Women's Studies in Cyberspace

When the Senate voted 84-16 in favor of the 1995 Communications Decency Act this summer, it did so in the name of American women and children said to be at risk from “cyberperverts” on the global electronic communications network known as the Internet.

Supporters of the bill, which would criminalize “indecent” speech on the Internet, drew on arguments that children, but also women, are automatically in danger on an unregulated 'net. "Computer pornography and sexual harassment by 'cyberperverts' may be frightening women off the information highway," declared The Daily Telegraph (6/14/95), while the Omaha World Herald editorialized that “some women users feel they must adopt gender-neutral nicknames to discourage perverts from trying to communicate with them [online]. Maybe government regulation is an answer” (2/11/95).

The bill, which was in a joint committee along with several House measures at press time, was the dramatic culmination of many months of media interest in the theme of women and the Internet. Much of this interest centered on a recent “discovery”: women are underrepresented among Internet users. Calling on “experts” to explain this phenomenon, much ink was spilt in discussion over this question.

IRWG decided, therefore, to consult its own experts. Through an informal survey conducted by IRWG among users of online services for women's studies professionals—students, academics, librarians, and administrators—we have compiled around 40 responses suggesting that much of the recent talk about women and the Internet has struck a false note. In short, respondents argued for a more complex understanding of the Internet’s benefits and pitfalls for women, insisting that these are not separable from the realities of “real” life.

How many women use the Internet? For some time, it was thought that 1 in 10 Internet users was a woman. A more recent study released this spring by the Texas firm Matrix Information & Directory Services, however, places the ratio at two men to every one woman. When Internet users affiliated with universities are excluded from the results, however, the percentage of female users goes down to about 30% compared to men’s 70%. In other words, there is more gender equality in 'net use within universities than on the commercial services and in government.

Why, in general, don’t more women use the 'net? Beyond the come-ons by “cyberperverts,” some have argued, women feel uncomfortable in an electronic world dominated by men, where male “styles” of...
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discourse prevail. Susan Herring, a
linguist at the University of Texas,
spent a year observing discussion on
two academic discussion lists and
argues that male participants are
more likely than women to send
aggressive or rude messages
("flames," in "net" slang), while
women are disproportionately the
targets of such flaming. Herring con-
cluded in her 1993 study that flaming
effectively silences women online (see "Resources," page 3).

Other experts have taken the idea
differences in male and female
conversation styles—popularized by
Deborah Tannen's 1990 bestseller,
*You Just Don’t Understand: Women &
Men in Conversation*—a step further,
arguing that women's discomfort on
the "net is inherent to the very tech-
nology of electronic communication.
"The medium pushes people toward a
controversial style," says Sherry
Terkle, an MIT researcher, in *The
Boston Globe.* "It rewards the quick
jab. It encourages a kind of con-
frontational style, which men are
more comfortable with."

Some commentators have been
quick to note the fact that some
women have started women-only or
women-only groups online as "safe"
spaces beyond the threat of
flaming or harassment. This sort of
coverage tends to reflect the differ-
ences among types of online ser-
dices, since by contrast to the more
open and anonymous "usenet"
groups that tend to be the focus of
negative coverage, a great number of
discussion groups for women are
"listers," or e-mail-based mailing
lists with a defined membership.
Other resources like "gopher"
archives or World Wide Web sites
dealing with women's interests (see
"Resources") are occasionally men-
tended groups—unmoderated talk-sites
where interchanges can take on a
free-for-all character—eliding what
takes place in these groups with the
Internet as a whole. In so doing, the
emphasis is also almost entirely on
recreational use, leaving a discussion
of what electronic communication—
or the absence of it—could mean in
women's professional lives behind.

Second, discussions of women's
relative absence on the "net hardly
ever address the question of
access—namely, of how gender
inequality in institutional affiliation
or wealth might affect the gender
inequality online. Thus they tend to
treat problems women encounter
online as isolated from a broader
social context.

Many respondents agreed that
men are more likely to flame than
women, but were divided over the
question of whether the medium of
electronic communication encou-
grages or discourages flaming and/or
expressions of bias. Some argued
that the lack of face-to-face contact
loosens normal inhibitions and facil-
itates abusive speech online, while
others felt that, quite the contrary, it
allows people to cool down and bite
their tongues. "From the beginning, I
felt the net gave me scope and equal-
ity," wrote one female English
instructor. "I could take time to figure
out how to react."

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Others disputed the emphasis on the difference between male and female online behavior or were wary of essentializing those differences. “For the most part men seem to be using the Internet in the same way as the women—to find and share information,” wrote one woman.

Had they ever experienced sexism online? “In spades,” wrote one self-styled “webmistress,” a student who runs her own Web site. A Ph.D. student at Syracuse University related a problem common to other venues as well, having received some not-so-subtle hints on one academic discussion list “giving me the impression that I couldn’t do theory with the boys.”

On the other hand, many respondents in the negative, although “I’ve experienced sexism offline, too,” was an even more typical sentiment. “Why should we assume online will be different from offline?” asked another respondent. “Cyberspace has the same ‘isms’ that our other reality has,” wrote a third, and again: “Sexism precedes entrance to the net.”

None of the respondents advocated censorship of the net as proposed in the Communications Decency Act. Rather, opinion was split between those who desired no government regulation whatsoever, and those who proposed that “individuals need to have some recourse should offensive, harassing, threatening remarks be made to them individually and directly.”

“A mechanism to prevent hate actions is good in theory but difficult in practice,” wrote one. “Such bills [as the Exon proposal] will, like most other laws regarding obscenity, have a far greater impact on the rights of gays and lesbians to have our own chunk of cyberspace, than they will on ‘actual pornography.’”

Reflecting on why there are fewer women than men online, respondents again and again raised “the obvious question of access.” Wrote the director of one women’s studies program, “the first point of difference is access according to class, which is of course intersected by gender and ethnic differences.”

“The media hype prevents a serious political discourse about the disposition and distribution of social resources,” remarked one student—“the Internet is simply too expensive to use for those not connected with a corporation or academic institution.” The proof of this was apparent in any schoolroom, wrote another respondent: “You can see the computer hases and have-nots from kindergarten on.”

Respondents suggested that Internet access has become a marker of status within and across institutions. Some described how institutional politics—the priorities of the administration or the whim of the systems chief—can, for example, determine which programs or individuals get an Internet hookup and which do not. Meanwhile, adjuncts must sometimes pay for their own Internet accounts, while low-income students at certain schools have no choice but to go “cold-turkey” during the summers and after graduation.

On the positive side, gender alone does not seem to account for the inequality between male and female users. Several instructors who have introduced the Internet into their teaching say that women students are as eager as men to learn the new medium. “I’ve had very few female students show the sort of reluctance one reads about so often,” wrote one teacher. “On the contrary, some of the most avid [new student users] are women.” “Women CAN learn to drive on the information highway as well as men,” insisted another respondent. “It seems that in this word-centered environment, what and how you write takes on more importance than how you look. Women can use the medium to enhance forms of communication and networking that have historically been women’s strength.”

It is this sort of “communication and networking” and the tremendous benefits to be gained for women’s studies students and professionals that respondents said the media have overlooked. Most respondents put regular e-mail at the top of the list for both utility and fun, with e-mail discussion lists in second place: “I have done reviewing for journals completely on line, submitted book reviews, had long chats with my closest friend from graduate school who is 1,500 miles away,” wrote one respondent in describing the joys of e-mail. “I read the lists related to my areas [and] keep in close contact with my graduate students.”

One student wrote that the Internet’s real utility is “seldom captured by all the media hype,” naming

Resources on the Net

The best place for more information about the Internet is the Internet. The boxed article on page 4 illustrates the variety, if not the quantity, of such resources. For questions about accessing any of the following, or for other net-related queries, yet another resource is IRWG’s electronic media assistant, Alana Erickson, who can be reached at 854-7034 or aje4@columbia.edu. “Women’s Studies on the Internet,” a flyer with tips and information, is also available in 763 Schermerhorn. Be sure to check IRWG’s homepage at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/irwg/.
such unsensational benefits as saving time and gas by accessing long-distance library catalogs from home. Instructors commented on the net's pedagogical uses, describing it as "a fascinating and exciting addition to teaching. It opened up additional lines of communication," wrote one professor, "extended the class into the world and gave a venue for participation to students who did not talk in class." Others saw the Internet as an equalizer: "Now we can network with each other without spending the big bucks to hang out at the conference bars." Above all, respondents described the Internet as a tonic against isolation, emphasizing the intellectual stimulation and emotional succor that electronic contact with like-minded people can provide. One woman wrote, "I feel connected to colleagues on a regular basis for the first time in my academic career (I was the only woman in my department until this year and now am the first woman with tenure in its history...and I do research [in women's history]...which isolated me further...I feel as if I'm in a grad seminar with the best minds in the field."

"It's made me worry less about where I might end up getting my first teaching job, because I know I won't be isolated as long as I have access to the Internet," wrote a graduate student; "the net lets us build a virtual community that can sustain us even when we don't get the support we need locally." Another respondent describes the net as a place "where the 'feminist' wheel need not be reinvented continuously."

A quiet revolution? Despite enthusiasm, most respondents remained skeptical about whether the net would revolutionize either the academic world or the discipline of women's studies. "Whether we like it or not we are not 'the people' and to my mind any revolution has to include 'the people,'" wrote one respondent. "More contact, support, and resources are marvellous," said another, "but we are still pretty much talking to ourselves." Several noted that women's studies online are hardly free from racism or exclusivity, or that students of theirs have been snubbed on occasion for not having sufficient expertise. "something that may help the net keep lily white and male."

In the end, wrote one student summing up, the Internet "will be good (or bad) as we make it or allow it to be."
Melanie Despain of SIPA Comes to IRWG

Melanie Despain joins us this fall as the Institute for Research on Women and Gender’s resident embodiment of cross-disciplinary gender studies. Despain, who holds a joint appointment with the School of International and Public Affairs, is mandated to forge stronger links between the Institute and the social sciences at Columbia. The initiative for her appointment was originally taken by Dean John Ruggie of SIPA and is the result of a happy pooling of resources on the part of IRWG, SIPA and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Despain, who will be exploring funding for the development of IRWG’s base in the social sciences, has already been instrumental in bridging the gap between gender studies and the “hard” social sciences in her work at SIPA. Now the director of SIPA’s two-year-old gender and public policy program (see page 6), Despain developed and taught SIPA’s first course on women and policy analysis, a course that Assistant Dean Nancy Degnan describes as being “absolutely critical to the well-being of the concentration.”

Despain came to the teaching of policy and gender, she says, as a result of the push by SIPA public policy students to secure a gender concentration in 1994. When students first presented their proposal for such a concentration, Despain noticed that—while representing a range of offerings from feminist theory to women in law—it contained no single course in gender and policy analysis. No such course, in fact, existed at the time, so Despain volunteered to create one.

As Despain explains, “policy analysis” is a methodology based on microeconomic concepts; it uses these as a basis for predicting and/or testing the results of policies in the real world. Policy analysis and gender intersect in that the former explores the interaction of agents—firms, consumers, governments—in all parts of the marketplace, with an emphasis on “all.” In many of these fields gender is a necessary category of analysis.

For example, in Despain’s own research into the development of consumer habits over a lifetime, it is necessary to explore behavior within the home and therefore to come to grips with the role of gender in the household. This study is part of her wider aim to inject “a more realistic assessment of people’s behavior into [current] mathematical models of spending and saving.”

A similar effort to introduce “human behavior into stylized, technically clean models” also informs much of the current research on policy and gender, Despain explains. Underlying microeconomic theory is the idea that human beings act as “rational utility maximers.” In classical microeconomics, says Despain, the notion of rational utility assumes that individuals may only “rationally” calculate actions based on their own interests. Theoretically, therefore, individuals “can’t care about children, a spouse or an elderly parent.”

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World Wide Web

Many a cybergrrl or webmistress has started her own “home page” on the web, making it easy to leapfrog to an array of feminist sites across the world. One such is Yale’s “The Ada Project,” named after an early foremother of computing languages and containing notes and downloadable pictures relating to the history of women in computer science, at http://www.cs.yale.edu/HTML/YALE/CS/HyPlans/tap/tap.html. Other starting points are cybrarian Karen Schneider’s page at http://www.intac.com/~kgs or the index of women’s online resources at http://www.mit.edu.8001/people/sorokin/women/index.html.

Queries, News, Etc.

Voters Telecommunications Watch posts regular updates on Internet-related legislation in the U.S. Congress. To receive postings, send the message “subscribe vtw-announce Firstname Lastname” to listproc@vtw.org. Those without e-mail can receive faxed bulletins by calling (718) 596-2851.

For general queries about Internet functions and/or issues, e-mail INTERNET-WOMEN-HELP@BEST.COM.

Last but not least are the infamous “usenet” groups, where the worst abuses of netiquette supposedly occur. However, there are several groups with a reputation for serious discussion dealing with women-related themes, such as soc.feminism, soc.women, or comp.society.women (the latter deals with social issues of women and computing). From the CUNIX prompt type “pinewsrc” for a full listing of groups available through the Columbia network.
Gender and Policy Join Forces at SIPA

Given her interest in women’s issues and her background in the medical trade, it was only natural for Bonnie Mackey to look for connections between the two fields when she began her studies at Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs. To her surprise, this effort was met with blank stares from some of her colleagues at SIPA.

“I encountered the attitude at school and elsewhere that there was no gender angle to health,” Mackey relates. Attitudes like these, she says, were what convinced some students of the need for a permanent curricular offering at SIPA that would link gender and public policy.

In fact, the impetus for such an offering first came from members of the student group Women in Public and International Affairs (WPIA) about two years ago. That was when, according to Assistant Dean Nancy Degnan, discussions began between WPIA and the Dean’s Office about the concern that “non-white, non-male issues were not present in the classroom in any kind of concrete, sustainable way.”

Last year WPIA presented a proposal, solicited by the deans, for a concentration in gender and public policy. As is usual at SIPA, students would select four courses, taught either by SIPA faculty or at other schools at Columbia. On the roster of options would be offerings from the Schools of Public Health and Social Work, Teachers’ College, and the sociology and anthropology departments at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, allowing students to tailor the concentration to their interests. WPIA, says Degnan, also convinced the deans that there was demand for such a concentration among students and faculty, and—crucially—that a gender and policy specialization was viable on the job market.

Approved in Spring 1994 and first offered that fall, SIPA’s administration judges the gender and public policy concentration a success. Its first graduating class of 15 (out of a class of 93) has fared as well or better than other graduates on the job market. According to Degnan, students were ideally poised to benefit from recognition in many parts of the private, public, and non-profit sectors that an awareness of gender is “crucial for the well-being of organizations and the success of their service delivery.”

Moreover, Degnan says that the existence of the gender concentration has proved “an extraordinary recruitment tool” for SIPA, accounting for a rise of ten per cent in the applicant pool—including, this year, the concentration’s first male student. For all these successes, Degnan praises the students. “The concentration really was formed out of their research, their commitment, and their motivation.”

Students also give the program high marks. Mackey says that it provides her with the tools she needs to make her point. “It’s very important to be able to measure things in solid terms,” she says. “People don’t think you’re just making things up if you can back yourself up with well-developed arguments.”

Moreover, while “these problems are being addressed both within and outside of the field of gender,” says Despain, “from a policy-analysis standpoint, there’s a gender component that needs to be addressed immediately.” Despain points out that last year’s debates over welfare reform were in large part a discussion of women’s behavior, yet they were uninformed by systematic study. In discussions over whether women’s incentive for staying on welfare would be decreased by eliminating benefits for second children, for example, “a lot of people threw around a lot of assumptions that aren’t supported by the research.”

In her gender and policy course, therefore, Despain tries to provide her students with a critical edge. In presenting a variety of current microeconomic models of gendered behavior, she encourages them to examine both how such models are constructed, as well as how policy is made based upon them. This approach has opened out, she says, onto “an incredibly broad spectrum of topics”—from ideas about how to measure the worth of women’s non-wage labor to discussions over the role of women in international development—all with important policy implications.

Despain hopes that more of her students can benefit this year from the resources and activities of IRWG, especially given the Institute’s strengths in the humanities. “Economics brings a lot of theories, models and techniques into an area where history, politics, and cultural behavior are very important, and economics doesn’t really have the tools for dealing with these things alone. I’m hoping that this liaison will allow more people to cross over.” At the very least, general studies at Columbia will benefit greatly from Despain’s presence on this side of Amsterdam Avenue in the year to come.

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For Despain, such conclusions simply fly in the face of reality. “Economics is a model of human behavior,” she insists; the problem, then, becomes “how to take that into account.” While some would prefer to toss microeconomic models out the window and start over, Despain feels that the current theoretical framework is not only salvageable, but a valuable tool. To put theory in the service of human needs and real-life problems, rather than the other way around, Despain feels, is the key, and introducing gender is one step towards this goal.
**The Search for a Relationship**

*In this issue, Feminist News continues a series of articles spotlighting the position of women and women's studies throughout the School of Arts and Sciences. Pursuing the theme of social science and feminism (see last issue’s focus on the political science department) we take a look here at the impact of recent changes at the sociology department.*

Compared to just a few years ago, Columbia’s sociology department has more women faculty, more course offerings in women and gender, and a new comprehensive field for graduate students wishing to concentrate on the study of gender. All this is good news, but it has raised a question: what is, or should be, the relationship of sociology as a discipline to women’s studies and feminism?

Until recently, sociology courses focusing on women and gender were sporadic. While undergraduates could take cross-listed courses in women’s studies at Barnard, graduate students wishing to specialize in the sociology of gender had little opportunity for doing coursework in the department.

Chair Mary Ruggie was appointed to the faculty in 1991 and elected department chair in 1994. Ruggie, with a research background in women and the welfare state, explains that introducing gender more firmly into the curriculum was necessary for two reasons: to meet student demand, and to reflect developments in sociology itself, where gender is an increasingly important subfield.

This has meant, above all, more options for graduate students. Since 1992, they have been able to choose gender as an area of concentration in the comprehensive exam, an option backed up by several new course offerings: a graduate seminar on feminist theory taught by Barnard’s Lynn Chancer; a course on gender and health, offered last spring for the first time by Mary Clare Lennon of the School of Public Health; and a joint listing of certain courses with IRWG. Women faculty also point to a general improvement in their work lives during Ruggie’s chairship. While Ruggie is the only woman of the department’s seven senior faculty, among junior faculty women are in the majority. “The sociology department has been pretty exemplary about hiring women,” says assistant professor Susan Lehmann. “Mary’s been fantastic in her work with junior faculty towards getting research and grant support. She cares very much about junior faculty and creating an environment where they can succeed.”

Meanwhile, at the undergraduate level Lynn Chancer continues to offer her lecture “Gender, Race and Class,” cross-listed with Barnard College. Chancer feels students respond to sociology’s ability “to illuminate issues related to their lives and to society around them. It’s not all abstract.” This is why, she believes, the course attracts some 200-250 students every year.

Does all this add up to a flourishing subfield in the study of women and gender in the sociology department? The answer is not altogether clear. Notably lacking, for example, is a faculty appointment specializing in gender. Ruggie says she has not given up on the idea; but with things the way they are, such a hire may not come soon.

“We’re glad that we’re able to do these things with the resources that are already here,” Ruggie explains. “Sociology is such a small department and we’ve got so many needs—and at the graduate level I’m not sure the demand for gender equals the demand for other subjects.” In fact, she adds, “there aren’t as many students in sociology that are working in gender as I thought there would be.”

Those students who do work in the field point out another gap: “Feminist sociologists don’t have any purely woman-based social theory,” explains Helen-Maria Lekas, a sociology Ph.D. candidate. “In our reading lists [for the gender comprehensive], we deal with gender issues, but only as they are approached by male theorists. This has certain limitations.”

Lekas did her course work at a time when gender-themed offerings in the department were scarce. In her first year, she audited an undergraduate course on the sociology of sex roles, taught by CUNY Graduate Center faculty Gaye Tuchman. Although the required first year course on classical social theory contained no specifically feminist texts—focusing rather on the “founding fathers” of sociology like Marx, Weber, and Durkheim—Lekas notes that gender was not entirely absent from the discussion, since the instructor encouraged students to be critical of what these writers had to say about women. “It was an initiation into what was missing from a feminist point of view in classical social theory. That was valuable for me.”

For Lekas’s next two years in the program, however, there were no courses in the sociology department oriented toward gender. While she could have taken courses outside the department, Lekas says, “my personal hurdle was that I didn’t have a background in sociology, so I wanted to take all my courses in the department.” Instead, Lekas used her papers to look at gender issues in courses focused on a variety of other sociological topics.

“Everybody liked the gender slant of my papers,” she says, “but that’s as far as it went.”

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Sociology and Feminism at Columbia

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Lekas was, however, able to choose gender as one of her comprehensive fields. Currently at work on a dissertation about the racial stereotyping of AFDC recipients, Lekas feels that the last few years have seen a definite improvement for students interested in the sociology of gender. "The department now has many more women, and they are much more inclined to bring changes into the curriculum. This is great for the next generation, even though it's a little late for me."

Gioconda Herrera, another advanced graduate student in the department, agrees that although "most theorists are considering gender as an important dimension," sociological theory is not really developing new paradigms with gender at their base. For example, "social network analysis"—an approach favored by many at Columbia—explores gender as one social variable (in a set that includes race, class, or ethnicity), rather than explicitly theorizing about it, she says.

However Herrera, whose research is about female religious symbolism and nation-building in Ecuador, also feels there are advantages to sociology's decentered take on gender. "It pushes you toward an interdisciplinary approach," she says, adding that when she taught a sociology of gender course this past summer for undergraduates, more of the readings were by anthropologists than sociologists.

"When we talk about gender it's very difficult to think only in terms of one discipline. I think that's inevitable, but I don't see it as a negative thing," Herrera stresses. She took advantage of the department's relatively flexible policy to pursue her interest in gender outside the department. In addition to an independent study with Ruggie, Herrera took one course in Religion, two in English and Comparative Literature, and the Institute's "Paradigms in Feminist Thought."

Herrera says it was "refreshing" to explore gender from a variety of angles. "On the other hand, it always leaves you with a lot of unanswered questions. Something integrating the various approaches might have been helpful."

Lynn Chancer seems to be offering something of the sort in her graduate feminist theory course. In it, she tries to relate various currents of feminist debate to similar concerns in sociological theory, encouraging students to interrogate traditional sociological classics like Marx, Weber and Durkheim with texts from feminist theory.

However, while the course is "housed within sociology," Chancer says it also remains highly interdisciplinary. Thus she prefers to speak of "social theory" rather than "sociological theory," to indicate a more wide-ranging body of thought.

"Nor is everyone convinced that feminist theory and sociological theory belong together at all. Susan Lehmann teaches an undergraduate seminar on contemporary women in the international context. "Sociology is a very American-centered discipline," says Lehmann, explaining that "to do good sociological analysis it's important to have an understanding of how other societies are different from America's." This includes familiarity with the position of women in politics, education, and the workforce in other countries.

But, Lehmann says, "I have an ambivalent feeling about separate gender and women's studies. I think it's my job to give students a grounding in sociology—after all, it is a sociology course." She says that the course is not "political"—"I don't cover topics like rape or pornogra-

phy"—although students, who tend to be first- and second-year undergraduates, often want to talk about why RU-486 is not available in the U.S. or about female circumcision.

Sociology's ambivalent relationship with feminism and women's studies can at times seem like a vicious circle: too little convincing feminist sociological theory means that few graduate students are attracted to the study of gender; too few students means too few courses, which in turn means no new hires in the sociology of gender.

Simultaneously, one could say that sociology's openness to other disciplines and approaches takes the pressure off developing a distinctively sociological theory of gender. But what would such theory look like were it to exist, and how would it be different from what other disciplines have to offer? Such riddles are more than ever open to consideration at Columbia—perhaps a first step toward finding some solutions.

INSTITUTE NEWS

The new year begins with a new Assistant to the Director, Kathleen Savage. Kathleen replaces Amy Sanders who has become Departmental Administrator in the Department of Sociology. Kathleen formerly administrated the huge and complicated American Language Program at Columbia. She has been a longtime supporter of the Institute and will bring to it, in addition to her vivacity and love of the Columbia and Morningside Community, two and a half decades of experience in dealing with the intricacies of the Columbia bureaucracy.
Fall Courses: Undergraduate

V1001x **Women and Men: Power Politics and Poetry** (K. van Dyck, N. Kampen, M 2:40-4:30 p.m., 3 points). An introduction to the ways in which femininity and masculinity have been represented in literature and constructed in culture. Interdisciplinary scholarship on gender analyses is presented in works of literature, film, social science, and current theory.

V3112x **Colloquium in Feminist Theory** (A. Pellegrini, Tu 10:00-12:00 p.m. and Th 10:00-11:00 a.m., 4 points). An exploration of the way feminist scholarship has altered knowledge in diverse fields including history, economics, psychology, literature, religion, anthropology, and biology. This course or V3813 is required of junior majors. Prerequisite: V1001; instructor’s permission.

V3520x **Senior Seminar** (M. Sale, W 2:10-4:00 p.m., 4 points). A one-term seminar in which students prepare a 20-25 page thesis based on original research. Students may elect to extend the thesis into a year-long project under the direction of a faculty advisor and their tutor. Prerequisite: V3813 or V3112; instructor’s permission. Open to senior majors.

V3521x **Senior Research Seminar I** (N. Kampen, W 12:15-2:05 p.m., 4 points). Individual research in women’s studies conducted in consultation with the instructor. The results of each research project are submitted in the form of the senior essay and presented in the seminar. Open to senior majors.

BC3111x **Feminist Texts I: Wollstonecraft to de Beauvoir** (A. Najmabadi, M 2:10-4:00 p.m., 4 points). The important contributions to feminist thought in the West, evaluated through critical discussion. Analysis of works by Wollstonecraft, Mill, Kollontai, Hurston, Goldman, Gilman, de Beauvoir and “others” in an attempt to discover the roots of the contemporary feminist movement. Prerequisite: instructor’s permission.

BC3113x **Feminist Texts II: de Beauvoir to the Present** (A. Pellegrini, W 2:10-4:00 p.m., 4 points). Contemporary issues in feminist thought. A review of the theoretical debates on sex roles, feminism and socialism, psychoanalysis, language, and cultural representation. Prerequisite: instructor’s permission.

BC3120x **The Invisible Woman in Literature: The Lesbian Literary Tradition** (E. Wiesen, Tu 4:10-6:00 p.m.). An interdisciplinary exploration of the “lesbian experience.”

BC3121x **Black Women in America** (J. Weisenfeld, Tu 2:10-4:00 p.m., 4 points). An interdisciplinary examination of the experiences of black women in America from slavery through the present. Emphasis will be on how the issues of race, gender, class and sexuality have shaped black women’s lives.

BC3505x **Women, Islam and Nationalism** (A. Najmabadi, Tu 4:10-6:00 p.m., 4 points). An historical survey of how concepts of women/gender have defined religious and national communities in the Islamic Middle East.

BC3590x **Independent Research** (instructor and time t.b.a., 3-4 points). Please contact Barnard Women’s Studies for more information about this course.

Undergraduate News

The Institute wishes to congratulate Katherine Raymond (CC ’95), this year’s winner of the undergraduate Queer Studies Award. Raymond’s prize-winning essay is entitled “The Lesbian Body: Problems in Sexuality, Subjectivity, & Identity—and Some Possible Solutions.”

The competition, now in its second year, is sponsored by Gay, Bisexual, and Lesbian Employees and Supporters (GABLES) and the Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Coalition (LBGC) at Columbia as a way of “recognizing the importance of Les/Bi/Gay Studies, Queer Studies, and Queer Theory for the academy, our communities, and our activism.” Undergraduates at Columbia, Barnard and General Studies are encouraged to begin thinking ahead now for next year’s competition; for more details contact LBGC at 854-1488.

The Queer Studies Award is one aspect of a campaign to institutionalize Les/Bi/Gay and Queer Studies at Columbia; the struggle for an undergraduate Queer Studies Major is another. While courses in Queer Studies do exist in the undergraduate curriculum, “organizational and administrative support is needed to ensure that the courses are offered on a yearly basis,” says undergraduate organizer Joneil Adriano. Those interested in forming an ad-hoc committee for a Queer Studies major should contact Adriano at 853-7455. Alternatively, check out his Web site at http://www.columbia.edu/~jna3/qstudy/html for up-to-date news.

Upcoming Events

Last year’s series “The Gendered Nation: New Feminist Perspectives on Nationalism and the Modern Nation State” served as a lively introduction to a vital topic in current feminist scholarship, bringing together members of the Columbia community with speakers Mervat Hatem (Howard) on Egyptian...
**Graduate News**

Held for the first time last spring, IRWG’s graduate Pedagogy Workshops were successful beyond all expectations. Intended to address the changing contours of the academic job-market—in particular, the increased demand for junior scholars able to teach jointly in Women’s Studies and a second discipline—the seminar was a tremendous success, according to co-coordinator Kathryn Gravdal. “It was like a bonfire of ideas.”

For Gravdal, who conceived and conducted the seminar along with Natalie Kampen (Barnard Women’s Studies), most exciting was the workshop’s cross-disciplinary dynamic. Many of the 22 senior graduate students from 10 departments were meeting like-minded feminists outside their own disciplines for the first time. What resulted, says Gravdal, was a sophisticated interchange of ideas about pedagogical tools and strategies. “GSAS has a fabulous resource in these hundreds of graduate students,” Gravdal says. “I think if Low Library knew all the brain power they had in one room, they would try to put it to use.”

Given the workshops’ success and the already long waiting list for future sessions, the Institute has applied for funds from the Mellon Foundation to expand the workshop, ultimately aiming at the development of a for-credit course. In the meantime, this spring’s series will be offered by Natalie Kampen, Barnard Women’s Studies Chair; and Maggie Sale, IRWG’s Undergraduate Director. Please call the Institute for further information.

This past spring saw another first: the formation of a Graduate Steering Committee to advise the Institute on graduate programming and curriculum. The nascent committee is planning elections of a Graduate Advisory Board, to be composed of representatives from the departments, with the aim of improving communication between graduate students and IRWG. For more information, contact Charity Snyder at 854-3277.

The Institute is continuing to offer a Certificate in Feminist Scholarship for graduate students. The certificate is awarded upon completion of an oral exam, which is taken either as a minor field within the student’s departmental orals or in a separate sitting at the Institute (usually within six months of the departmental orals). Working with an interdisciplinary faculty team, candidates prepare and are examined on a reading list of works related to their field along with theoretical literature central to feminist scholarship. Interested students should begin planning between three and six months ahead of the proposed examination date by contacting the Institute.

**Fall Courses: Graduate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Instructor(s)</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G6001x</td>
<td>Theoretical Paradigms in Feminist Scholarship</td>
<td>K. Gravdal and K. Thomas</td>
<td>M 2:10-4:00 p.m., 3 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>G8020x</td>
<td>Colloquium in Queer Theory</td>
<td>A. Pellegrini</td>
<td>M 11:00-12:50 p.m., 3 points</td>
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Islamist discourse; Marnia Lazreg (Hunter) on Algerian nationalisms; Afsaneh Najmabadi (Barnard) on gendered tropes of Iranian modernity; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg (U. of Pennsylvania) on the construction of the American middle class; Gayatri Spivak (Columbia) on the Cairo Conference; Ann Stoler (U. of Michigan) on race and the education of desire; and Katherine Verdery (Johns Hopkins) on gender and nation in Eastern Europe. (Summaries of these papers are available at the Institute.)

Thanks to the series’ great success, IRWG will continue the theme this fall, with hopes that as many participants and listeners will bring their ideas and expertise to the talks as they did last year.

Ann McClintock will open the new series with her paper, “No Longer in a Future Heaven: Gender and Nationalism” from 4:00-6:00 p.m. on October 19 at the Institute. For future speakers, keep an eye open for publicity on campus or contact IRWG for more information.

IRWG and the School of Social Work are co-sponsoring the fall panel series, “Crossing the Boundaries: Feminist Controversies Today.” Sessions and topics are as follows, with more speakers to be announced:

- **September 28:** “Women and Resistance” with Mimi Abramovitz, Atina Grossmann, Ann Pellegrini, Gilda Zwerman and Helen Benedict (moderator).
- **October 26:** “Xenophobia and Racism: Women & Other Strangers” with Afsaneh Najmabadi, Maggie Sale, Judith Weisenfeld, Patricia Williams and Zita Nunes (moderator).
- **November 9:** “Biologistic Thought and Gender Research” with

**Upcoming, continued on page 11**
Keep an eye open for these soon-to-appear titles by Columbia and Barnard faculty:

Victoria de Grazia (History), Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective (University of California Press), an edited volume of essays including work on the U.S. and Western Europe from the late 18th to the late 20th century. Their common theme is the study of how the consumption of goods and images has shaped and been shaped by the sexual division of labor.

Linda Green (Anthropology), Fear as a Way of Life: Mayan Widows in Rural Guatemala (Columbia University Press), an ethnography of the lives of Mayan women alone and their economic and cultural survival strategies in the aftermath of a counterinsurgency war.

Jean Howard (English and Comp. Lit.) and Phyllis Rackin (University of Pennsylvania), Engendering a Nation (Routledge), a study of the English history play in the early modern period and the role of gender in its construction of the nation.

Martha Howell (History), Marriage Stakes in Urban Cultures of the Late Medieval North: Women, Property, and Social Place in Douai, 1350-1550, a study of marriage in commercial societies of late medieval northern Europe, focusing on tensions about social place and gender hierarchy generated around the property relations constructed through marriage.

Maggie Sale (Women’s and Gender Studies and English and Comp. Lit.), The Slumbering Volcano: Recasting Race, Masculinity and U.S. Identity, an analysis of masculinity and national identity formation in the context of four mid-19th-century slave revolts on ships, historical and fictional.

Carol Slade (English and Comp. Lit.), St. Teresa of Ávila: Author of a Heroic Life (University of California Press), arguing that Teresa employed her autobiographical writing to create an innocent textual self in the face of actual and potential accusations of heresy as well as to depict herself in heroic terms.

Judith Weisenfeld (Barnard, Religious Studies), "The More Abundant Life": African-American Women and Christian Activism in the New York CityYWCA (Harvard University Press), an examination of the work of black women in New York City’s African-American branch of the YWCA, and of the particular modes of Christian activism in which these women engaged from the late 19th century through World War II.

Karen van Dyck (Hellenic Studies/Classical Studies) and Angela Zito (Barnard, Religious Studies) are also at work on upcoming volumes.

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Rosalind Morris, Barbara Simon and Carole Vance, moderated by Peter Avon.

November 16: "Women, Work & the Vanishing Welfare State" with Brenda McGowan, Katherine Newman, Carol Sanger, Jane Waldfogel, Augusta Kappner (moderator) and Gayatri Spivak (general respondent).

“Race and Gender, Law and Politics” is to be the title of a Spring ’96 conference, hopefully the first of many events to be jointly sponsored by Columbia’s Institute for Research on African American Studies and the Institute for Research on Women and Gender. Set for April 12, the conference will feature among others Cathy Cohen of Yale University and Patricia Williams of Columbia Law School.

Faculty News

On a date to be announced, early in the spring term IRWG will be holding a Mentoring Luncheon aimed at connecting new feminist faculty members with a supportive network of Columbia faculty. The impetus for a mentoring program arose from the new feminist faculty group at the Institute, and is based on the assumption that junior faculty face exceptional professional pressures, often exacerbated by departmental isolation. Therefore, any feminist faculty, male or female, who is interested in being or finding a mentor should attend the luncheon; RSVP with the Institute at 854-3277.

Resources

The CUNY Feminist Directory is a comprehensive list of women’s studies programs and women faculty engaged in feminist research and scholarship throughout the City University of New York system. The Directory may be obtained from The Center for the Study of Women and Society, Graduate Center of the City of New York, 33 W. 42nd St., Room N410, New York, NY 10036 or by calling (212) 642-2954. A donation of $10 for faculty and $5 for students is requested.

The Women’s Resource Center of New York provides women and women’s organizations with information and resources pertaining to health, education, career development, family and more. The WRC disseminates information by personal visit, phone, fax, or mail, and educates women on specific issues through publications and special events. To become a member, use the data base, or list an organization, call (212) 875-8533.
Recent Dissertations in Women’s Studies

Columbia Ph.D.s have produced an impressive range of work in gender and women’s studies in recent years. The following is just a sampling of some of the many such titles since 1992 (a more complete listing is also on file at the Institute).

1992
Asch, Adrienne (Education), Values, attitudes, and public policy: the case of surrogate motherhood.
Birge, Bettine (East Asian Languages and Cultures), Women and property in Sung Dynasty China (960-1279): Neo-confucianism and social change in Chien-chou, Fukien.
Epley, Steven (English and Comp. Lit.), Three women writers and public discourse, 1788-1798: Mary Wollstonecraft, Hannah More, and Susanna Rowson.

1993
Andina, Michele (Education), Is two better than too many? Reproductive behavior of rural Jamaican women.
Byfield, Judith (History), Women, economy and the state: a study of the adire industry in Abeokuta (Western Nigeria), 1890-1939.

1994
Capelle, Elizabeth (History), Analyzing the "modern woman": psychoanalytic debates about feminism, 1920-1950.
Jaicks, Nancy (History), The angel-makers: the crime of abortion in nineteenth-century Lyon.
Marakowitz, Ellen (Anthropology), Gender and nationalism in Finland: the domestication of the national narrative.
Meyer, Ilan (Sociomedical Sciences), Prejudice and Pride: minority stress and mental health in gay men.

1995
Cook, Rebecca (Law), Protection of women’s human rights in international law.
Farrell, Beth (Social Work), Gender integration of the FDNY firefighting force: an organizational case study.
Horrigan, Patrick (English and Comp. Lit.), Out in the open: gay identity and the writing of cultural criticism.
Matos, Félix (History), Economy, society and urban life: women in nineteenth-century San Juan, Puerto Rico (1820-1870).
Round, Martin (History), Norms of masculinity in Roman society: the significance of male personal appearance from Cicero to the death of Hadrian.
Tadjbakhsh, Shahbanou (Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures), The a-Soviet women of the Muslim East and nativization in Tajikistan, 1989-1992.

1996
Hahn, Hannah (Education), If Linus’ blanket were Lucy’s too: sex difference in transitional object use.
Hughes, Katherine (Sociology), Wives of public men: the case of wives of American foreign service officers.
Purushothamar, Sangeeta (Urban Planning), Grassroots women’s movements in India: networking and state policy.
Thompson, Elizabeth (History), Engendering the nation: statebuilding, imperialism and women in Syria and Lebanon, 1920-1945.
Walton, Andrea (Education), Women at Columbia: a study of power and empowerment in the lives of six scholars.