MacKinnon and Spivak on the Gendered State

On November 14, students and faculty packed the Altschul auditorium for a lecture by Catharine MacKinnon, Professor of Law at the University of Michigan, titled Women’s Status, Men’s States. Columbia’s Avalon Foundation Professor of the Humanities Gayatri Spivak was the respondent. The event was jointly sponsored by IRWaG and the Heyman Center, where Professor MacKinnon was a guest for a few days, giving two seminars as well as the lecture.

IRWaG director Professor Lila Abu-Lughod introduced the speaker and respondent both as “giants in the field of sexuality studies” whose intellectual paths had crossed early on when they both thought Marxism and feminism together. Now their interests had once again overlapped as Professor MacKinnon had moved into international work, notably representing Bosnian women survivors of genocidal sexual atrocities. Professor Abu-Lughod ended her introduction by remarking that as a lawyer, teacher and activist, MacKinnon had “continued to make a difference, gaining the respect of colleagues and adversaries.”

Professor MacKinnon began her talk by referring to her work with Bosnian rape victims to illustrate her gendered theory of states and their wars. “Women’s resistance to the denial of their humanity”—by demanding justice for genocidal rapes—“is shifting the human rights paradigm,” she affirmed. MacKinnon went on to examine the human as “a normative social status, not just a given.” Giving crimes against women their due as human rights violations, she added, “makes human rights a more honest term.”

Next MacKinnon turned to assessing the state as an institution gendered male in social and political terms. “Its structures and actions are driven by and institutionalize strategy based on an epistemic angle of vision,” she noted. The further question she posed was whether the international system is a counterbalance to this epistemology, or “is it meta-male if the state is male?” Building on the assumption that the main instrument of state power was the law, MacKinnon focused her inquiry on international law.

Four dimensions of state power underlay the discussion: its ability to distinguish public from private, to naturalize dominance as difference, to hide coercion behind consent, and to conceal politics behind morality. In international politics, these dynamics of power took on new dimensions, for instance in reconstituting layers of public and private spheres. These spheres were gendered in new ways, moreover, for example when the distinction between civilians and combatants was cast as that between women and children and men.

Human rights law had consequently developed in gendered terms through successive wars and codifications of war crimes. Traditionally the international human rights discourse ranked group rights—such as the rights of women—lowest in its hierarchy. MacKinnon interrogated the idea of group rights as an *Gendered State*, continued on page 10.
The fall series of Feminist Interventions opened with a talk by Professor Jenny Davidson of the Department of English and Comparative Literature, titled “Why Do Girls Look Like their Mothers? Rewriting Shakespeare’s A Winter’s Tale.” Professor Davidson was introduced by IRWaG director Professor Lila Abu-Lughod as the recipient of Columbia’s Lenfest Award for distinguished teaching as well as a Guggenheim fellowship in 2005. In addition to her book Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness (2004) and a current project titled Breeding: Nature and Nurture Without Biology, Professor Davidson is also the author of a novel, Heredity (2003) and a forthcoming children’s book.

Professor Davidson’s investigation of the idea of generation in early modern British literature was framed within an historical context of scientific tumult regarding the nature of reproduction and heredity. “Environmental accounts of people, plants and animals dominated eighteenth-century writing,” she said, tracing a gradual shift toward nurture rather than nature as a biological model at the same time as “theorists of education from Locke to Rousseau emphasized the power of education to transform the self.”

Eighteenth-century plays and novels reflected the conflicts that arose over evolving theories of heredity, providing what Davidson calls a “literary palimpsest” of scientific and social transformation. Her study focused on the abundance of narratives about “breeding,” an umbrella term which encompassed roles for nature and nurture in the formation of social identity.

Several eighteenth-century romance novels featured “a young person whose mysteriously good breeding belies a lowly upbringing,” Davidson noted. She read the emergent notion of breeding in these stories alongside eighteenth-century theatrical adaptations of an older Shakespeare play to trace changing notions of heredity. The play A Winter’s Tale “explores the transmission of properties from parent to offspring, observing and interpreting the resemblances by which familial relationships are discerned and patterns of inheritance regulated,” she summarized. It had rarely been performed through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but its surge in popularity at mid-century, notably through free adaptations of the original text, suggested that heredity was a particularly charged subject then. Davidson mentioned three popular adaptations of the play and presented a reading of one, David Garrick’s Florizel and Perdita, which premiered in 1756.

Davidson, continued on page 9

Jenny Davidson on Nature and Nurture

Her study focused on the abundance of narratives about “breeding.”
From September 29 to October 1, an interdisciplinary colloquium on Josephine Baker was sponsored by Barnard Center for Research on Women, the Institute for Research on African American Studies, the Center for Jazz Studies and IRWaG. Professor Farah Griffin, who had just stepped down as director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies, shared these thoughts as part of her closing remarks.

Josephine Baker: A Century in the Spotlight gathered an international group of scholars to celebrate and interrogate the legacy of Josephine Baker. Throughout the event participants and audience members explored Josephine in the context of other black women entertainers who precede and follow her: Josephine on stage and screen; Josephine in relation to other black French speaking women; Josephine, the agent of the French resistance and the anti-racist activist.

We left with greater insight into the culture that produced her as well as that which celebrated her. We saw her as the embodiment of a tradition of black women entertainers, a tradition that she built upon and moved beyond, blazing a path for a number of other entertainers who would follow. But she also represents the difficulties that go along with embodying someone else’s fantasy of you and of themselves in relation to you.

Watching Baker in the film Zouzou, we are reminded of just how glorious and multitalented she was, just how gorgeous and glamorous, how she wore couture as if she were made to wear nothing else, how she managed to be both long and lean and round. Baker, the dancer, the comedian, the singer, the beautiful movie star—all on display. And for all of the film’s limitations and problems, she burst forth to shine and we cannot keep our eyes off of her. She could never have starred in a vehicle like that in the United States in 1934. Remember that is the year of Gone with the Wind which gave us Mammy and Prissy. Even when we get to Lena Horne in the 40s and Dorothy Dandridge in the 50s, each is only allowed to star in all black cast films. And sadly, in spite of the triumphs of Halle Berry in film and Beyoncé on stage, I cannot think of a black actress/entertainer in our own time who has been allowed to shine in the way Baker was in Zouzou.

But Baker has borne many daughters: models Pat Clevland and Naomi Campbell, entertainers Eartha Kitt, Tina Turner, Diana Ross, Janet Jackson, Beyoncé, even Lil’ Kim all having conquered the stages of the world by their sheer talent, beauty and willingness to do what it takes to be loved: in some cases this means getting as naked as possible, or simulating sex or getting whiter through the aid of make-up or chemical peels or surgery or peroxide. (And this is as true of Madonna and Britney as it is any of the aforementioned women). And, interestingly enough, each of them cultivates an image of herself clad in furs, diamonds and couture. (See Lil’ Kim clad in Chanel with a $6,000-$80,000 Birkin bag by Hermes on her arm as she descended the courthouse stairs during her trial.)

All are women who create and recreate themselves. With the exception of Beyoncé and Janet Jackson, both of whom were born into privilege, the others have a familiar tale, the little colored girl, sometimes unappreciated by her own people, resented by them even...
Feminist Economist on Domestic Violence

On November 30, Professor Bina Agarwal of the Institute of Economic Growth at Delhi University presented the second in an annual series of Barbara Aronstein Black Lectures on Women and Law, this one co-sponsored by IRWaG. She was welcomed by Professor Carol Sanger of Columbia Law School, who mentioned that Professor Agarwal was currently a visiting research fellow at the Ash Institute at Harvard.

Professor Agarwal said she was honored that Barbara Black was herself in the audience, then presented her talk titled Domestic Violence and Women’s Property Status: The Neglected Obvious. “Few issues so graphically illustrate gender relations as domestic violence,” she began. This fact was widely acknowledged by activist organizations, Agarwal said, noting that 180 such organizations surveyed had listed domestic violence as a “vital gender issue.” In India, where she conducted her research, many laws had been enacted to combat such violence. However, she emphasized that “the effectiveness of laws cannot be separated from social and economic relations, and laws in turn reflect those relations.” Thus she turned to an aspect of the socio-economic context of domestic violence that had been little researched, that of women’s property ownership and its connection with violence. Agarwal and her co-researcher Pradap Panda took their cue from the concept of capability outlined by economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, examining how the unfreedoms hidden within families eroded human capabilities and eventually hindered development.

“Marital violence is the most pernicious because it ruptures the myth of home as a protective space,” Agarwal asserted. “It dehumanizes men and scars children as well as affecting women.” Moreover, violence against women had a secondary effect on the lives of their children, as women took primary responsibility for childcare. Domestic violence cuts across countries and social classes, Agarwal reported, though figures in India were particularly high at 20-50%. Several layers of causality for such violence had been posited, but the logical link between women’s means of independent economic support and their ability to escape violent marriages had not been studied empirically. Studies focusing on women’s employment showed mixed results but the correlation between property ownership and the incidence of domestic violence investigated by Agarwal and Panda was found to be significant.

Agarwal and her colleague sought a location in India with a sufficient number of property-owning women and chose Trivandrum in the southern state of Kerala. The state was home to historically matrilineal communities, and even though their relative numbers were small they appeared to have influenced other communities culturally, Agarwal observed. 24% of Kerala women inherited land from their fathers, and women often remained in the vicinity of their natal families when they married, in contrast to North Indian women. Yet Kerala women experienced high levels of marital violence, which Agarwal and Panda defined as physical or psychological violence. Finding such violence pervasive, frequent and varied in nature, Agarwal and Panda asked both what triggered abuse and what socio-economic factors seemed to contribute to its incidence.

Of the sample of women interviewed, 34% owned some property, which they had either inherited or brought as dowry when they married. The statistical results of the study showed that a woman’s property status was a significant predictor of the likelihood of her being subject to violence. 49% of propertyless women were abused, while rates of abuse among women who owned either a house, land or both varied from 7-18%. Agarwal and Panda hypothesized that property ownership deterred domestic violence, while also giving the woman a position of self-respect so that she could leave her husband permanently, if she chose. The field study investigated qualitative aspects of the phenomenon as well. Social factors found to be important included the household’s economic status, the social support network of family and neighbors, the husband’s employment status, and the intergenerational transfer effect on children who had seen fathers abuse mothers. Less consistently significant factors were the woman’s formal employment.
In a recent survey of IRWaG alumni, we found that graduates of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender have had success in pursuing advanced degrees and finding challenging careers in a wide range of fields including education, medicine, public health, public policy, law and non-profit. Recent students have been accepted into doctoral programs in Anthropology, American Studies, History, and Public Health at major research universities including the University of California at Berkeley, the University of California at Santa Cruz, the University of Chicago, Columbia University, and New York University. Some who graduated many years ago have gone on to teach in the fields of U.S. women’s history, the history of gender and sexuality, South Asian studies, and gay and lesbian history.

Graduates from our program have also pursued careers outside the academy, with many stressing the importance of their interdisciplinary education in gender studies for their careers and professional training. Many work in the area of women’s health and sexuality. Victoria Borgia (‘92) and Vanita Kumar (‘96) are practicing family physicians, while Rebecca Brafman (‘04) and Leah Rorvig (‘03) are in medical programs at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and San Francisco State University, respectively. Borgia noted that, “My degree in Women’s Studies informs everything I do in medicine. It gave me a perspective to see the individual in society and the ability to practice with a sense of social justice.” Kumar, a faculty member in the Department of Family and Social Medicine at the Montefiore Medical Center is also a trainer at Planned Parenthood in New York City. Estelle Raboni (‘98) is the Program Manager of Planned Parenthood’s “Real Life. Real Talk” initiative designed to change the way communities talk about sex and sexual health, while completing her MPH at Columbia University. She said that the program was superb in training students how to think and write critically and has carried those skills and competencies with her throughout her life and work. Emily Kramer (‘00) has recently published A Piece of Cake: Recipes for Female Sexual Pleasure (2005), a book on sexual education. She also co-founded CAKE, a multi-faceted project devoted to promoting healthy views of women’s sexuality.

Haley K. Olsen-Acre (‘03), Katherine Thursby (‘03), Simon Moshenberg (‘01) and Cris Maisano (‘01) are pursuing law degrees at the University of Michigan, the University of California-Hastings College of Law, Yale University, and New York University, respectively. Commenting on her degree from IRWaG, Olsen-Acre said, “What I continue to appreciate most about my experience in the program is the attention paid to developing both critical thinking and writing skills. I remember being constantly challenged to explore ideas from all angles, critique my own conclusions and those of others, and shape my thoughts into articulate oral and written statements for others to consider.

What’s the Use, continued on page 11
Women’s Rights and Shari’a in Indonesia

On November 20, Lily Munir, the founder-director of the Center for Pesantren and Democracy Studies in Indonesia, spoke on “The Introduction of Shari’a-Nuanced Bylaws and the Creation of Patriarchy in Indonesia.” The event was sponsored by the new Center for the Study of Democracy and Religion at Columbia, together with IRWaG, the Center for the Study of Law and Culture and the Southeast Asian Student Group.

IRWaG director Professor Lila Abu-Lughod introduced Ms Munir, whose background included management, medical anthropology, and visiting appointments at the University of South Carolina School of Law and the program in Islam and Human Rights at Emory University. Ms Munir said the important part of her background was that she came from a “moderate and progressive” family of ulama (Muslim religious scholars) and had studied theology before medical anthropology. This had led her to question patriarchal cultural norms that posited women’s lower social status as divinely sanctioned, in Indonesia and elsewhere. Thus she founded the Center for Pestantren and Democracy Studies (CPDS), a non-governmental organization that conducts outreach work on women’s rights in Islam in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) as well as the broader civic sphere.

“The through our center we explore and promote woman-friendly verses in the Qur’an,” asserted Ms Munir. “We reveal the gaps between normative and historical shari’a (religious law).” Her presentation outlined the history of Indonesia, the nation with the world’s largest Muslim population. It is a secular state which incorporates Islamic teachings into certain laws. “There are broad and narrow meanings of shari’a,” she noted, explaining that the word shari’a simply meant a path or a way in its broadest sense. “There is always human interpretation, and this can’t get away from its social and cultural basis.” The CPDS makes its own intervention by focusing on issues that are too often ignored by authoritative interpreters, such as poverty, education and healthcare rather than the veiling of women.

The province of Aceh was the first in Indonesia to introduce what Munir calls “shari’a-nuanced by-laws” in 1999, following the referendum that ended a long civil conflict. Munir conducted field studies there in 2002 and 2005, and found that the new laws were causing conflict. For instance, women who were not veiled faced public hostility. A new shari’apolice had begun to work in parallel with the regular police force. Aceh was meant to be a pilot case for shari’a-based law in the rest of Indonesia, but Munir cited the excesses seen here as an example of the alarming discretion with which authorities could deploy shari’a if it were written into law. Her NGO instead pointed to ways in which shari’a could inspire community activism and awareness outside the realm of law.

Professor Abu-Lughod opened the question-and-answer session by asking who the main audiences of the CPDS’s work were. Munir said that the NGO worked mainly with pesantren (Islamic boarding school) communities, to which she herself has school and familial ties. Additionally, they planned to expand outreach efforts by publishing a book which aimed to “educate people that they have been mystified by shari’a authorities,” Munir mentioned. At the same time, she also travelled to the United States and Europe to speak in policy and academic settings. “My feet stand at two different levels,” she acknowledged. “One is academic and intellectual, and the other is with people on the ground.”

When asked if there were positive examples of shari’a implementation, Munir was skeptical. “We have to ask who does the ijtihad (interpretation) to produce shari’aby-laws,” she countered. “There are no women on the ulama councils. The shari’a councils are made up of politicians.” However, the CPDS does train people to interpret shari’a, while also consulting on religious law with Indonesian bureaucrats and members of human rights committees at the provincial and national level. In the practical, policy-oriented approach which forms the basis of the CPDS’s work, both secular and Islamic approaches are deployed to the end of widening human and women’s rights. ■

Lily Munir
NEWS FROM FACULTY IN THE IRWaG ORBIT

Look for these 2006-2007 books and CD's:

Lila Abu-Lughod, Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory (with Ahmad H. Sa’di)

Zainab Bahrani, Uruk: The First City (Bible World) (with Mario Liverani and Marc Van De Mieroop)

Ellen Baker, On Strike and On Film: Mexican American Families and Blacklisted Filmmakers in the Cold War

Susan Boynton, Musical Childhoods and the Cultures of Youth (Music Culture) (with Roe-Min Kok)

Saidiya Hartman, Lose Your Mother

Jennifer Hirsch, Modern Loves: The Anthropology of Romantic Love and Companionate Marriage (with Holly Wardlaw)

Jean Howard, Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy 1598-1642


Elizabeth Ladenson, Dirt for Art's Sake: Books on Trial from Madame Bovary to Lolita

Sharon Marcus Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England by Sharon Marcus

Christia Mercer, Leibniz’s Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development (now in paperback)

Verne Moberg, CD's in the series “Scandinavia Off Broadway, on Campus at Columbia.” Agnete (1893) by Amalie Skram and Alva & Gunnar: 91 Days in the Long-Distance Relationship of the Myrdals One Summer During World War II by Hans Hederberg (both translated by Verne Moberg)

Elizabeth Povinelli, The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality

Anupama Rao, Discipline and the Other Body: Correction, Corporeality, Colonialism. (with Steven Pierce)

Pamela H. Smith, The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution (now in paperback)

Ezra Tawil, The Making of Racial Sentiment: Slavery and the Birth of The Frontier Romance


Maxine Weisgrau, Raj Rhapsodies: Tourism, Heritage and the Seduction of History (with Carol E. Henderson) and Experiencing Life and Death Before Birth: The Anthropologies of the Unborn

Nancy Woloch, Women And The American Experience

A few highlights on other fronts:

Rachel Adams received a major grant from NEH to co-direct (with Caroline Levander of Rice University) a seminar called “Toward a Hemispheric American Literature” at Columbia in summer 2007.

Susan Crane presented “For the Birds,” Biennial Chaucer Lecture, New Chaucer Society in New York, July 2006

Ellen Gray has an article coming out in Ethnomusicology, “Memories of Empire, Mythologies of the Soul: Fado Performance and the Shaping of Saudade.”

Neferti Tadiar was Andrew W. Mellon Global Fellow at the Institute for the Humanities at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and gave a paper, “Diaspora and Disappearance: The Global Course of Filipino Nationalism.”

More Faculty News on Page 8

On October 24, members of the IRWaG community and anthropology department gathered for a book party to celebrate the publication of Professor Beth Povinelli’s dazzling and original book, Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy and Carnality by Duke University Press. When asked to read some of her favorite paragraphs from this study of two settler colonies, the United States and Australia, in which queer Radical Faeries and aboriginal communities respectively challenged the state’s liberal norms, Professor Povinelli offered informal conversation and urged her colleagues to eat and drink.
At what price? If we use Baker as an example we know that talent and beauty are not enough, though she had a lot of both. But she had something else, and here I am not going to say that extra spark, that unknowable thing that made her stand out. It is not as mysterious as that. What she had that the others didn’t was (1) coming along at the time when the culture was ready for her, and (2) a desire to be recognized, acknowledged and loved. And this second is especially important, her willingness to do what it took to be loved (as is the case with most great performers/entertainers). Baker provided a vision that her hosts wanted to see. Not just as the glorious primitive whose every step is a dance and who oozes sex from every pore. But also a reflection of themselves that is appealing. I was primitive until you domesticated and tamed me....taught me how to be a lady and how to speak your language. And I will praise you in your own language and accept and define myself by the terms, frames that you set forth. At the same time I am not like your idea of black people. I am nothing like that. I am unique, singular, the most dazzling, the most brilliant—all that you want to be. I will be ever so grateful to you, I will praise your name worldwide, I will take risks for you and fight for you when you are under attack. I will spend the rest of my life expressing my gratitude to you and in so doing I will manipulate you to do my bidding along the way. (The equivalent in the United States would be to agree to embody the role of America’s beloved Mammy all the way to the bank.) And, as is always the case, this tells us more about the societies that require this kind of adoration than it does about the women who provide it.

For Baker—chorus girl, music hall diva, movie star, muse to poets and painters, business woman, resistance worker—remains a bit of an enigma. Even as we peel through layers of myth, even as our analysis and discussion bring us to a clearer and closer understanding of her, what we come away with, like looking at the poster for the conference, is a reflection of ourselves.
Davidson read Garrick’s adaptation as a “transformation of Shakespeare’s account of aristocratic inheritance under threat into an endorsement of a new model of English breeding, one that emphasized middle-class manners and values.” This is clearest in a significant pair of changes in the scenes of Leontes’ tormented doubts about whether his wife’s children are in fact his own. While Shakespeare’s text had a nurse insist the child Perdita was a copy of her father, Garrick’s version twice changes the text to say that the child is “printed off” her mother. The motivation for these changes was the puzzle that guided Davidson’s investigation into theories of identity and inheritance in this era. The leading scientific models of reproduction were those of Galen and Aristotle, the latter having developed Galen’s notion of male and female semens to suggest the male had a more dominant role. There was a complementary belief in the power of the maternal imagination to affect the child’s form. But as Garrick’s adaptation of A Winter’s Tale revealed, identification between daughters and mothers had become a potent trope at this time. “Garrick’s revision to Shakespeare can be seen...to generate a kind of "soft" ovism,” Davidson remarked, noting that in this adaptation “the shared fact of femaleness trumps other relations of resemblance.”

The story of disrupted inheritance in the kingdom of Sicilia in The Winter’s Tale was abridged and adapted by Garrick into a romance of “love in a cottage” in which the noble heroine’s rule within her husband’s house compensated for her loss of claims to rule after her marriage. This romantic view of disinheritance, Davidson noted, paralleled “an increasing tendency in Britain to disinherit daughters at the expense of sons.” At the same time, despite experimental developments which clarified the role of sperm in reproduction, scientists widely maintained “an ovist view of preformation.” There were awkward compromises in novels as well as scientific theories which sought to underscore paternal resemblance in order to affirm a daughter’s legitimacy, but emphasized her closer identity with her mother, reflecting “socioeconomic transformations that nudged Britain away from blood kinship towards a conjugal model in which a woman’s identity was defined more clearly by her husband than her father.”

The contradictions engendered by changing theories of heredity were resolved in newer literary genres. While in Frances Burney’s 1778 novel Evelina the heroine’s legitimate birth is established through her resemblance to her dead mother, Elizabeth Inchbald’s A Simple Story, resolves the tussle between maternal and paternal identity instead by underscoring the difference that education and upbringing made in giving the daughter a superior character to that of her wayward mother. This literary trope, carried through in the novels of Jane Austen, could be seen, Davidson suggested, as a point of beginning for current debates on nature and nurture.

In November 2006 Other Press published Unconfessed, a first novel by 1997 IRWaG Visiting Scholar Yvette Christiansë. Within a few weeks it had gone to a second printing. Born in South Africa under apartheid, poet Christiansë (publication of whose first book Castaway was celebrated at Columbia’s Deutsches Haus) now lives here in New York City where she is an Associate Professor at Fordham University. Based on the author’s archival research, the novel tells the heart-breaking story of a slave named Sila van den Kaap who is driven to an unspeakable crime. It has been compared to Edward P. Jones and Toni Morrison.
aspect of sovereignty, the concept around which the public/private distinction acquired moral weight. Often this concept privileged male power at home and came with the notion that women’s injuries should be redressed in private. This notion inevitably carried over to the idea of domestic rather than international political concerns as well. Ironically, noted MacKinnon, the process of claiming their rights has generally taken women further away from home in appeals to distant authorities. The example of Bosnian women seeking redress for genocidal rape in a foreign country was a significant one, and a signal victory for international women’s rights. Other positive examples of conventions which recognized women’s rights as human rights, MacKinnon said, were regional multi-nation conventions in Africa and the Americas.

The question of an international charter for women’s rights was a more complex one, MacKinnon acknowledged, detailing attempts in this direction such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). “Sex equality is moving toward recognition as a peremptory rule,” she stated, noting that no country said that it supported sex discrimination even though it widely existed in fact. But MacKinnon cautioned that there remained significant barriers to introducing into the political arena a concept so strongly tinged with ideas of morality. The recognition of women’s rights remained a less powerful concept internationally than the quest to end racial discrimination.

Professor Gayatri Spivak responded with a critique made, she said, “in solidarity” with MacKinnon’s ideas. Taking up the idea of the state as a male-gendered institution, Spivak argued that “the problem may not be the state but the state’s frontiers.” Drawing an analogy with the university, another male-gendered institution which critics sought to reform rather than collapse, Spivak called for a “reinvention of the state that should not keep to the sovereignty argument.” Regional organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation offered one arena for instituting state-to-state laws for the rights of women, she argued. “That’s where the hope lies—not in simply dismissing the state as male, but in devising feminist regionalisms.”

Spivak distinguished also between civil society within a state and internationally, arguing that one could not say civil society was generically coded as feminine. In this respect, Spivak also noted that it was important to recognize that “the imperatives of globalization require that barriers between international capital and state capital are removed.” The state’s redistributive power had thus significantly changed. A further point of caution was the possibility of what Spivak called “racist feminism.” She concluded that the question of global women’s rights must address not just the pervasiveness of gender inequality, but also local ideologies of reproductive heteronormativity, particularly “the benevolent version in which the seeds of gender inequality lie.”

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**Gendered State, continued from page 1**

*Institute for research on women and gender’s 12th annual queer studies prize.*

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All Columbia College, General Studies, and Barnard College undergraduates are invited to submit their best papers for consideration. Papers from every discipline, on any topic within “queer studies”—broadly defined—will be judged anonymously by an interdisciplinary committee of Columbia and Barnard faculty and graduate students.

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whether or not the couple had children, and alcohol consumption. Agarwal then turned to the question of what could be done about domestic violence in India in light of these findings. She noted that macro- and micro-economic factors governed the factors which contributed to domestic violence, and each would have to be addressed. A change in macro-economic conditions could only be expected in the long term and this would be linked to wider economic growth. It was already clear that rates of domestic violence were lower in rich countries.

Agarwal focused her consideration on micro-level redressive measures instead. She noted that measures that dealt with violence after the fact, such as setting up halfway houses, could only play a limited role. But increasing women’s access to housing and land “can play a preventive role and deter violence.” Both legal and other remedies would be necessary, she remarked, emphasizing that “we need to bridge the gap between law and practice.” This would entail addressing social obstacles such as parental bias against giving their daughters property as well as making available legal aid, low-cost housing options and subsidized credit. “Law can be an important enabling factor, but not the last word,” Agarwal concluded.

The question-and-answer session, moderated by Professor Sanger, featured a lively exchange on the details of the social context in which the study was carried out. Professor Agarwal responded to a question on the difference made by caste and religion by saying these were not found to have a significant effect on domestic violence; even traditionally matrilineal castes did not as a result have a different pattern. The factor of property ownership was important across caste and religious backgrounds. In response to another question on differences in patterns of violence for respondents in rural and urban areas, Professor Agarwal noted that this difference mapped onto that between socio-economic classes, with wealthier families tending to reside in urban areas.

What’s the Use, continued from page 5
and critique. The constant exchange with professors and other students, and the intellectual rigor of the program overall, provided excellent preparation for my current studies in law.”

Several IRWaG alumni went overseas after graduation. Naomi Schiller (’00), a Fulbright U.S. Student Fellow, researched women, nation, and development in Venezuela and then went on to work on a Ph.D in Anthropology at New York University. Alexandra Hartman (’05) was a Rotary Scholar who used her fellowship to study in Paris. Calla Brown (’03) joined the Peace Corps shortly after her studies, working in the Youth Development Program in Ecuador where she taught reproductive health classes and facilitated prenatal and HIV education. She is currently completing her MPH in the Population and Family Health department at Columbia University. Karen Austrian (’02) founded a women’s rights and reproductive health center for adolescent girls in the Kibera slum of Nairobi, Kenya. She currently serves as an advisor to the girl’s center helping with fundraising, report-writing and new program development, while completing her MPH–Reproductive, Adolescent, and Child Health Track in the Population and Family Health department at Columbia University.

Alumni described IRWaG professors as unique for the individual attention and academic support they gave students. They pointed out that the program provided a solid grounding in feminist and gender theory, texts, and history which gave students the analytical tools they needed to reexamine the world with a gendered perspective. Korvig said, “The dedication of IRWaG faculty to students was unparalleled.” Andrew Hao, a 2005 IRWaG graduate, echoed this in his comments. “I really believe there exists a great degree of personal and scholarly commitment of IRWaG professors to their students, teaching, and material. In terms of the skills of reading, research, writing, and classroom debate, I could not have been better trained than at IRWaG. Many of my peers in graduate school, and certainly at Columbia, never had the chance to take an extensive regimen of seminars nor to work closely with professors until their M.A. studies.” Patricia Gibson (’04) added, “Most of my Women’s and Gender Studies classes taught me to look at things from a different angle and to question things until satisfied with the answer. The major allowed me to appreciate myself, my history…. Students who take gender studies courses can also take full advantage of the city since they can become socially aware and get involved with city issues and connect Columbia with the city.”

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11
### Spring 2007 Undergraduate Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Call#</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Instructor(s)</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V3111</td>
<td>Feminist Texts I</td>
<td>07309</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N. Kampen</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>11:00am–12:50pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>V3112</td>
<td>Feminist Texts II</td>
<td>23324</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>M. Hirsch</td>
<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC3117</td>
<td>Women and Film</td>
<td>09389</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>J. Beller</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>7:10–9:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC3121</td>
<td>Black Women in America</td>
<td>02095</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>K. Hall</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>11:00am–12:50pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC3130</td>
<td>Intro. to Gay &amp; Lesbian Studies</td>
<td>08742</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>R. Young</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>4:10–5:25pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC3134</td>
<td>Unheard Voices: African Women</td>
<td>04007</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>C. Ogunyemi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4:10–6:00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>V3312</td>
<td>Theorizing Women’s Activism</td>
<td>07651</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>R. Young &amp; J. Jakobsen</td>
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<tr>
<td>V3521</td>
<td>Senior Seminar I</td>
<td>63442</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>E. Povinelli</td>
<td>T</td>
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<tr>
<td>V3522</td>
<td>Senior Seminar II</td>
<td>01088</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N. Tadiar</td>
<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>V3813</td>
<td>Colloquium in Feminist Theory</td>
<td>25280</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>E. Baker</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>V3915</td>
<td>Gender &amp; Power in Global Perspective</td>
<td>02575</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>K. Bedford</td>
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### Spring 2007 Graduate Courses

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<th>Points</th>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W4300</td>
<td>Advanced Topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sec. 001</td>
<td>20th Century US Jewish Women</td>
<td>02735</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>I. Klepfisz</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>11:00am–12:50pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sec. 002</td>
<td>Gender HIV &amp; AIDS</td>
<td>09632</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>R. Young &amp; C. Cynn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sec. 003</td>
<td>Feminist Postcolonial Theory</td>
<td>04846</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N. Tadiar</td>
<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sec. 004</td>
<td>Feminisms in China</td>
<td>01356</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>D. Ko</td>
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<tr>
<td>G4000</td>
<td>Genealogies of Feminism: Politics in the Wake of the Human</td>
<td>73453</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>S. Hartman &amp; N. Tadiar</td>
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<tr>
<td>W4485</td>
<td>Gender &amp; Development in South Asia</td>
<td>81098</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>S. Jassal</td>
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