WHO'S WHO AT THE INSTITUTE

WHO'S NEW

Our new Program Administrator is Aloka Dalal. Aloka has lived a large part of her life in India, Cyprus and Egypt. She has a master's degree in Sociology and has had over six years of administrative experience, most recently with the United Nations.

Melissa Clark, our new secretary and receptionist, is a graduate of Barnard College. Melissa has worked for various magazines and newspapers, and is currently studying writing in the Master of Fine Arts program here at Columbia.

Susan Kraham is joining the Institute as a Departmental Research Assistant. She is a Columbia law student and is the managing editor of The Human Rights Law Review.

Chris Johnston, Teaching Assistant for "Women and Men: Power, Politics and Poetry," is a graduate student in the sociology department.

WHO'S NOT

Director Martha Howell is a Professor of History specializing in late medieval/early modern social history. She will continue to advise women's studies majors and provide direction for us all. AND...

Associate Director Priscilla Ferguson has dual appointments in the Sociology and French departments and will also be the Director of Graduate Studies for the Comparative Literature program. If Martha is not in, ask Priscilla. Her number in the Sociology Department is 854-5622.

Zoe Pappas returns this year as a Departmental Research Assistant. She is our resident computer whiz. This year Zoe is beginning the PhD program in classical studies.

Also returning this year as a Departmental Research Assistant is Shyama Venkateswar. She will be coordinating the plethora of events hosted by the Institute. Shyama is a graduate student in the political science department.

Staff and Faculty Notes

Siobhan Benet, who served for the Institute for two years as its secretary and receptionist, left at the end of the summer to begin work in the African-American Studies Program at Yale, where she received a fellowship. Even in the most frantic times, Siobhan managed the Institute's front office with calm charm and good will - a perfect representative of what a Women's Studies office should be. Sue Rosenstock, the Institute's Administrative Assistant, is also leaving to take up an offer she couldn't refuse, from the Department of Comparative Literature at Brown University. Sue will surely bring to her studies there the same organizational skills and quickness she displayed in managing the Institute's office; comparative European literature may never be the same. We will miss both Siobhan and Sue very much, but we are delighted with their honors, and we wish them well.

Faculty news includes two special items. In October, it was announced that Elaine Combs-Schilling, Associate Professor of Anthropology, received tenure, and in May, Elizabeth Blackmar, Associate Professor of History, was awarded tenure. Elaine and Betsy are two of Columbia's finest scholars and teachers, and both are central to the Institute's teaching and study programs. Congratulations to them, and to Columbia.

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Letter From the Director

Martha C. Howell

We begin this year at the Institute with our basic teaching program well established and with facilities in place for workshops, seminars, and lectures. Last year we revised the undergraduate women's studies major and mounted an introductory course in feminist theory at the graduate level. Both the undergraduate and graduate programs, and the courses offered this year, are described in our course guides which have been sent to all department chairs and women's studies faculty. If you would like more copies, just call or drop by the Institute. We have also published a small brochure describing the Institute and its programs; students and faculty who would like copies can also call or pick some up in the office.

The Institute hosts a number of workshops, seminars and lectures during the year which address pedagogical and scholarly questions in feminist theory and practice. Some of last year's activities, including those continuing into this year, are described separately below. For the upcoming year, several programs have already been planned:

- "Contemporary Greek and Irish Women's Poetry" November 6th and 7th in Philosophy Hall. This workshop will be co-sponsored with the Poetry Society of America. For more information, call Karen Van Dyck at the Program in Hellenic Studies, 854-1554.
- Professor Caroline Byrnum of the History Department and Professor Temma Kaplan of Barnard's Center for Research on Women are organizing the women's history lecture series this year. The topic, "Gender and the Supernatural," will be discussed in two symposia, one early in December, and one during the Spring. The first will compare the gendering of art objects in religious history in both African and European cultures.
- Going Public: Feminist studies of the Public. The Institute, the Department of History, and the Department of English and Comparative Literature, along with scholars from Johns Hopkins University and Rutgers University, are organizing a three-part seminar series investigating new feminist work on the "public" - how the public, the polity, the communal, the civic, and the market have been gendered in Western thought and practice, and how the boundaries between the public and the private have been contested. The first workshop, featuring papers by Professor Elizabeth Blackmar of Columbia and Professor Judith Walkowitz of Johns Hopkins, will be held at Columbia on December 6. The day-long workshop is open to all members of the Columbia community.

As Priscilla Ferguson's letter below explains, the Institute welcomes additional proposals from faculty and student groups for workshops, lecture series, or seminars. In the past, we have hosted reading and study groups (who use our seminar room, coffee-making facilities, etc.) and we have sponsored seminars, lecture series, and political action groups concerned with issues in feminist scholarship. In addition, of course, we invite visitors to Columbia and the New York area to give individual lectures, and we regularly issue calendars announcing these events.

On the last page of this newsletter, we have listed the lectures and workshops already scheduled this year, but we will be updating this calendar regularly. Look for our announcements in the hallways and elevators where you teach and study. And put your name on our mailing list so that you receive news of our latest plans (call Melissa Clark at the Institute at 854-3277).

...And From The Associate Director

Priscilla P. Ferguson

Katherine Hughes elsewhere in this newsletter fills you in on her tremendous work putting together the material necessary to the Gender Subcommittee to make its proposal for parental work load relief. We were pleased that the proposal carried the endorsement of the Senate Commission on the Status of Women, two of whose members joined our committee for the final proposal. It remains to be seen what will come of the proposal in the upper reaches of the University bureaucracy in these times of special (not just the usual) financial exigency. The dramatic increase in health care costs over the past 3 to 5 years, at Columbia and everywhere else, does not make me overly optimistic. But we shall work this fall to bring the issue to the attention of the University community at large and hope to obtain the commitment from the University to pursuing this goal.

The Institute and the Gender Subcommittee joined the Take Back the Night Coalition in sponsoring a lecture April 22 by Linda Fairstein, Chief of the Sex Crimes Division, New York County District Attorney's Office, on "Crimes of Violence against Women: Changing Laws, Changing Attitudes." Although the last week of classes is not the best time to attract a large student audience, the women and men who attended the lecture were both interested and enthusiastic. Fairstein was, I would say, guardedly positive about further changes in the laws and particularly in attitudes that now allow prosecution of acts that were not even considered crimes not so very long ago. A glass one-quarter full is surely better than one three-quarters empty. Still, there is the rest of the glass to be filled at what seems to be drop-by-drop speed.

This coming year I shall be working closely with Martha Howell to set up faculty-graduate student workshops. Anyone with suggestions for workshops should get in touch with one of us. The Institute will of course continue to sponsor and co-sponsor individual lectures. But individual presentations, however interesting, cannot have the impact of a series of several presentations around a common theme and reading. We hope to cast our net even more broadly this year to bring people to the Institute from the entire campus.
To launch the year-long celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Barnard Center for Research on Women, the Center’s fall program focuses on issues of special importance to integrating women of color into the general undergraduate curriculum and on the ways feminists have transformed the practice of writing women’s biographies.

With support from the Ford Foundation to promote curriculum transformation, the Center is sponsoring another group of lectures on women’s roles in literature, history, art, political theory, and psychology. Among those people scheduled for the fall are Deborah McDowell, speaking on “Gender and Race;” Lily Johnson Edwards on “African-American Missionaries in Colonial Africa;” Diosa Summer on “Native American Women as Tradition Bearers;” Joy James on “Political Theory in African-American Women’s Auto-biographies;” and LaRue Allen on “Adaptive and Mal-Adaptive Outcomes Among Low Income Urban Adolescents.”

Barnard’s renowned series on feminist biography and autobiography has been grappling with special issues that emerge when women write about women. Speakers in the fall are Ellen Chesler, author of a new study on Margaret Sanger; Sallie Bingham, who has taken on the issue of objectivity in her controversial study of her family, the publishers of the Louisville Post Dispatch; and Deirdre Bair, acclaimed biographer of Simone de Beauvoir, who will be speaking about her new subjects: Anaïs Nin and Colette.

This fall’s Women’s History Seminar, sponsored by both the Barnard Center and the Columbia University Institute, is on the topic of “Gender and the Supernatural.” For further information, consult this newsletter. For dates, times, and information about programs the Barnard Center offers, please call 854-2067 or write to the Barnard Center for Research on Women, 3009 Broadway, New York, NY, 10027.

The Lesbian and Gay Studies Group
Sarah Chinn

Founded in November of last year, participation in the Lesbian and Gay Studies Group has been flourishing. Our first two meetings, which focused respectively on issues of identity construction and queer politics, attracted between twenty and twenty-five participants. A colloquium on the relationship between AIDS activism and cultural practice was also warmly received. The meetings draw on a wide variety of scholars and students from universities around the New York area.

For the 1991-92 academic year, we have scheduled a plethora of diverse colloquia. The group will meet twice monthly to discuss subjects ranging from lesbian and gay marriage to the ethics of inter-generational sex. For our first meeting, Martin Duberman, of CUNY will address the problems and pleasures of establishing a lesbian and gay studies institute (The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies, or CLAGS) at City University, and the ramifications of such a project for the future of queer studies itself. Professor Duberman’s scholarship in gender and sexuality studies, and his work for lesbian and gay liberation are wide-ranging. This promises to be a gripping session.

We have also put together an exciting speaker series. For this semester our confirmed speakers thus far are: Eve Sedgwick, a leader in her field, who will present a new paper on Henry James’ The Wings of the Dove; Douglas Crimp, a cultural critic and editor of October, who will address an array of current issues such as outing, queer representation in film, and gay bashing; and Elizabeth Wood, a musicologist from Sarah Lawrence College, who is working on a theory of lesbian musical style.

Our colloquia and speaker series are open to anyone inside and outside the Columbia community—anyone with an interest in gay and lesbian Studies. We meet twice monthly on Fridays at 4pm (except the first session, with Martin Duberman, which will be at 3:30) at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, 754 Schermerhorn Extension. If you have any questions, please call the Institute at 854-3277, or Sarah Chinn at (718) 789-2073.

LOGO COMPETITION

The Institute for Research on Women and Gender is searching for a unique logo to represent us and the community we work with. The logo should be an original design presented as either a line drawing or computer graphic. First prize is a $50.00 gift certificate to a local bookstore. Entries must be received by the Institute (763 Schermerhorn Ext., Columbia University, NYC 10027) by November 1st, 1991, and cannot be returned. The winner will be notified by telephone, so please include a number where we can reach you during the day. Contest open to students only. For more information, call Melissa Clark at 854-3277.
This past spring semester Associate Director Priscilla Ferguson, acting as Chair of the Gender Subcommittee of the Civility Committee, initiated a project on Columbia University parental leave policy. Several university groups including the Faculty Affairs Committee and the Senate have attempted to revise this policy over the past few years without success. By making this issue the focus of the subcommittee, Priscilla ensured that this time real action would be taken.

We began with a comparative study of policies at other universities. I conducted telephone interviews with a sample of female faculty at Columbia to get some idea of how frequently the existing parental leave (limited as it is) is used, and the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the benefit. In April the subcommittee submitted a proposal for a much expanded parental leave policy to the Civility Committee, Provost Jonathan Cole, and the University Senate. The proposal will be taken up by the Senate and the Benefits Committee in the fall.

The current Columbia policy for faculty allows a new mother only the eight weeks of paid disability leave that is mandated by the state. The woman must be certified "disabled" by her doctor, and it is up to the woman's department to cover her courses while she is on leave. In addition, a full year of leave without pay may be taken by either parent. A recent addition to the policy is the extension of parental leave for adoptions. Leave policy for non-faculty at Columbia is determined by the various unions, but all of the policies at Columbia are fairly similar. We decided that a focus on faculty was justified as faculty must plan around the semester schedule.

Upon beginning the research, I discovered that there are no published, reliable data available on the incidence of parental leave-taking by faculty each year. Thus I began to randomly telephone female faculty in order to formulate a very general picture. Of the thirty-two women I spoke with in my telephone interviews or otherwise gathered information about, only two had taken the official disability leave in the past five years. Two others were able to arrange leave at the departmental level. Some faculty who had children during the past five years had taken no leave but had just "fit them in." As any parent knows, babies do not "just fit into" a full teaching and research schedule, yet treating maternity as a short-term disability, the only course open to Columbia faculty members, was self-evidently not the solution.

Many of our peer institutions have already come to the same conclusion. If Columbia is to compete effectively for the best of the junior faculty, it must be competitive in the area of benefits. With this argument in mind, the subcommittee drafted a revised parental leave policy which distinguishes disability (maternity) leave from workload relief, or parental leave. Faculty may choose a fully paid relief from teaching and other major duties for one entire semester or a half-time appointment for two semesters.

We realize that the proposed changes are by no means radical enough, but in consideration of the current state of the University's budget, we decided to request what could reasonably be expected to be obtained. Clearly, a fully paid parental leave of six months would be preferable. If you would like to learn more about parental leave at Columbia, or find out how to lend your support to the liberalization of the policy, please contact me or Professor Ferguson here at the Institute.

The Thursday afternoon Seminar Series, "Rights and Politics," organized last fall by Professor Jean Cohen of the Columbia University Political Science Department and co-sponsored by the Center for the Social Sciences and the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, continued this past spring. Four lectures were held. The first, on February 21st, "Constitutional Rights: Democratic Instrument or Democratic Obstacle," was given by Benjamin Barber, Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University. Columbia Law School Professor Martha Fineman delivered a talk on March 6th entitled "Feminist Theory in Law: The Difference it Makes." The third lecture on March 27th featured Charles Hamilton, Professor of Political Science at Columbia, who spoke on "The Dual Agenda: Welfare Rights versus Civil Rights." The final lecture for the year on April 26th was led by Alan Westin, also from the Department of Political Science at Columbia, whose lecture was entitled "Privacy as a Right and a Political Issue."

Our thanks to Jean Cohen, the Center for Social Sciences and the speakers.
Thanks to the energy and hard work of Professor Nancy Leys Stepan, a member of Columbia's history faculty and a specialist in the history of Western science, the Institute was host last year to a four-part workshop on Gender and Natural Knowledge. The sessions were attended by graduate students and faculty from many disciplines, including the biological sciences, and the discussions highlighted both the pleasures and the difficulties of interdisciplinary work.

In the first session, “Was the Scientific Revolution Gendered?” Professor Stepan gave a brief overview of the history of science as a field and the relatively new attention to gender questions. The stepping stones to a feminist history of science are provided by work on the effect of culture, history and politics on science, and by modern critical theory, which suggests new ways of reading the texts of science. She raised the thorny questions: If one questions scientific objectivity, then how is one science better than another? How can one both critique and use science at the same time?

The second session, “Science and the Construction of Gender Difference,” was a discussion of how the female body was socially constructed so as to make the female appear biologically inferior to the male.

Session three on “Political Meanings of Sex Difference Research in Contemporary Science” was led by Bonnie Spanier and examined gender metaphors in medical textbooks. In a lively debate, scientists from the Columbia community questioned the notion that metaphors are anything but convenient tools for thinking while other participants insisted that metaphors require interpretation and are dangerous precisely because they are easy to understand and useful. The energetic exchange testifies to the relevance of the question.

Professor Donna Haraway of the University of California, Santa Cruz, led the final session, on her book: Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science. Because primatology stands at the border of human self-definition and belongs to many disciplines, it served Haraway and her readers as a wonderful vehicle to study how objective knowledge is constructed.

The workshops also raised the question of how much technical knowledge is necessary to read both science and criticism, and how the high entry costs in both fields create interdisciplinary barriers. This is particularly problematic for feminism, which by definition is interdisciplinary. The only answer seemed to be to read more.

Ellen Marakowitz will be a Teaching Assistant again for the “Women and Men: Power, Politics and Poetry” course. Ellen is finishing up her dissertation for the anthropology department.

Katherine Hughes will be around doing special projects and odd jobs. She will be starting her fifth year as a graduate student in sociology.

Kirin Gill, and Tanya Segal will all be back as work-study employees, and the Institute welcomes Molly Logan, Patricia Ybarra, Naomi Clewett, Elena Grossman and Julie Lee who have just recently joined our team.

Columbia also continues to attract senior scholars whose work contributes to women’s studies. Professor Gayatri Spivak, one of the most influential and provocative cultural theorists working today, joins our English Department, where she will be teaching graduate and undergraduate courses treating deconstruction and feminism, post-colonial studies as well as Marxism and other work relevant to contemporary feminist theory.

And Mary Ruggie will be joining the Department of Sociology. Professor Ruggie has done extensive research and writing on comparative social policy and welfare states, and women’s issues. Look for her course on the sociology of gender roles in the spring.

The Women’s Studies department, in consultation with the Dean’s Office, is in the process of establishing a formal pre-med concentration in Women’s Studies. The new concentration will enable students to complete both the pre-med and women’s studies requirements within four undergraduate years.

We will update you with details as they become available closer to the spring.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS
FALL SEMESTER, 1991

September 13, Friday - 3:30 - 754 Schermerhorn Extension
"Lesbian and Gay Studies within the Academy" with Martin Duberman of CUNY

September 27, Friday - 4:00 - 754 Schermerhorn Extension
"Love and Marriage" - Lesbian and Gay Studies Group

October 1, Tuesday - Time and Location TBA
Douglas Crimp of Sarah Lawrence College sponsored by the Lesbian and Gay Studies Group

October 25, Friday - 4:00 - 754 Schermerhorn Extension
"The Ethics of Intergenerational Sex" - Lesbian and Gay Studies Group

November 6 & 7, Wednesday and Thursday - Philosophy Hall, Time TBA
"Contemporary Greek and Irish Women's Poetry" - Karen Van Dyke - 854-1584

November 15, Friday - 4:00 - 754 Schermerhorn Extension
Works in Progress, - Lesbian and Gay Studies Group

November 22, Friday - Time and Location TBA
"Sapphonic" with Elizabeth Wood of Sarah Lawrence College sponsored by the Lesbian and Gay Studies Group

Tuesday, December 3 - 7:00 - 9:00 pm - 754 Schermerhorn Extension,
The Women's History Series - "Gender and the Supernatural"

December 6, Friday - Time and Location TBA
"Going Public: Feminist Critiques and Historical Perspectives," Workshop I with Professor Elizabeth Blackmar of Columbia University and Professor Judith Walkowitz of Johns Hopkins University

December, 13 Friday - 4:00 - 754 Schermerhorn Extension
Nationalism and Sexuality - sponsored by the Lesbian and Gay Studies Group

FOR OTHER EVENTS, SEE THE CALENDAR FROM THE BARNARD CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN