Is women’s and gender studies a “discipline”? For many critics from other, more traditional fields of study, the answer is “no.” “Like Alice among the daisies and roses in Wonderland’s Garden of Live Flowers,” writes Carol Sanger, “something about feminism does not look quite right to those already firmly rooted. As the Tiger-Lily remarked about Alice: ‘If only her petals curled up a little more, she’d be all right’” (Loyola Law Review, 1993).

Sometimes, it is said that women’s and gender studies lacks a unique methodology that would clearly demarcate a “territory” separate from that of other disciplines. Alternatively, writes Sanger, critics charge that women’s studies “fails as a discipline not because of what it isn’t, but because of what it is: something more political than academic, a movement rather than a branch of knowledge.” Or, it is said to be “too emotional,” without “the rigor and detachment” of a real “discipline.”

On the other hand, some feminist scholars would be inclined to agree that women’s studies is not, nor should it be, a discipline in its own right. “Feminism has long been aware of the limits of disciplinarity,” writes Sanger, since it is felt that “the very attributes that distance feminism from traditional disciplines enhance, not diminish, its value within the academic garden”—its eclecticism, its freedom from encrusted tradition, its willingness to evaluate new kinds of knowledge.

While such discussions often take on an abstract air with regard to scholarship alone, they can become more acrid when pedagogy is at issue. Some of the most heated debate over the idea of women’s and gender studies, in fact, centers around the question of undergraduate education. What does it mean to offer an undergraduate major: as Columbia does, in women’s and gender studies? Are students well served who graduate with diplomas in a field that some view as transitory, or worse yet, “trendy”? What sort of knowledge and skills do students acquire through their women’s studies coursework, in
comparison to more traditional
majors?

When Columbia undergraduates reflect upon their own experiences as women's and gender studies majors, it becomes apparent that many of the terms of debate over women's studies need to be revised. The Columbia program, in fact, fits few, if any of the negative characterizations commonly applied to undergraduate programs in women's studies. By contrast, it suggests—whether or not women's studies can (or should) be considered a "proper" discipline—a number of lessons in how to attract, cultivate, and challenge undergraduates who are genuinely excited by the intellectual pursuit.

Columbia undergraduates have been able to major in women's and gender studies since 1987. The major, which entered the world as the twin of Barnard's, has subsequently evolved, assuming a distinctive curriculum and character. This year, nine students (seven women and two men) will graduate in women's and gender studies at Columbia. What lay behind their choice of women's studies as a major?

Junior and senior women's and gender studies majors at Columbia typically describe their attraction to the program in intellectual terms. In discussion with them it becomes clear that most came to college with a clear sense of intellectual identity and strong interests, which they frequently found unsatisfied by a traditional major. And whether or not their primary concern was gender—often it was only one of several—students found that the women's and gender studies major enabled them to pursue the types of questions and problems that were most meaningful to them. Many students stress that it was the interdisciplinary nature of the major that made this possible.

If the flexibility and interdisciplinarity of the major have attracted students, so have the small size and rigorous nature of the program. Students name learning to think critically and theoretically, close attention from faculty, the stimulation of their peers, and above all, the challenge of writing a senior thesis—"a time and space allotted to pursue something of your own creation," in the words of senior Ai-jen Poo—as the most valuable aspects of the program.

The women's and gender studies major is one of the most demanding undergraduate programs at Columbia, and majors consistently receive college honors in percentages higher than in most other departments. With a credit requirement of 44 points, and coursework introducing students to a range of theoretical paradigms along with the nuts and bolts of scholarly research, it is also one of only two undergraduate majors in which a senior thesis is required of all students. These factors tend, says Undergraduate Director Maggie Sale, to "weed out students interested in the topic but daunted by the rigor of the program. It takes a special kind of person to want to be challenged in that way."

Poo, for example, had planned to major in English, but found herself attracted to the flexibility of the Women's and Gender Studies Program. Poo explains, "it wasn't that I didn't know what I was interested in"—literature, cultural studies, and gender and queer theory—but rather, it was precisely that she did know, and saw that these subjects could be pursued within the Women's and Gender Studies Program, that led her to the major.

Similarly, Jessica Greenberg, now a junior, also came to Columbia with a clear idea of what she wanted to study. But Greenberg's world changed when she first encountered feminist scholarship: "From the time I was ten, I wanted to go into biology.
Then I got to Columbia and there was something about theory that really drew me. And while I wanted to have some background in classical philosophy, what was most exciting to me was what was going on in gender theory.

Greenberg explored the possibility of doing a concentration in feminism in the Philosophy Department. After encountering resistance to this plan, Greenberg switched to women’s and gender studies. “It’s upsetting to see feminist thought divorced from mainstream philosophy in a way that really stunts the growth of both,” she says. What Greenberg enjoys about the Women’s and Gender Studies Program, however, is the opportunity to view diverse problems through the unifying lens of gender—“this is the first semester where my courses have come together in meaningful ways,” she says.

Joneil Adriano, a senior, also turned to women’s and gender studies after his first choice of majors, a proposed individual major in lesbian and gay studies, was turned down by Columbia College. Adriano’s thesis analyzes the consequences of colonial, anthropological, and gay and lesbian writings on the “berdache”—a term used to describe a range of Native American spiritual practices related to cross-dressing. For Adriano, the thesis was the crowning experience of his college career—“I really learned a lot about the writing process, and about how I myself think and write,” he says.

Adriano adds that “it was through my women’s studies classes, not my core classes, that I actually learned to think critically and write argumentatively.” Nina Russakoff, also a senior, suggests that there can be a productive tension between Columbia’s core curriculum and the coursework in women’s and gender studies. “At Columbia you get a grounding in classical theory, and women’s studies is at the other end of the spectrum,” she explains. “It’s the most relevant moment of where those theories have come to.”

Despite the unimpeachable academic rigor of the program—and the energy and enthusiasm it unleashes among students—Poo notes that “there’s often a question of the legitimacy and seriousness of women’s studies and gender studies.” Greenberg adds she is not sure whether this is “because gender is such a charged issue academically and politically, or because [women’s and gender studies] is an interdisciplinary major.” This interdisciplinarity, she feels, is the program’s greatest strength and, perhaps, a weakness as well—“I can’t boast a thoroughgoing understanding of any one specific area,” she says.

The fact is, however, that a liberal arts education is not usually meant to produce expertise, but rather a certain general body of skills and knowledge. If so, the question becomes, what skills, and what knowledge? Poo feels that the debates have a tendency to avoid these issues by throwing up red herrings: “It’s like any other discipline; in some ways there is a vocabulary you really have to work to achieve. People think of women’s studies as a field that’s supposed to be more inclusive or touchy-feely or has a different agenda from other academic fields of study. But for me, feminist studies is about questioning gender, questioning race, questioning class and sexuality and nationalism.”

But given the breadth of such a mandate, wouldn’t it be better, as some critics charge, to press for the inclusion of feminist scholarship in every discipline, rather than restrict the study of gender to a separate program? The Institute, of course, has also worked to encourage the “mainstreaming” of gender within the general curriculum. Supported by grants from the Ford Foundation and the Dean of Columbia College, for example, the Institute developed a new course (“Social Hierarchies”) that for a while was part of the “Extended Core.” The course, which dealt with issues of gender as well as race, class, and sexuality, was taught at least eight times—until Columbia College eliminated the “contemporary issues” requirement of the Extended Core in 1994.

**Senior Theses in Women’s Studies, 1995-96**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joneil Adriano</td>
<td>“Gender, Sexuality, and the Legacy of Imperialism in the Anthropology of the Berdache”</td>
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<td>Moira Demos</td>
<td>“The Queer Politics of Being Alone: A Political and Theoretical Examination of the Wish to be Left Alone”</td>
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<td>Amy Ellenbogen</td>
<td>“Writing Selves at Home: Maxine Hong Kingston’s The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts and Eva Hoffman’s Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language”</td>
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<td>Nancy Gajee</td>
<td>“The Diaries of Sarah Richardson”</td>
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<td>Conor Kennedy</td>
<td>“A Community of Individuals: Queer Teens Fighting Isolation Through Technology”</td>
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<td>Naomi Murakawa</td>
<td>“The Politics of Looking: Unveiling Asian Blepharoplasty and Exposing the Fallacies of Liberal Choice”</td>
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<td>Ai-jen Poo</td>
<td>“Gathering the Fragments: Desire and Theresa Hakyung Cha’s Dictee”</td>
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<td>Naomi Reed</td>
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<td>Nina Russakoff</td>
<td>“Equivalent Sisters: Mass Media Representations of Jewish Women”</td>
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“What are you going to do with that?”

Women’s Studies majors sometimes worry about their job prospects. But reports from Columbia graduates in the field suggest that it is possible to land feet-first in today’s employment market.

Elise Feldman (CC’95), civil rights advocate: The first thing my father asked when I told him that I was going to major in Women’s Studies was, “what are you going to do with it?” I didn’t have a ready answer. At the time, my only concern was which discipline was going to allow me to explore my interests in literature, film, human rights, lesbian and gay studies, and non-Western cultures. That’s a heavy demand for any major. But these interests combined well into the Women’s Studies track.

As my undergraduate career progressed, I realized that the very interests that brought me to Women’s Studies were evolving into career options. When I finally settled on pursuing a career in law, my feminist world-view became even more important to cling to and understand. I see this in my current work for Nadine Strossen, the first female president of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Part of understanding the ACLU and its many projects (such as the Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, the Reproductive Freedom Project, and the Immigrants’ Rights Project), is understanding the historical juxtaposition of various peoples’ oppression in our society. One way of doing this is by seeing how women are affected across group lines. The Women’s Studies major provided me with the background and consciousness to know that such commonalities exist, and what it can mean in the struggle for equality.

In order to keep an organization like the ACLU together, it is necessary to learn from the past. University programs like Women’s Studies provide an arena in which we learn what will keep that historical foresight intact. What will I do with my Women’s Studies major? I will continue to use it to enrich and flesh out my own struggle, enabling me to fight more effectively for equal rights for all.

Tina Alexander (CC’95), film documentary researcher: The first six months out of college are truly miserable for anyone who is not geared up for a career in investment banking. In fact, even conservative Ivy Leaguers are not delighted with their job prospects once graduation rolls around. My dorm boasted a rejection wall where all the seniors would post those, “we were really impressed with your credentials, but” letters. Luckily, I can proudly say that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Most Women’s Studies majors and graduates I know are not cash-driven. We all learned after several semesters of, “And what are you going to do with that?” questions, that life is not about mercenary pursuits. We must tenaciously follow our visions even though we may question when the fame and glory are going to follow. While firmly believing that principles and passion are superior drives, however, there is the reality of Manhattan rent.

This summer I worked about 60 hours per week for paltry pay because I didn’t want to take just any job that would impress my parents and buy me pretty things. I did have fun. I ran a very successful downtown club and worked part-time at a bookstore/cultural center for gay and lesbian New York. After taking care of necessary expenses like housing, furniture, and groceries, I was able to think carefully about my college career and the things for which I had a passion, inside and outside school. I tried not to focus on the bottom line, but rather on how I wanted to live my life and how I viewed myself. These are similar concerns I had when choosing between a major in Women’s Studies or Political Science—should I opt for security, or follow my heart?

One day while I was on campus headed toward the vestigial office known as Career Services, I dropped by IRWG. As I started describing my summer, Professor Gravdal dropped a short fax in front of me about a new job opportunity. I quickly responded and the next thing I know I am back in school, but this time I’m getting paid. Currently, I am a Research Associate at a commercial television firm that is making a movie on the woman’s suffrage movement.

I can actually say that my major secured my current position, and, more importantly, that I am studying what I would have gladly pursued on my own, without having to write another thesis. Surprisingly, I also became upwardly mobile. My new job’s salary more than doubled what I had been earning, and within less than two months I received a substantial raise and increased responsibility. (Incidentally, I recently learned that I earn more money at my feminist job than my roommate did on his first job writing speeches for the Giuliani administration.)

I have only been out of college for six months, so I cannot claim ultimate security and bliss. I can say that I am happy I took the high road in school and did not settle for less than what I wanted. Perhaps the interdisciplinary nature of Women’s Studies opened my mind to creative solutions to my economic woes.
At the Boundaries: Gender, Race and the Law at Columbia

In the past, Feminist News has spotlighted the position of women and gender studies at different departments of the School of Arts and Sciences. In this issue, we turn to Columbia’s professional schools—here, to survey current work by the faculty at the Columbia School of Law.

A row of images on Kendall Thomas’s office door grabs the attention of the visitor: a picture of guerrilla soldiers squatting and clutching their rifles on a pile of rubble, underneath a poster for a movie called Endless Love; a uniformed waiter ladling punch on a roadside as a row of tanks passes; what look to be Bosnian children “playing” with guns—strange juxtapositions of love and death, peace and war, innocence and violence.

Just as the images challenge our received sense of order, so does the scholarship of Thomas and a number of his colleagues at the Columbia School of Law examine how law shapes our beliefs about what is natural and what is deviant, what is normal and what is extreme. In particular, it questions the role of law as ideology—sculpting and constraining what is imaginable, even in attempts at “reform”—and/or the role of law as discourse—providing a “vocabulary” for describing and regulating relationships among groups and individuals, bodies and things.

Much of this scholarship can be classified under the heading, “critical legal studies.” The field is also sometimes sub-categorized as “critical race theory” and/or “feminist legal studies”—terms designating academic movements that emerged in response to a more “mainstream” left critique of liberal legal ideology. Whatever the label, the keyword is probably “critical”—the sense that, as Kimberlé Crenshaw puts it, law is not merely a “referee” among social actors, but that “its basic role always has been and continues to be to shape social relations.”

That Columbia has emerged as a center of such scholarship is at least partly thanks to a project brought to Columbia by Martha Fineman six years ago from the University of Wisconsin. Fineman started the bi-annual series of workshops in feminist scholarship and the law, she says, to encourage a new generation of scholars and to provide exposure for their ideas. The first workshop resulted in the seminal collection, At the Boundaries of Law: Feminist and Legal Theory (1985); besides a number of intervening volumes, two more books gathering together the fruits of these workshops are forthcoming, Feminism in the Media (Oxford) and Women, Children and Poverty (Routledge). Fineman notes with pleasure that some of their collections are now used in undergraduate courses across the country. “As important as our own work is,” says Fineman, “what’s most important is that there be some new structures that allow new feminist scholars to do their work, and that their work be out there to be confronted.”

At the same time, Columbia faculty like Crenshaw, visiting scholar Carol Sanger, Jane Spinak (on leave this year, and not interviewed for this article), Thomas, Patricia Williams, and Fineman herself have been continuing to teach and write “at the boundaries.” Among the themes that emerge most strongly in their work are the law’s impact in the formulation and regulation of motherhood, the family, and the body; and the relationship between law and “identity,” and its ramifications for antiracist and other group struggles for equality.

Fineman’s work, for example, critiques how “the sexual family”—in which the core family unit is defined as a heterosexual couple—“has been invested by our culture and society with exclusive legitimacy,” as she writes in her newest book, The Neutered Mother, the Sexual Family, and Other Twentieth Century Tragedies (1995). For Fineman, the persistence of this model presents a problem not only in existing law, but also in attempts at “reform” that struggle to stretch the application of the model to other cases, for example same-sex couples. Fineman is particularly concerned with the ways in which the “sexual family” norm excludes and defines as deviant families headed by single mothers, and presents a “vision” in which the base unit would be redefined and symbolically designated as “Mother and Child”—a dyad embodying the ideas of caretaking and dependency.

Sanger, too, questions the law’s role in the construction of “family values”; in an upcoming article and book she is exploring the theme of “separation” between mothers and children. Sanger argues that the law influences how we think of a range of “separations” that lie along “a continuum, from behaviors we hardly even think of as separation—like a mother going out for a movie and leaving her kids with the babysitter—to more long-durational kinds of separation, like surrender or adoption.” The common thread among all these behaviors, however, is that “the notion of a woman willingly parting from her kid is something we generally disapprove of,” says Sanger. In her book, Sanger pushes this phenomenon to the limits in her consideration of two novels—Doris Lessing’s The Fifth Child and Toni Morrison’s Beloved—in which mother-child separation takes its most extreme form, infanticide.

Williams considers the point at which law ends and biology begins from another standpoint. Williams, whose early career as a practicing lawyer in commerce and consumer protection led to her fascination with
“the marketing of bodies or the pieces of bodies” from the slave trade onward, explores, for example, the “tension between the alienable and the inalienable—that which can be sold and that which cannot in a culture that equates a free society with a free market.” “The issue of self-possession,” she writes in her most recent book, The Rooster’s Egg (1995), “is central to the determination of what we mean by justice in today’s world...Our system of jurisprudence is constantly negotiating the bounds of our communal civic body.” The book, which is designed for a trade audience, explores continuing battles over these boundaries, teasing forth interpenetrating legal, political, and popular discourses on race in America.

If law frames the social construction of the family, motherhood, and the body, it plays an extremely complex role in the construction of group identities such as race. Like Fineman, Sanger, and Williams, Crenshaw is interested in both sides of this equation: not just in how the law prescribes or proscribes, but also in the responses of social actors to the law and their own perceptions of their actions. Crenshaw, who is editing a volume on Critical Race Theory: Key Documents That Shaped the Movement (due next year from the New Press), considers, for example, how identity politics—despite having developed in partial reaction to liberal notions of the equality of individuals—sometimes reflect the law’s own tendency to essentialize difference. Thus she examines feminist and antiracist discourses that “assume that sexism and racism are mutually exclusive—that the object of sexism is a white woman and the object of racism is a black man.”

Crenshaw links this assumption to “the classic way that law enacts the dichotomy between race and gender”—anti-discrimination doctrine that demands claiming discrimination either on the basis of race or on the basis of sex. And yet in cases involving women of color, it is sometimes only when one looks at the evidence through the two lenses together that the full impact of harassment or discrimination is apparent. By contrast, Crenshaw suggests that identity be reconsidered in terms of what she calls “intersectionality,” a notion of overlapping identifications that allows for intra- as well as intergroup diversity—“reconceptualizing race,” for example, “as a coalition between men and women of color [or] a coalition of straight and gay people of color,” as she writes in the Stanford Law Review (1991).

Thomas also stresses that for scholarship as well as law, it is important to differentiate clearly among different forms of domination like race and gender. In his research, Thomas is interested in the legal construction of norms—masculinity as well as femininity, whiteness as well as blackness, and heterosexuality as well as homosexuality. Reading “legal texts as social texts, as gestures of power,” Thomas’s most recent work looks at “Masculinity and the Rule of Law” (appearing shortly in a collection from Routledge). “Analytically, we need to understand the distinctions among these categories,” Thomas says, “so that when we do the coalitional politics we will do so from a very clear-eyed and rigorous analysis both of connections among the various practices of domination on the one hand, and their specificity on the other.”

The form that this work will take continues to unfold. “This project is not yet twenty years old,” comments Thomas—“the effort to develop a conceptual vocabulary for reimagining the law in an image of racial and gender justice is still an open enterprise.” Williams notes that “both the study of and the status of women is under attack” in today’s political climate—something that may increasingly have repercussions in the academy and in law. Yet Fineman finds it heartening to see feminist law students going into teaching. “You can just see the ideas spreading.” “Law isn’t outside of the people who make it,” adds Crenshaw—“law is an arena of struggle.”

**Breaking the Mold, from page 4**

maturity and the desire to pursue questions that do not easily find a home elsewhere.

And then? A recent study from Teacher’s College Press (Women’s Studies Graduates: The First Generation, 1995) surveyed 89 graduates (1974-1992) of women’s studies programs across the country to discover, “What can you do with a major in Women’s Studies?” Their findings point toward an incredible diversity of professional options for women’s studies graduates—from aviator to advocate, researcher to rabbi.

Barbara F. Luebke and Mary Ellen Reilly asked those surveyed, “If you had it to do over again, would you major in Women’s Studies?” In response, “many graduates answered simply: yes, absolutely, you bet,” write the authors. Many felt that their educations had prepared them better than any other could have, not only for their professions, but for continued learning and growth in all spheres of life.

See Breaking the Mold, page 7
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<th><strong>Institute News and Events</strong></th>
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| On April 12, 1996, the Institute for Research on African American Studies and the Institute for Research on Women and Gender are co-sponsoring a conference on *Race and Gender, Law and Politics*. Confirmed speakers include Patricia Williams, Cathy Cohen, Celina Romany and Jacqui Alexander. Look for posters or call the Institute for more details. (For more on legal studies, see *More Details,* p. 5.) This fall saw a tremendous amount of activity in 754 Schermerhorn Extension, thanks in large part to the enormous success of the panel series *Crossing the Boundaries: Feminist Controversies Today* and the continued speaker series on *The Gendered Nation: New Feminist Perspectives on Nationalism and the Nation State.* The former, co-sponsored by the School of Social Work, brought together scholars from a variety of disciplines around the four themes of “Women and Resistance,” “Xenophobia and Racism: Women and Other Strangers,” “Biologic Thought and Gender Research,” and “Women, Work and the Vanishing Welfare State.” The Institute wishes to extend its thanks to the panelists and to all those who contributed to the stimulating exchange of insights at the events.

Likewise, speakers in the Institute’s ongoing series “The Gendered Nation” maintained the high interest level and cutting-edge relevance of last year’s participants. *Ann McClintock* (English and Comp. Lit.) kicked off on Oct. 19 with “No Longer in a Future Heaven: Gender and Nationalism,” a meditation on the synchronicities of gender, race and nation in South Africa. On Nov. 2, *Geertruide Knijn* spoke on “Care and Gendered Citizenship: Towards a Comparative Conceptual Framework.” Finally, Atina Grossmann (History) presented the first fruits of her research on “Victims, Victors, and Survivors,” a look at the politics of fertility and reproduction in post-WWII Berlin. The speakers demonstrated yet again the crucial importance of a gender analysis for understanding the construction of national identities. As always, summaries of papers are available at the Institute. (For more on “Victims,” see *Feminist Perspectives on Violence,* p. 10.) Other events hosted by IRWG this past term included panels and readings of the Lesbian and Gay Studies Group, a report-back on the Beijing conference by Lynn Freedman (School of Public Health), and Princeton historian Dror Wahrman’s talk on “gender panic” in 18th-century Britain and France. In addition, the Institute co-sponsored appearances by Caroline Bynum (History), who spoke on “Love for the Body in the Middle Ages”; Claudia Koonz (Duke University) on “The Popularization of Racial Science in the Nazi Media”; and Jennie Livingston, the director of *Paris is Burning,* all at Columbia’s Deutsches Haus.

The Institute is pleased to have Hamideh Sedghi in residence as a visiting scholar in 1995-96. Sedghi, also visiting research professor at the Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University, holds a doctorate in Political Science from the City University of New York. While at Columbia, she is using her time at IRWG to finish a book on gender, religion, and the state in 20th-century Iran.

In effect, “what current majors described about their educations-in-process have been put into practice by graduates,” write the authors. “What has been happening (and continues to happen) in women’s studies classrooms across the nation clearly has tremendous effects beyond graduation.” Perhaps this could someday include growing acceptance for the goals, methods, and gains of women’s studies itself.

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**Breaking the Mold, from page 6**

In effect, “what current majors described about their educations-in-process have been put into practice by graduates,” write the authors. “What has been happening (and continues to happen) in women’s studies classrooms across the nation clearly has tremendous effects beyond graduation.” Perhaps this could someday include growing acceptance for the goals, methods, and gains of women’s studies itself.
## Spring Courses: Undergraduate

**BC311y Feminist Texts I: Wollstonecraft to Beauvoir**
(A. Najmabadi, Wed. 2:10-4:00, 4 points. Instructor's permission required.) The important contributions to feminist thought in the West, evaluated through critical discussion. Analysis of works by Mary Wollstonecraft, J.S. Mill, A. Kollontai, Zora Neale Hurston, Emma Goldman, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Simone de Beauvoir, and others in an attempt to discover the roots of the contemporary feminist movement.

**BC3113y Feminist Texts II: Beauvoir to the Present**
(L. Tiersten, Tues. 4:10-6:00, 4 points. Instructor's permission required.) Contemporary issues in feminist thought. A review of the theoretical debates on sex roles, feminism and socialism, psychoanalysis, language, and cultural representations.

**BC3117y Women and Film**
(Staff, Mon., Wed. 11-12:15, 3 points.) A critical interpretation of film from a feminist perspective and explanation of the relationship of gender to the language of film.

**BC3130y Introduction to Gay and Lesbian Studies**
(A. Pellegrini, Mon., Wed., 11-12:15, 3 points.) Key texts and issues in the new interdisciplinary area of lesbian and gay studies. Race, class, gender, religion, and national differences will be discussed as part of the elaboration of homosexual/lesbian/queer identities. Readings include historical, cultural, and theoretical documents and scholarship.

**BC3132y Women and Science**
(L. Kay, Tues. 4:10-6:00, 3 points.) History and politics of women's involvement with science. Women's contributions to scientific discovery in various fields; accounts by women scientists, engineers, and physicians; issues of science education. Feminist critiques of biological research and of the institution of science.

**BC3134y Gendered Controversies**
(J. Rodriguez, Mon. 2:10-4:00, 4 points.) A seminar investigating the significance of social, political, and cultural conflict centered around issues concerning women's lives.

**BC3508y Asian American Women's Literature**
(A. Suh, Tues. 4:10-6:00, 4 points.) An exploration of selected texts written by Asian-American women from diverse backgrounds. Issues for discussion include cultural assimilation, nationalism, class, language, generation, sexuality, the social significance of literary representations, and genre.

**V3522y Senior Research Seminar**
(T. Szell, Thurs. 12-2:00, 4 points.) Individual research in women's studies conducted in consultation with the instructor.

**V3813y Colloquium on Feminist Inquiry**
(K. Gravdal, Wed. 2:10-4:00, 4 points. Prerequisites: Women's and Gender Studies V1001; instructor's permission.) This course will survey research methods from the social sciences and interpretive models from the humanities, inviting students to examine the tension between the production and interpretation of data. Students will receive first-hand experience practicing various research methods and interpretive strategies, while simultaneously considering larger questions of epistemology.

**W4300y Advanced Topics in Women's and Gender Studies:**

## Undergraduate News

On December 13, 1995, nine Women's and Gender Studies majors presented their senior theses to a packed house of friends, family, and faculty. The papers, representing a striking array of subjects and approaches, wowed the audience almost as much as the poise and presence of their authors. The senior thesis is the culminating project in the Women's and Gender Studies major, which is one of only two undergraduate majors at Columbia to require that all students write such a thesis. (For more on Women's and Gender Studies, see "Breaking the Mold," p. 1.)

*Sister* magazine, Columbia's only feminist student publication, is currently accepting submissions of fiction, non-fiction, and art for its spring issue. In the past, *Sister* has published articles on elections in South Africa, body piercing, and Logic and Rhetoric plus poetry, photography, and drawings. The deadline for submissions is early February; for more information or to get involved (they're looking for a business manager), call Samara at 853-1824.
Graduate News

The first Coalition of Feminist Graduate Students at Columbia, some sixty strong, has formed as a venue where graduate students can exercise not just their academic, but their activist commitment to feminism. Last semester, organizers started by building a network and establishing an electronic mailing list. This term, members hope to launch one or more projects that will strengthen the group through involvement with feminist causes on campus and beyond.

Charity Snider of the Comparative Literature department explains that students started the group to compensate for what they felt was missing in the "Columbia experience": access to and engagement with the city’s cultural resources, and an "activist outlet" for their feminism. Thus, some topics under discussion at the last meeting included the possibility of getting involved with adult education and/or community efforts combatting domestic violence and rape; Columbia’s policies on sexual harassment; and organizing a delegation for Expo ’96, a nationwide feminist conference.

While the Coalition is not formally linked with the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Snider expects that a close relationship will evolve: “We want to make sure our voices are heard on campus,” says Snider, “and the Institute is the most natural venue for that.” Organizers are especially pleased with the wide range of graduate programs thus far represented, including International and Public Affairs, Teachers College, Law, Social Work, Public Health, Fine Arts, and at least twelve departments from Arts and Sciences.

To find out more about the coalition’s plans for the spring, leave a message for Snider at the Institute or subscribe to the coalition’s e-mailing list (send a request to Jason Riffaterre at jpr11@columbia.edu). To use the list to publicize events or discuss issues, please contact Riffaterre for guidelines.

The Institute’s Pedagogy Workshops resume this spring, designed to provide graduate students with a head start in the competitive field of multidisciplinary feminist scholarship. Two sections will be offered: those who missed last year’s can sign up for an introductory workshop offered by Maggie Sale; and Ann Pellegrini and Angela Zito will lead a follow-up to last year’s series. (Those interested should contact the Institute ASAP for dates and application procedures.)

The Institute is also pleased to announce the addition of a new 4000-level course to its regular offerings in Women’s and Gender Studies, “Theories and Interpretations.” The course—intended to address student concerns about the paucity of introductory courses in theory, and particularly in feminist theory, at the graduate level—provides an overview of essential texts and prepares students to do more advanced work in feminist theory. This year under the direction of IRWG Graduate Director Kathryn Gravdal and Atina Grossmann of the History Department, the course will be team-taught by a different pair of scholars each year. (For description, see below.)

Spring Courses: Graduate

New course!
G4000y Theories and Interpretations (K. Gravdal and A. Grossmann, Thurs. 2-4:00, 4 points.) This course surveys key issues in 20th-century feminist scholarship: gender, sexuality, race, women’s history, women and the state, examining canonical male thinkers of Western epistemology and the feminist scholars who have challenged their work. Authors include: Mill, Wollstonecraft, Marx, Freud, Beauvoir, Fanon, Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Irigaray, Spivak, hooks, Sedgwick, and Butler.

W4300y Advanced Topics in Women's and Gender Studies: Contexts of Emergence: Women Writing in the United States (M. Sale, Wed. 11-12:50, 4 points.) See Undergraduate Courses for description.

G8010y Advanced Topics in Feminist Theory: Literary and Historical Gender Studies of South Asia and the Middle East [A. Najmabadi, Tues. 2:10-4:00, 3 points. [Section 1]] This seminar focuses on feminist literary and historical studies of South Asia and the Middle East. It aims to bring gender analysis to research on nationalism and post-colonial studies and introduce a post-orientalist critique into theories of gender and sexuality.

G8010y Advanced Topics in Feminist Theory: Mapping Identity: Sexuality, Science, Policy and Politics (C. Vance, Mon. 4-6:00, 3 points. [Section 2]) This seminar examines contemporary scientific efforts to identify biological factors which might influence sexual identity. The class frames current work within the larger context of 19th- and 20th-century scientific inquiry into sexuality and gender; various and competing ways of imagining difference, and recent political and policy struggles about the meaning of sexual identity.
Feminist Perspectives on Violence

A new publication, “21stC,” announced itself at Columbia last spring. “21stC is interested in how knowledge moves from the research university to the general public,” the editors explained in the inaugural issue—it “begins with the premise that a great university is both a microcosm of society and one of the forces that drive society.” Provost Johnathan Cole, whose office is responsible for 21stC, described it more simply as “the publication that examines the research enterprise at this institution.”

Statements like these suggest that 21stC would strive to represent the broadest range of research practiced at Columbia, but the newletter’s first two issues raise some doubt as to whether this also applies to feminist scholarship. Most striking was a special section on violence in the Fall 1995 issue, in which, despite the decorative effect of two accompanying photographs of blonde women holding guns—Juliette Lewis in Natural Born Killers and Amanda Plummer in Pulp Fiction—the articles had almost nothing to say about real women as the victims (or perpetrators) of real violence.

Violence is one of the most distinctly gendered forms of behavior in our society: as groups, men and women experience and engage in violence in dramatically different ways. The fact that researchers at Columbia are currently investigating the possible genetic roots of violent behavior among 126 New York boys seen to be at risk for such behavior, for instance—or that more than half of the women on death row in the U.S. in 1993 were convicted of murdering an abusive partner—and, moreover, that such facts rarely attract notice or comment, indicates the extent to which the gender-specific contours of violence are both recognized and taken for granted in scholarship as in our daily lives.

It is the impulse not to take anything for granted about gender and violence that unites feminist scholars at Columbia from a tremendously diverse range of disciplines. These researchers are engaged in trying to uncover more precisely how and why violence and gender are linked—and posit that each is fundamental to understanding the other. This holds not only for acts of violence where women are typically the victims, but also for those of which they are perpetrators, or where that line is unclear; and not merely for the “fact” of violent acts themselves, but for our cultural ways of understanding and misunderstanding such acts. Indeed, for each of the five themes examined in 21stC (except, perhaps significantly, that of “violence as a biomedical problem”) there is a feminist scholar at Columbia contributing to our understanding of violence.

Violence and poverty: images and realities of the “underclass”

Among the most obviously “gendered” acts of violence is domestic abuse. It is also the leading cause of injury to women in the United States—more than muggings, stranger rapes, or car accidents combined. And yet, says School of Social Work researcher Kathryn Conroy, this remains a fact that even many women would rather not think about. “Every woman is potentially a battered woman,” she says—although few feel comfortable recognizing the vulnerability this implies.

While domestic violence is thus a thoroughly “mainstream” problem, Nabila El-Bassel studies the especially cruel toll it can take upon some of the most marginalized women in the United States—drug abusers and female offenders, on the one hand, and immigrant women on the other. In a series of studies coordinated under the umbrella of the Social Intervention Group at the School of Social Work, of which she is co-director, El-Bassel and her colleagues have found that domestic violence is one of the most important variables in screening for other problems among women at risk for violence and drug dependence. They found a high association between incidence of childhood abuse and domestic violence, for example, among women in methadone treatment programs, leading them to recommend routine screening for childhood abuse and domestic violence for early identification and treatment.

El-Bassel and her colleagues have also stressed the importance of addressing domestic abuse among women at risk for HIV-AIDS. “Women, especially offenders, don’t see AIDS as a top priority because they are occupied with so many other problems”—homelessness, custody battles, abuse by a husband or lover. Particularly, “we cannot do HIV-AIDS intervention,” El-Bassel says, “without dealing with the problem of domestic abuse.”

El-Bassel has also been active in an unfunded project on domestic violence in South Asian, East Asian and Middle Eastern immigrant communities. Initiated by a group of social workers, psychologists, and sociologists, and aided by student volunteers, its members have been working with community organizations in New York City and Chicago to develop culturally specific strategies for the identification of and intervention in instances of abuse.

Immigrant women, El-Bassel explains, may be at greater risk because the language barrier and loss of a social network can intensify their isolation and dependence on their husbands. Moreover, immigrants often respond to abuse in ways that do not conform to recognized patterns. El-Bassel has noted, for example, “a very high
Why Doesn’t Columbia Have an EAP?

On October 19, hundreds of advocates for victims of domestic violence converged on Ferris Booth Hall to discuss the theme of the Seventh Annual Conference on Domestic Violence, “Domestic Violence and the World of Work.” Sponsored by New York City’s Human Resources Administration and Survivors’ Emergency Assistance Program, and by the Columbia School of Social Work, the conference focussed on transcending conventional boundaries between home and work in the response to domestic abuse.

In keeping with this theme, representatives from companies like Liz Claiborne, Marshalls, and Polaroid, and from the New York City Department of Personnel and the municipal employees’ union discussed a variety of measures undertaken by employers to combat domestic violence. These ranged from education and counseling at the workplace, fund-raising for advocacy efforts, and legal assistance, to the relocation of employees to branches in other cities, away from a dangerous partner.

As an employer, what does Columbia do to combat domestic violence? Unlike some other major universities, Columbia does not have an employee assistance program (or “EAP”). An EAP is a comprehensive service, often involving counseling, education, and other programs that address issues like drug abuse, family crises, or other problems not traditionally covered by insurance. Most employer programs on domestic violence are operated under the umbrella of an EAP.

In the absence of an EAP, Columbia employees who suffer from domestic violence may seek a referral from Health Services to outside counseling or other treatment. But it is the insurance company’s prerogative to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether to approve physician-recommended care. Not only, therefore, does Columbia fail to take any pro-active measures against domestic violence; but there is no guarantee that an employee who suffers from abuse will get the services she needs.

According to Ombuds Officer Marsha Wagner, Columbia ought to have an EAP. The problem, she says, is funding. Wagner herself operates the Ombuds Office, a one-woman affair charged with educating and advising on issues like sexual harassment, on what is “a shoestring budget.” As for an EAP, “maybe people would rather have a better library,” she speculates, “than support services for employees…”
who has studied the reenactment of social power in sexual rituals. But McClintock is not the only feminist scholar at Columbia to have set the symbolism of sexual violence in the frame of social power. Several such scholars, including McClintock, have recently presented their research in IRWG’s speaker series, Crossing the Boundaries: Feminist Controversies Today and The Gendered Nation: New Feminist Perspectives on Nationalism and the Nation State.

Professor of History Atina Grossmann, for example, has shared her ongoing research on German women, gender, and reproduction in the final days of World War II and in the immediate postwar period. Grossmann is pursuing the question of how, as she says, “narratives of [women’s] victimization worked, not only to block confrontation with the past of Nazi crimes, but most importantly...to manage the chaos of the immediate postwar years, and eventually to authorize the reconstruction of German nationhood and national identity.”

Grossmann has written elsewhere on a topic which, she says, drew attention almost against her own will: the story of mass rapes of German women by the “liberators” of Berlin at the end of the Second World War. “I didn’t want to write a book about rape,” she says—but found the stories told by thousands of women to municipal health authorities in 1945-7 of rapes, mostly by Soviet soldiers, fascinating for the role they played in German consciousness. Perhaps one out of every three women living in Berlin was raped in this period; regardless of actual numbers, however, and more important for the role rape would play in German memory, “mass rapes of civilian German women signaled the end of the war and the defeat of Nazi Germany.”

In Berlin in the years immediately following defeat, Grossmann argues, “nothing was fixed, everything was discussed and nothing was taboo, and the transformation of Berlin’s status was open and fluid until the final result.” It was in this state of flux—against the background of a “weak” state, an indeterminate nation, and a dubious national past—that the memories of rape carried by German women along with those of other forms of suffering (nursing a sick child or losing and burying one, half-starving on meager housewife’s rations), “constructed a legitimated community of suffering,” justifying the “healing” process of postwar reconstruction.

Grossmann notes that this legacy was later to be rejected by the generation of ‘68, who would accuse their parents of hypocrisy and cause the “explosion into memory” of the Nazi legacy. She is also struck by the stark contrast between the wave of abortions sought by German women immediately after the war, and the simultaneous baby-boom among Jewish refugees in Berlin displaced-persons camps; thus, in an upcoming book, she is hoping to tell these two stories side by side in an effort to answer the larger question, “what is the cultural and political work done by women’s bodies—raped, child-bearing—in nation-making?”