this field.” The series will be moderated by Kendall Thomas. The list of participants includes: Drusilla Cornell, Cardozo Law School and The New School; Kimberlé Crenshaw, UCLA Law School; and Martha FineMAN, Carol Sanger, and Patricia Williams, all of Columbia Law School. See calendar insert for more information.
How To Build A Women's Studies Course

This fall, Maggie Sale directed a faculty seminar charged with designing a new core course for junior Women's Studies majors and concentrators at Columbia and Barnard. Says Sale, “the seminar brought together faculty from the social sciences and literatures to think about and characterize debates about methods, methodology, and interpretation within feminist scholarship.” Seminar participants included Kathryn Gravdal (Women's Studies and French), Linda Green (Anthropology), Roger Lancaster (Anthropology), Michelle Matson (Germanic Languages), Martina Morris (Sociology), Zita Nunes (Comparative Literature), Sunita Parikh (Political Science), and Priscilla Wald (English). Throughout the fall, these faculty members worked jointly to create a course description and syllabus for the new junior colloquium entitled “Feminist Inquiry,” to be taught for the first time this spring by Kathryn Gravdal. The colloquium will introduce students to feminist research and interpretive methods drawn from the humanities, social sciences, sciences, and the professions, such as law, medicine, and education.

The most innovative aspect of the seminar, however, was the collaborative way in which the faculty approached the task of creating the new course. Prior to the first meeting, Sale drafted a list of “Pedagogical Goals,” which she sent to participating faculty. These included, among other things, the intent to “introduce students to the idea that the method of research and the interpretation of data is not fixed or immutable, but is always in dynamic interaction with the way in which the information and meanings we create, and have implications for the ways in which we understand social structures, cultural norms, and the natural world.” Other goals included introducing students to the idea that not all methodologies are infallible; giving students hands-on experience implementing different research and interpretive methods; exposing students to the incredible range of work in feminist studies and the debates among feminists, and freeing students from the notion that there’s one way to be a feminist or do feminist studies; reinforcing the idea that feminist research presumes the interconnectedness of gender, race, class, and sexuality; and, enabling students to make informed choices about what and how they want to study. Sale comments that “the experience required all of us to stretch ourselves conceptually.”

New Options for Juniors

Attention Columbia junior women's studies majors—in addition to the Barnard Junior Colloquium on Feminist Theory, you now have a second option to fulfill your junior year course requirements—V3813, “Colloquium in Feminist Inquiry,” taught this spring by Kathryn Gravdal. See above article for further details.

Meeting for Prospective Women's Studies Majors

On March 21, the Institute will host its annual “Meeting for Prospective Majors.” Scheduled a week before Columbia College sophomores must declare their majors, this meeting serves as a way to inform interested students about the contours and requirements of the Women’s Studies major, as well as to explain the advantages of choosing an interdisciplinary field of study. Current Women’s Studies majors will be on hand to answer questions and talk about their own experiences. See calendar insert for details.

Voices of Experience

Catina Alexander, Senior, Women’s Studies Major

Women's studies has provided me a way to understand the many complex issues—such as race, sexuality and class—that I have witnessed affecting women. It is a powerful tool for analysis that simultaneously provides a method of empowerment. As a result of choosing this major, I feel that I've gained a broader base of knowledge than what is offered in more traditional disciplines, and am better able to integrate a wide range of skills. The reading required for the Junior Colloquium, for example, covered material from psychoanalysis to socialist critiques to post-colonial studies. Women's studies provides a fuller vision of the world—it teaches you to look at the world as a cross-section, rather than along a single plane.

Aijen Poo, Junior, Women's Studies Major

The interdisciplinary nature of the Women’s Studies Program has offered me many opportunities I felt were not available to me in other fields, and the size of the department affords a lot of opportunities for individual student-faculty interaction. Being part of such a new department is also exciting because as students, our opinions and input are factored into decisions affecting the future of the department. What I’m learning, as a women’s studies major, while heavy in theory and critical study, is the kind of knowledge which I find informs the way I see the world around me and the way in which I interact with others, in a useful, necessary way.

Job Alternatives for Politically-Committed College Graduates

The second annual Progressive Politics and the Professions Panel will take place on February 7, from 7-9pm in the Institute seminar room. This year’s invited panelists include Vernice Miller of The Natural Resources Defense Fund, Yolanda Sanchez of the Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs, and Dena Davis, of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation. The purpose of the panel, created last year by Maggie Sale in response to complaints by women’s studies majors regarding the dearth of information or support available for students interested in pursuing more “politically-minded” careers, is to present students with a wider range of options—such as those available in the non-profit sphere—than are typically offered through college career counseling services.
Institute Offers Women’s Studies Pedagogy Workshop for Graduate Students

This spring, Graduate Director Kathryn Gravdal and Natalie Kampen, Chair of the Barnard College Women’s Studies Program, will direct a series of three workshops dedicated to teaching graduate students how to approach women’s studies—this time as professors—in the classroom. “Specifically, we are training students how to teach an introductory women’s studies course,” Gravdal elaborates. “We’re hoping that this will better prepare these students as they enter today’s competitive job market, by expanding their area of expertise and establishing them as candidates for a joint appointment.” The workshop was made possible by the co-sponsorship of Eduardo Macagno, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Thirty-seven students met with Gravdal and Kampen at the Faculty House on December 6 for an organizational luncheon. “The demand for these workshops has come from the graduate students,” Gravdal comments. “Until now, there hasn’t been a locus on campus where interested students could learn about women’s studies pedagogy.” The workshop will meet three times—in late February, late March, and late April. The first meeting will discuss curriculum issues, focusing on how to put together an interdisciplinary syllabus for an introductory women’s studies course. The second session will explore the available research resources in libraries and throughout the Internet. The final meeting will take a look at feminist classroom practice, specifically examining the different notions of authority and power between teacher and student espoused by feminist pedagogy.

The workshops will operate using a collaborative format. Upon completion of the series, students will receive a letter of certification from the Institute, verifying their competence in the area of women’s studies pedagogy.

Earn A Certificate in Feminist Scholarship

The Institute offers a minor field exam and certificate that acknowledges the holder’s competence in the area of feminist scholarship. Students must compile a reading list under the direction of two professors affiliated with the Institute. The actual exam can be administered either in conjunction with a student’s departmental oral exams, or within six months of completing departmental exams. Contact Graduate Director Kathryn Gravdal at the Institute for further information.

1995-96 Institute Graduate Courses in Women’s Studies

G6001: Theoretical Paradigms in Feminist Scholarship
In the Fall semester, Kathryn Gravdal and Kendall Thomas (Law) will team-teach “Paradigms,” the Institute’s core introductory course. In addition to its focus on paradigmatic feminist theory, Gravdal and Thomas will structure the course around issues of law, sexuality and violence.

G8010: Advanced Topics in Feminist Theory (Fall)
“Literary and Historical Gender Studies of South Asia and the Middle East,” taught by Asfaneh Najmabadi (Barnard, Women’s Studies) will focus on feminist and political theory in South Asia and the Middle East, with specific emphasis on literary and historical gender studies.

G8010: Advanced Topics in Feminist Theory (Spring)
“Sexuality, Science, and Policy,” taught by Carole Vance (School of Public Health), will focus on past and present theories of the “gay brain.”

In addition: The Institute plans to develop a new 4000-level graduate course for the 1995-96 school year, tentatively named “Theory and Interpretation.” This new course will be team-taught, and will offer an introduction to readings in feminist theory.

Five Professors Join Graduate Committee
This Fall, Graduate Director Kathryn Gravdal expanded the Institute’s Graduate Committee, with the addition of five new members. The newest members of the committee are: Marcellus Blount and Joan Ferrante, English; Keith Moxey, Art History (Barnard); Haruo Shirane, East Asian Languages and Cultures; and Dorothea von Mücke, Germanic Languages. They will join the original members Elaine Combs-Schilling of Anthropology, Eric Foner of History, Jean Franco of English (retired), Jean Howard of English, Eugene Rice of History, and Gayatri Spivak of English. Collectively, these professors serve the Institute as advisors and consultants, acting as a standing committee of Columbia and Barnard faculty assisting Gravdal in her capacity as Graduate Director.
# Coming to the Fore: Graduate Students at the Institute

Graduate students—given their highly specialized interests, their overwhelming academic commitments, and their tendency to disappear to foreign countries for long stretches of time to conduct dissertation research—have always been elusive presences at the Institute. "The graduate experience can be a diffuse and isolated one," states Kathryn Gravdal. "As Graduate Director, part of my job is to create a better sense of community for these students, as well as to make them more visible so that they can serve as role models and mentors for our undergraduates." With the hope of introducing a few of our graduate students to a wider audience, Feminist News has profiled four students (from the History, English, and Anthropology departments) who have been involved with the Institute in various capacities, to get their perspectives on graduate life and the ways in which working with the Institute has enriched their experiences at Columbia.

## Lucinda Holt

Call it greenness or naiveté. Blame it on blind optimism. Whatever the reason, Lucinda Holt maintains a remarkably high-spirited outlook, even though it is the tail end of the semester, a time when most students are afflicted with under-eye bags and unwritten papers. A second-year Ph.D. student in Anthropology, Lucinda Holt locates the origins of her interest in both anthropology and gender at Amherst College, where as an undergraduate she became engaged in the study of hip-hop dance culture. "This led me to an examination of how black men perform racial and gender identity through dance," Holt says. In true anthropological style, Holt became a participant observer of a culture that, she emphasizes, is incredibly male-dominated and unresponsive to women—especially women anthropologists. "There was definitely a gender barrier to contend with," says Holt.

Though her interaction with the Institute thus far has been limited to attending talks and lectures, Holt will begin a more "formal" commitment this spring, as she serves as the teaching assistant for the new junior colloquium, "Feminist Inquiry," taught by Kathryn Gravdal. "Professor Gravdal is trained in the humanities. In order to broaden the scope of the course, she wanted someone who could bring a social science perspective to the classroom," Holt explains.

Holt also looks forward to the Institute’s Women’s Studies Pedagogy Workshop (see related article page 5). "I was a Women’s and Gender Studies Major at Amherst, and the experience meant a lot to me academically. It represented a space where I felt comfortable in both my classes and my department. I’m very excited about how to translate the things I learned as a student to my own classrooms—particularly the different dynamic that exists in a women’s studies classroom, where the sense of authority is not so oppressive."

Gender continues to be integral to Holt’s graduate work. Still in the early stages, Holt’s doctoral work is currently centered on the aspirations of black youth in the inner city. "Some social scientists claim that the black underclass works beneath a set of oppositional values. Without other economic options, the drug market and crime became the only viable options. It seems to me, however, that the music industry has emerged as an alternative. Gender in this context is really important because few people have really examined how young, black people who align themselves with hip-hop culture understand themselves as gendered subjects and the representations of themselves in music video."

## Rebecca McLennan

Though a fifth-year graduate student in the History department with years of coursework behind her, Rebecca McLennan still recalls her participation in the first "Paradigms" course, taught in 1990 by Martha Howell (then Institute Director) and Professor Jean Howard, as "one of the most stimulating classes I took at Columbia." Fresh out of college in her native New Zealand, where classroom discussion "typically resembled an amicable—though nonetheless useful—chat about the question at hand," McLennan was immediately struck by both the forcefulness with which the Columbia students of feminism argued their points, and their willingness to make the disciplinary differences that arise in feminist scholarship the subject of critical discussion. McLennan continued to be involved in the Institute through its years of growth and expansion under Howell’s directorship. During the 1992-93 school year, McLennan served as one of the first writing tutors working one-on-one with students in the Women’s Studies Senior Seminar. Not only did the undergraduates benefit from this interaction with advanced students, McLennan points out, but "this was a very rewarding experience for the graduate tutors as well, as it taught us how to teach in an interdisciplinary way, and to help students do sustained work on highly original research and writing projects."

What attracts McLennan most to the Institute, however, is the fact that it is one of the few areas on campus where one can forge dialogues between disciplines. "It is a center," insists McLennan, "where, on an otherwise atomized campus, students and faculty from various departments can work together to organize reading groups, guest lectures, and seminars—and secure some degree of institutional support for these activities." She cites as an example the continuing series of graduate panels entitled “Figuring U.S. Culture,” which is organized by the History and American Studies Collective, and promoted in the Institute literature. McLennan is also involved in an interdepartmental reading group that has received support from the Institute to run a series of guest lectures on "The Body" this spring. She strongly encourages other students to take advantage of resources such as these. "All it takes is initiative on the part of the students; in my experience, the Institute has responded very positively to all student groups that want to organize events."

Currently, McLennan is in the process of writing her dissertation (with the help of advisor Barbara Fields), which examines the everyday practices of incarceration in the
U.S. and the connection of these practices to the development of a trans-Atlantic network of institutions and discourses around crime, penology, and the mass prison in the early 20th century. She brings a gendered analysis to this work in her study of the construction of criminality, masculinity, and homosexuality in the work of U.S. penologists. “I am particularly interested in tracing the route by which the mass prison, and the men’s prison in particular, came to be seen as an invasive tumor in the social body, as a place that reproduced and re-infected—rather than reformed—the so-called ‘criminal man.’”

Though the Certificate in Feminist Scholarship was not yet in place when McLennan took her orals, she is now in the process of working with faculty to receive certification. “I was pleased that the Certificate was made available to students, like me, who had already completed their orals but are still committed to doing feminist work.”

**Rona Peligal**

Unlike many Ph.D. candidates, Rona Peligal is unperturbed by inquiries about the progress of her dissertation. A fourth-year graduate student in the History department with a concentration in African history, Peligal energetically details her project in ways that would make any eavesdropper eager to accompany her to do field work in Tanzania for the next year and a half.

“I’m doing an urban history of the town of Arusha from 1930 to 1950,” Peligal explains. “I’ll be looking specifically at gender, labor and space, and at women’s impact on the ‘Africanization’ of the town—that is, its transformation from a predominantly white colonized area to one populated, post-colonially, by Tanzanians.” She plans to focus on ways social constructions of gender play into questions of what is deemed “proper” for women, from jobs women could or should do, to family obligations, to owning property. “Basically I’m looking at boundaries—physical as well as psychological and cultural—that inhibit women, as well as the way in which women negotiate these restrictions.”

Peligal cites her participation in the “Theoretical Paradigms in Feminist Scholarship” course in the fall of 1992 (co-taught by then-Institute director Martha Howell and Anthropology professor Elaine Combs-Schilling) as being a crucial experience in terms of solidifying her interests and providing her a theoretical platform from which to embark on her subsequent work. “Both Howell and Combs-Schilling helped me develop my ways of thinking about history—Howell, with her expertise in areas of women and law, marriage, and early modernization, and Combs-Schilling with her knowledge about ritual, performance, space, and the way in which culture is reproduced.” Peligal also recalls her “Paradigms” experience for the diversity of the student participants and the challenges this interdisciplinary approach posed. “As students coming from different fields, we didn’t share any common language and had to develop, among ourselves, a whole new way of communicating.”

“Paradigms” also better prepared her to be a graduate tutor for the Fall 1994 Senior Seminar. “Having done ‘Paradigms,’ I was better able to direct the students to particular articles and ask them the right questions to provoke their thinking.” She describes her tutoring position as being good pedagogical preparation, and thought it probably “more intimate, and thus more rewarding, than your average TA experience.”

Peligal also attributes her ability to “ask the right questions” to the exam she took to receive the Institute’s Certificate in Feminist Scholarship. The field of feminist theory was incorporated into her departmental oral exams last April as one of her four areas of concentration. With the support of her advisor, Professor Marcia Wright, she compiled a reading list—derived in part from the “Paradigms” syllabus, as well as from the Institute’s 1993 “Advanced Topics in Feminist Theory” course on third world feminist theory, taught by Professor Gayatri Spivak. Howell and Combs-Schilling acted as her examiners. In terms of the future of the Institute, Peligal expresses excitement over the fact that Kathryn Gravdal has assumed the position of Graduate Director. “Though the Institute has served as a community for feminist scholars, bringing in speakers and sponsoring panels, Gravdal’s appointment will serve to even further solidify communication between students and faculty.”

**Alexandra Suh**

Alexandra Suh is an advanced graduate student in the department of English and Comparative Literature who is currently writing a dissertation that examines texts at the intersection between Asian-American studies and third world women’s studies. She has attended lectures at the Institute since her first year at Columbia, but became directly involved when she asked Maggie Sale to be an examiner for the feminism portion of her orals. Sale invited her to be a tutor for the senior thesis seminar. “As one of the graduate student tutors to the Women’s Studies senior thesis seminar, I was really impressed by the students’ intelligence, personal commitment, and hard work,” says Suh. “To major in a field that is both interdisciplinary and politically marginalized means that students need to do far more work than students in traditional disciplines. Despite the barriers, the students in the seminar have produced stunning work.”

In addition to helping Columbia seniors write their theses this past fall, Suh was also inspiring minds on the other side of Broadway—teaching a course in Asian-American Women’s Literature through the Barnard Women’s Studies department. “I feel a real need for people working in disciplines that intersect in women’s studies to work closer together,” Suh insists. “As one of the more conceptually open disciplines, women’s studies has a lot of overlap with Asian-American studies—both of them share many of the same ideas, and both deal with issues of identity. We need to build upon that common ground. I believe that both areas of study can only be enriched by this effort.”

As a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Asian-American Studies, Suh is involved in efforts to establish an Asian-American Studies program on the Columbia campus. “There is currently not a single permanent faculty member in Asian-American studies on the Columbia campus. Not only Asian-American students, but all students are thus denied a comprehensive education here at Columbia.” Her course, which has been taught by other instructors in the past few years, represents a step forward in collective efforts between the two fields, and fills a void in the curriculum. “The number of adjunct courses in Asian-American studies has increased this year to four,” Suh continues. “This is an improvement over the past years, but we are still a long way from our goals. If students want to write a thesis on an Asian-American studies topic, they have nowhere to go. There is no concentration, minor, or major. Even existing courses are not guaranteed to be there the following year. Each year students are forced to renew the struggle and pressure to keep the classes from disappearing. Though I and other temporary instructors do our best, the Columbia community really needs full time junior faculty members with experience in Asian-American studies, women’s studies, and lesbian and gay studies.”
Institute Spotlight: The Political Science Department

As part of Feminist News’ continuing look at departments on campus and their commitment to hiring women and incorporating relevant feminist scholarship and perspectives into their discipline’s curriculum, this spring we interviewed faculty members in the Political Science department. Compared to Anthropology (spotlighted in Feminist News, Fall 1994), which some might regard as a paragon of virtue, the Political Science department looks like a bleak place. It currently has only 4 women faculty out of 44, though, admittedly, one of them, Professor Lisa Anderson, is the Chair and a sympathetic voice. As it turns out, Columbia isn’t especially wanting in terms of either women faculty or women-oriented studies when compared to the nation’s other leading institutions in the field. Given that Political Science is currently reevaluating its needs in view of hiring new faculty, now seems a propitious time to examine the situation.

The “Politics” of Gender

Finding the Political Science department is no easy task. The department is located in that netherworld on the “other side” of Amsterdam (in the International Affairs Building, a structure that, at first glance, has no windows and no discernible entrance), and one is advised to schedule a good fifteen minutes’ travel time from the center of the Columbia quad to reach the office of the Chair of the department, Lisa Anderson—first to find the front door, tucked discreetly away on 118th Street, then to reach the 7th floor by slow elevators, the negligible progress of which is carefully charted by a video screen with a discomforting resemblance to a Nintendo game.

Unfortunately geography is one of the reasons that Anderson, a warm and energetic woman with an efficient, no-nonsense manner, gives to explain the Political Science department’s lack of concern for certain issues that have long since permeated the consciousnesses of other departments—such as the fact that amongst a faculty of 44 political science professors, only 4 are women, and only 2 of those have tenure. “This is a very insular building,” she explains. “The department has fewer productive connections to the rest of the campus than one might hope.”

In addition to the problem posed by the male-to-female faculty ratio, however, the Political Science department can claim few professors whose intellectual pursuits focus on gender or feminist issues. Though the department is currently in the throes of assessing its needs—a Planning for the Future of the Department Committee has been formed to canvass faculty members for their opinions and suggestions about how the department could be improved—Anderson suspects that the lack of gender specialists in three of the four subfields (international relations, American politics, and comparative politics) will not be determined a priority of the committee. “This suspicion emerged from the first meeting, in which several possible future directions of the department were considered. We identified weaknesses in a number of areas but women’s issues weren’t mentioned. Though there are currently virtually no faculty to assist students interested in writing dissertations on women in politics, the committee felt that expanding in this area would not be playing to their strong suit.” Anderson insists, however, that her own personal agenda as Chair is to hire more women. “There are so few women on the faculty that it’s scandalous.”

This ambivalent attitude toward the hiring of women and/or feminist scholars, as well as the inclusion of feminist literature in the political science canon, may be endemic to the field itself—or at least to certain subfields that have not yet been greatly influenced by the work of gender or feminists theorists. There is a prevalent belief in these fields that most of the feminist social science work is not sufficiently rigorous, does not conform to normal social science methodology, and is primarily polemical and ideological in nature. But even professors in these subfields sense a gap between student interests in feminist approaches and faculty capacities to meet these needs. They are aware of the fact that there is a segment of the student body—by no means limited to women—interested in applying gender studies to subfields such as international relations. Though they admit it would be beneficial to have better-informed faculty to assist students in navigating the available literature, faculty who both think about gender and are good social scientists, they feel that there are certain “linchpin” vacancies that must first be addressed in the department. If one of these candidates also happened to include gender in interesting ways, they feel these candidates should take precedence over other applicants.

Professor Ira Katznelson, who recently returned to Columbia after having taught at the University of Chicago and been Dean of The New School for Social Research, has a very different perspective on the importance of feminist literature to political science. As an American politics specialist, he is part of a field that has been greatly influenced by feminist work. Katznelson sees gender studies involved in political science in two ways: first, gender has become the object of analysis (the direct study of gender has become considerably more important in recent years) and, second, work conducted in other fields not exclusively about gender has nonetheless been nourished by work done under the rubric of gender and women’s studies. “In a number of intellectual areas important to the department, as well as to the larger world of social science, gender is the site of the most innovative and interesting work.” For example, postmodern theories have deployed considerations of gender to launch a fundamental critique of liberalism and the distinction between public and private. “Feminist theory has made that distinction problematic,” Katznelson explains, “exposing the protected zone of the private as a zone of patriarchal authority. Much of the intellectual vitality in this field comes from gender studies.”

Bleak Statistics

Though the current dearth of female professors in Columbia’s Political Science department is cause for concern, the problem is hardly unique to Columbia. As the figures below illustrate, six of the country’s top graduate programs suffer from a similarly low representation of women professors.
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Katznelson cites his own evolving approach to his subject matter as a case in point. When he wrote his first book 12 years ago on the relationship between work and home—specifically examining why the U.S. seems politically divided between neighborhood/home and work/labor unions—he was wholly innocent of emerging work concerned with the same distinction, but understood in more gendered terms. "Disputes of boundaries between public and private bear directly on zones of labor market and family. To the extent to which I am still considering these questions politically, there is no doubt that the scope of questions I ask today are broader because of the impact of feminist theory, as well as the empirical and theoretical work done on women in the labor market."

His current work, a theoretical and empirical study of American liberalism, is innately, if not overtly, concerned with issues of gender. One of the recurring questions in literature about American liberalism and the liberal tradition is whether liberalism can capably address deep difference—i.e., racial, moral, gender differences. The most incisive critiques of liberalism's ability to grapple with deep difference come from feminist theory. "Scholars such as Kirstie McClure at Johns Hopkins gave me the tools with which to interrogate my material. I'm not writing a book called Gender and Liberalism, but there is no doubt that my questions are shaped in part by emergent literatures in gender."

When queried about the future of the department, Katznelson states that there are two crucial and distinct issues that must be addressed as Columbia's Political Science department continues on its quest for self-improvement: the intellectual trajectory or orientation of faculty members ("there is no non-trivial number of students interested in feminist and gender issues," says Katznelson) as well as the male/female composition of the department's faculty. This distinction—the presence of feminist scholars and the presence of women faculty—raises a different but nonetheless related issue. Intellectual orientation aside, what is it like to be a woman student in the Political Science department?

Kate O'Neil is an advanced graduate student in Political Science and an "elder stateswoman" of a group called "Women in Political Science," commonly referred to by its vaguely menacing acronym, "WIPS." Though O'Neil's area of concentration—international relations and environmental politics—has little direct relationship to gender, she is nonetheless concerned about the difficulty encountered by students interested in such issues. "I was originally interested in doing gender work, but as there was no one to work with, I found other areas that were easier to pursue at Columbia."

In general, however, O'Neil feels that friends who have continued to pursue gender studies within the department have met with considerable resistance. "Many members of the faculty think that feminist theory isn't scientific; that it's just a critique put forth by scholars who are saying that the world would be a better place if women ran it." Those who are interested in gender and stay at Columbia are usually forced to look outside the program for support. O'Neil cites as one such support source the International Studies Association, a nationwide organization with a strong feminist theory section that caters both to professionals and academics, sponsors women's caucuses, and serves as a network for women and feminists in a primarily male-dominated field. She admits, however, that if she ever met someone interested in gender studies thinking of attending Columbia, she would encourage that person to look elsewhere.

A bigger, and more immediately applicable problem for O'Neil, however, is the lack of women faculty in the department and the overall atmosphere this creates for women students. "WIPS" was founded six years ago after the emergence of a number of sexual harassment issues within the department. "This led to a realization that a network of women students was needed." WIPS functions as a support network, organizing dinners, speakers, and meetings. The group also attempted to initiate policy reform a few years ago, spurred by the seemingly disproportionate number of women who failed their qualifying exams. "This raised other issues concerning women students—funding, the distribution of teaching positions, and the drop-out rate, but we were inhibited by the absence of any centralized data bank." The key problem, however, is having to deal with a predominantly male faculty. "Many women feel alienated from what appears to be a buddy-buddy relationship that exists between the men students and faculty. Women students have to be assertive to get time and attention from male faculty members." In the past, women had a tendency to vanish from the program, O'Neil remarks, due to the lack of any really supportive community (and, if they had children, due to the lack of adequate daycare facilities at Columbia). As a result of such adversity, however, the women in the department have managed to form a solid support network among themselves. "There's always support if you need it, though there's still no doubt that you need to be strong if you want to survive."

One of the few exceptions to both problems—the lack of women faculty, and the lack of gender-inclusive political science scholarship—exists in the figure of Professor

Sheila Mann, Director of Education, American Political Science Association

"There is no doubt that there is a professional increase of women in political science. We expect, given the steady increase that's occurred over the past two decades, to see a growth of total women faculty members to 30% by the beginning of the next century."

| % of Women Faculty in Political Science: | 19% |
| % of Full-Time Women Faculty: | 16% |
| % of Faculty in Doctoral Programs Who are Women: | 10% |
| % of Women in Political Science Ph.D. Programs | 1974: 15% |
| | 1984: 28% |
| | 1994: 33% |
| % of Women Starting Ph.D.s in Political Science | Fall 1984: 30% |
| | Fall 1994: 40% |
| * source: American Political Science Association |

1993-94 Survey of the 35 Largest Political Science Ph.D.-Granting Departments in the U.S.

| Highest % of Tenured Women: | Cornell, 19% |
| Highest % of Female Full Professors: | Cornell, 25% |
| Highest % of Doctorates Granted to Women: | Cornell, 8% |
| Highest % of Ph.D. Students Enrolled: | NYU, 51% |
| Highest % of Women in Tenured or Tenure Track Positions: | Rutgers, 14% |
| Most Women and Politics Courses by Tenure or Tenure Track Professors: | Rutgers, 14% |

* source: Women's Caucus for Political Science Quarterly
Jean Cohen. A specialist in the areas of gender and contemporary political theory, legal theory, and the theory of democracy, Cohen teaches courses to both undergraduate and graduate political science students, as well as courses in the Law School. She also co-taught “Theoretical Paradigms in Feminist Scholarship” this fall with Dorothea von Mücke (Germanic Languages), a course which concentrated on issues of identity, gender, and sexuality, concluding with a close examination of the pornography debate. Cohen also teaches the modern section of the Columbia College core curriculum course, “Contemporary Civilization.” Her approach carefully integrates gender issues and feminist concerns with what are considered the “classic” texts. “Each stage of political thought we cover includes both classical works as well as what the authors of these works have written about women and gender. We also include any feminist statements of the period.” She lists as some examples Kant’s essay on “The Beautiful and the Sublime,” Rousseau’s excerpts on Sophie, John Stuart Mill’s book on the subjugation of women, and Engels’ text on private property and the family.

Until recently, the department has not been receptive to gender issues. “It’s been difficult to get support for including feminist theory and gender issues in my courses, especially when it’s a matter of a course specifically on gender and political theory. I’ve also had great difficulty and very little success in getting women authors and feminist theorists approved as required reading for the [qualifying] exam.” She bemoans in particular the omission of Hannah Arendt from the departmental reading lists. As a member of the political theory field, Cohen finds it somewhat odd to encounter such resistance to raising issues of gender or looking at works by women and feminists. “Every political theorist, from Plato to Nietzsche to Habermas, has had something to say about gender issues, and the construction of their theoretical framework, irrespective of what they say about gender, is permeated by gender considerations.”

Cohen admits that she has noticed an increased receptivity in the last year or so on the part of the department with respect to her courses, a change in attitude that she thinks is partially attributable to the increased enrollment by women students. In terms of the future evolution of the department, Cohen feels that both problems—the lack of gender-oriented faculty, and the lack of female professors—must be addressed. “Though I fill the need for gender-oriented courses in the area of political theory, I still feel there’s a need for someone in American Politics to replace Ethel Klein, whose specialty was gender and American politics, and I think we could use someone in international relations and human rights who could integrate concerns of gender. We need at least one person to cover each of the bases.” As to the dearth of female faculty members, Cohen responds by saying, “I have found with my women graduate students that it is very important to have a woman role model as a professor, one who is serious, well-regarded, and widely-published in the field, involved with journals and projects, so that they feel that they too can actually aspire to and hope to achieve similar levels of success within the field of political science.”
In A Word, continued from page 10

Still another intriguing rationale behind the preference for the word “gender” is an economic one, and one also raised in Spector’s book. Given the tightness of university budgets, some feel that women’s studies programs run the risk of extinction unless they adopt a more general, less specialized approach—the uncomfortable implication being, of course, that “gender” is a more acceptable and less politically abrasive term than “women”. A similar trend can be found in the way publishing firms have taken to marketing scholarly books, using “gender” instead of “women” in the titles of books and series. This strategy is believed to attract a wider audience and, by extension, increased profits. The notion of “gender” being more acceptable, or more marketable, than “women,” however, immediately sets off bells and sirens for anyone suffering (justifiably) from fear of the feminist backlash. (The publishing world is not always exclusively driven by financial motives, however. At scholarly presses, for example, where people are more sensitive to issues of language, great care is given to the titles of academic series. “We had an agonizing time deciding what to call our series, ‘Thinking Gender,’” says Routledge Press’ Editor for Philosophy and Psychoanalysis Maureen MacGrogan. “In the end, it was an editorial, not a marketing, decision. Usage tends toward ‘gender’ these days as a more inclusive category than ‘women’s studies’, but that could easily change in the future.”)

It should be noted that “gender” is not always used to replace “women”; sometimes, as at the Institute, the two terms are used to complement one another. Oftentimes (as is the case with Columbia), Women’s Studies departments also become the locus for department-less fields such as Gay and Lesbian Studies. The combination of terms, as in “Women and Gender,” is thus an attempt to signify the wealth of scholarly offerings contained within a single department. Using the two together makes clear the difference between them, as well as pointing to the fact that they cannot be used interchangeably, as each signifies a very different motive and approach—one better than the other, the point being that they are simply not the same. Still, naming programs remains a contentious issue in the academic world at large. Should these shifts toward gender studies signify a broadening in the scope of inquiry that women’s studies should embrace? Or does this change represent a way for men to reapportion what has been designated and protected as women’s space for writing, discussion, research and scholarship? Or, as a third (though certainly not final) option, should we not view the terms as existing in opposition to one another but, in the ideal scenario, as coexisting comfortably without the fear that one will undermine or supersede the other? Given the current interest in this topic, Feminist News talked to scholars around the country, to get their opinions on the matter.

Carolyn Dinshaw,
Associate Professor of English, University of California at Berkeley

Feminists in academia have all worried about the implications of the rubrics given to our work. On the one hand, “Women’s Studies” is problematic because of the apparently essentialist claim it makes and because of the related issue of the occlusion of differences between women. “Gender Studies,” on the other hand, threatens to elide politics—concerted attention to the problems experienced specifically by women—in its attempts to study socially-constituted categories of difference. Real women might seem to disappear, and the concerns of men might preclude those of women. I prefer “Feminist Studies,” for its explicitly stated political agenda and its claim, staked out over several decades now, that all of gender is its province.

Now we’re worrying over what to do with “Lesbian and Gay Studies.” We definitely need a specific term that refers to that rapidly growing field that is not Gender Studies. “Lesbian and Gay” shares the problems of essentialism and occlusion with “Women’s Studies,” since the concern is to study all forms of sexuality in a cultural frame, but this one shares the problems of “Gender Studies”: its political agenda is unclear. “Queer Studies” is theoretically better, since it seems inclusive of various sexualities, but its practical use these days suggests that its range of reference is far less inclusive than it should be (white, young, gay males are most often “queer”).

My concerns right now are twofold. First, differentiate Queer Studies (I choose this term in the hopes of extending its frame of reference) from Gender Studies so that the specificities of sex as distinct from gender— and concomitantly sexual identities and practices that aren’t (only) oriented around gender—don’t get elided. And second, make it clear to conservatives everywhere (and they do seem to be everywhere) that all of sexuality is the province of Queer Studies. In particular, Queer Studies not only makes heterosexuality visible but makes heterosexuality itself a body of study, queers it—shows that heterosexuality isn’t timeless, singular, and unvarying, and thus seeks to take it away from those who exploit it as a monolithic, normalizing tool of power.

Professor Nancy K. Miller,
Distinguished Professor of English at Lehman College and The Graduate School, CUNY

It would be a grave error to drop the word “women” from “Women’s Studies,” as the field has a significant history in institutions as a locus for interdisciplinary studies. To erase it completely would be to re-erase women. I see no reason not to include “gender” in the title, though I’m also not opposed to leaving women’s studies as women’s studies. I also think that “Feminist Studies” provides an interesting alternative, as it places emphasis on the process of examination rather than the objects of analysis. Few universities have chosen to do this, however, I think because for many academics and administrators “feminist” implies an ideology, “Women,” on the other hand, seems a more neutral, acceptable category. In an ideal world, you would be able to say “women” and the term could include everything—women, gender, sexuality, and race. In the end, of course, all of these terms could be disputed.

Shirley Geok-lin Lim,
Professor of English and Women’s Studies, University of California Santa Barbara

Women’s Studies should remain Women’s Studies, as long as there continues to be a need for a space within the university that focuses only on women. Globally, women have not received the full benefits of the study of women. Many social concerns and issues affecting women still need to be addressed, but the value of such study is already under question! We are just beginning to engage in these discourses, and I would be loath to insert another focus at this time. The name change signifies a shift away from the question of women. “Gender” is, after all, a non-gender-specific term. Every discipline in the university until recently had been male-oriented studies. Perhaps in 150 years we won’t need Women’s Studies, but that is certainly not the case today. Gay and Lesbian Studies should be associated with Women’s Studies, but the two interdisciplinary fields are very different. If we were to include sexualities in a name change for Women’s Studies, then why not race as well?
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Perspectives from Leading Women in the Field

Nancy Rosenblum, Professor and Chair of the Political Science Department, Brown University

There are two generic problems affecting the number of women professors in political science departments. The first has to do with the ‘pools’ of women in political science. This is not a field that has attracted women to Ph.D. programs in the past. Certain departments, even with the best intentions, were not able to overcome this disparity since there simply were not enough women candidates to go around. This situation is changing, however. If you look now at the pools of candidates for junior faculty, these will be vastly larger than were the pools that existed when the senior faculty was being hired a few years ago. This also varies from subfield to subfield. There are far more women in political theory than there are in international security, for example. There would be a greater cause for concern, thus, if an institution had no women in the area of political theory since there is an ample pool from which to choose.

The second problem has to do with hiring procedures, and how carefully the home institution monitors the hiring practices of its departments. At Brown, for example, there is a very aggressive internal monitoring system that requires all departments, even those with very small pools of women to choose from, to justify their hiring procedures from the very first steps. Putting this sort of procedure in place requires departments to carefully document and give reasons for their decisions.

Susan Okin, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Ethics in Society Program, Stanford University

Amongst the social sciences, there is no doubt that political science has remained more of a male-dominated field than other areas like psychology. Though this can in part be attributed to the fact that the timing in academia is very bad for women—namely, that the years when professors experience the greatest pressure to produce scholarly works often coincides with the time when some women are interested in starting families—political science still stands out from the rest of the humanities as exhibiting a particularly poor ratio of women to men faculty members. There’s no particular conspiracy theory at work. I think it more has to do with the number of women Ph.D. students in the various areas. In political theory, for example, you tend to find many more women than in other fields.

On the subject of resistance to acknowledging and including feminist literature in core political science courses and required reading lists, work of this sort challenges the paradigms in political science. Though feminist work is more accepted in the field of political theory, it is still a bit marginalized. In other fields, however, it’s a very uphill battle to get feminist work accepted because it challenges the traditional way of doing things. It is not an issue of not being rigorous enough, or too theoretical. The fact is, in a field like international relations, theory is very high on the agenda, and there exists a great deal of fine theoretical literature that involves gender. Anne Ticknor’s book *Gender and International Relations* is just one example. There are also many people writing excellent books on women in American politics. I see no reason for political science departments not to be able to offer rigorous feminist courses, as there exists very good literature in all the subfields.