In the wake of the global economic crisis – which has adversely affected women’s work opportunities and access to healthcare, increased instances of violence against women, and slowed down progress toward achievement of the Millennium Development Goals – it is appropriate to ask how Women’s Studies programs and departments address the issues and inspire students toward theoretically-informed action for social and gender justice.

It should be noted that Women’s Studies as an academic sub-field was established in the wake of the women’s movement of the 1970s; some feminist scholars wrote women back into history or documented the diversity of sex roles across time and space while others engaged with legal and policy inequalities and discrimination.\(^1\) In the 1980s, feminist studies began to move in a more conceptual direction, especially in the United States; by the 1990s there was, in general, less attention to legal, policy, and social justice issues than to matters of theory. Meanwhile, the academic study of women and gender began to spread across the globe; in many countries, the study of women’s participation and rights, as well as broader issues of development and justice, have been flourishing. More recently, the global economic crisis has galvanized some feminist scholars in the U.S. – where the crisis originated – to reflect on how the production of knowledge at universities, and especially in Women’s Studies programs and departments, might critically address such crises, with a view toward cultivating knowledge and action for progressive social change.

Preliminary research finds that while many Women’s Studies programs in the Global South address grassroots activism, legal and policy issues, the programs in the Global North often focus on cultural processes to unpack gender inequalities. Even so, there are differences in the Global North, with more attention to issues of the welfare state and economic opportunity in the Nordic countries and the U.K. than is the case in the U.S. At the same time, an activist trend may be observed among students within U.S.-based women’s studies programs, with a focus on reproductive and sexual rights. Moreover, the study of “global feminism” and “transnational feminist networks” has introduced students and scholars to the important role of feminist advocacy and lobbying at the global level.\(^2\) Dialogue is needed, then, to elucidate the educational objectives, policy-oriented research, and theoretically-informed activism in and around Women’s Studies programs worldwide.

To that end, I proposed and organized an international conference, to take place at the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center, in Italy, in September 2011, and to focus on the topic: Women’s Studies North and South: Addressing Global Gender and Social Justice Issues.

The purpose of the conference was to share information on how we integrate contemporary gender justice and social justice issues into our teaching as well as our research, with a view toward recommending appropriate curricular revisions. The meeting also would identify areas of collaborative action research that could include students. The goal was to demonstrate the continued relevance of Women’s Studies in knowledge-building for social justice and ethical leadership, and the ways by which we navigate boundaries and borders across theory, policy, and activism. As such, the conference brought together scholars, advocates, and policy-oriented researchers. Specifically, they were scholars or directors of women/gender

continues on page 2
studies programs; staff members of professional associations or international organizations; and representatives of transnational feminist networks.

In addition to myself, the “Purdue delegation” included Dr. Alicia Decker (WOST/HIST) and Ph.D. student Michelle Carreon (AMST/SOC). Also in attendance was Patti Provance, deputy director of the National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA). The four of us, along with Prof. Mary Margaret Fonow of Arizona State University, will constitute a panel at the annual meetings of the NWSA in Atlanta in November.

Most of the Bellagio conference participants are members of the Global Women’s Studies/Gender Research Network, established in 2005 when I was a UNESCO staff member. This informal network includes feminist scholars/professors and women’s studies programs/departments at universities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Europe, and Oceania. To date, participants have initiated or taken part in collaborative activities such as small meetings and two book projects. Given its scope, the network has the potential to raise awareness and to educate large constituencies – both university- and community-based – in the 16 countries across the globe within which it operates.

The work plan and agenda addressed the following issues:

* What contributions has feminist scholarship made to contemporary discussions of social and economic problems (e.g., poverty, economic crisis, social protests, democratization, violence, peace-building)?

* What are the critical issues for Women’s Studies today? How can/do academics and practitioners work together more effectively?

* How is women’s studies taught across the network? How do we integrate theory, policy, and activism in the curriculum and in co-curricular programming?

* Gender, economic crisis, and social/economic rights: how can Women’s Studies incorporate feminist political economy?

* Democratization: How can democratization better serve women and the poor? How do we teach about democracy?

* How do we inspire our students to become future ethical leaders? What courses or projects are specifically geared to encourage critical thinking and a concern for social/gender justice?

Preparations for the Bellagio conference, and the discussions that took place there, provided us with the opportunity to reflect on the kinds of relationships that exist between Women’s Studies programs and feminist scholars, on the one hand, and activist groups and coalitions on the other; the social justice and gender justice issues that are addressed, whether at local, national or global levels; and the extent to which the academic programs integrate feminist activism and policy work into the curriculum, thus fostering a new generation of graduates who can bring critical, ethical, and informed perspectives to bear on such local/global matters as the economic crisis and pathways to social justice; democratization with women’s participation and rights; and attaining human rights and women’s full citizenship.

A compendium of the papers prepared for the conference will be available in both hard-copy and electronic forms.

Endnotes:


Ph.D. Student Michelle Carreon and Dr. Moghadam in Italy
The Women’s Studies Program is excited to announce the commencement of our first study abroad program, which will take place in Uganda from May 31-July 7, 2012. This program has been designed to provide students with a much-needed global experience and will function as an international feminist practicum—an optional capstone course that will follow Global Feminisms (WOST 483), which will be taught during the spring semester. This experiential learning program will also give students an opportunity to think critically about feminism, activism, and social justice within the Global South.

This five-week program will begin by introducing students to some of the major feminist concerns and debates within Uganda. We have been working closely with professors at the School of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University to design and implement all phases of this program. They will provide at least four preliminary lectures (e.g. African Feminisms, History of Women’s Studies in Uganda, Queer Politics in Africa, and Women and Health). The students will also spend the first week learning some of the basics of Luganda, one of the major local languages spoken in Kampala. During the next three weeks of the program, students will be immersed in one of seven different feminist organizations operating within Kampala (e.g. Forum for Women in Democracy, Raising Voices, Action for Development, Uganda Women’s Network, Association for Ugandan Women Lawyers, Center for Domestic Violence Prevention, and ISIS-WICCE). By engaging in feminist activism “on the ground,” students will be able to see how theory links to practice in a very different global context. The final week of the program will involve a four-day, three-night private safari within Queen Elizabeth National Park. Weekend excursions have also been planned, which include whitewater rafting on the Nile, a visit to a chimpanzee sanctuary on Lake Victoria, and outings to the local wildlife sanctuary and botanical gardens.

For undergraduate students interested in pursuing a Women’s Studies minor or major, this program will meet six credits of their departmental requirements (WOST 492: Practicum in Women’s Studies and WOST 281: Topics in Gender Studies), not including the three additional credits they will receive for successfully completing the prerequisite Global Feminisms course in the spring. Graduate students will receive three credits that can be applied to the Women’s Studies Graduate Minor (WOST 681: Contemporary Issues in Feminist Scholarship).

Applicants are asked to submit a 1-2 page statement of interest, as well as one letter of recommendation, to Dr. Alicia Decker (acdecker@purdue.edu) by December 1, 2011. (Please note that this is a highly competitive program that is limited to nine students per year). We will notify all applicants of their status by December 15, 2011. A $500 non-refundable deposit will be due by January 15, 2012.

Dr. Alicia Decker and WS graduate Student, Adrianna Lozano, will serve as the program leaders.

For additional information, please contact Dr. Decker at acdecker@purdue.edu or visit the following website: https://www.studyabroad.purdue.edu/programs/flyer.cfm?flyer=975.
Meet the Graduate Staff

Suzanne Thompson Clemenz
1. Give a short description of your research. My current research focuses on contemporary U.S. narratives that disrupt the received, nostalgic notion of childhood innocence. I study writers such as Sapphire and Dorothy Allison who tell difficult, complex stories of childhood and consider how their stories shake up our culture's normative ideas about children and families. 2. Name a feminist you admire. Must I name just one? At the moment both Vandana Shiva and bell hooks come to mind. 3. What are you currently reading? Olympia Vernon's Eden and David Eng's The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy

Adrianna Lozano
1. Give a short description of your research. My dissertation looks at the history of the School of Women's and Gender Study at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. I am interested in the ways that gender and feminism have been used to create the distinctly unique academic and political environment found in Uganda. More broadly, my research focuses on the history of women's studies in a global context, feminism in the global south and global north, global sex & sexuality, and feminist pedagogy. 2. Name a feminist you admire. Tammy Lee Themel. My mom…it took until her 49th birthday for her to admit she was in fact a feminist, not an “I’m not a feminist, BUT.” Her commitment to women’s empowerment and social equalities regularly inspires me, as does her challenge to complacent feminism. 3. What are you currently reading? Bonk: The Curious Coupling of Science and Sex by Mary Roach; Anti-Bride Guide: Tying the Knot Outside the Box by Carolyn Gerin; Women’s Studies and Studies of Women in Africa During the 1990s by Amina Mama

Brittany Bayless Fremion
1. Give a short description of your research. At Purdue, I developed an interest in the ways race, class, and gender intersect in environmental activism and have shaped American conceptions about the proper use of natural spaces. In my dissertation, I investigate a group of women who organized to protect the sand dunes just outside of Gary, Indiana, from the construction of a new public port on Lake Michigan in the mid-twentieth century. I situate the experiences of the group within a larger historical framework of environmental activism, traditional gender roles, and racial discrimination in the U.S. to revise a historical narrative that long disregarded and marginalized women’s interest and engagement in environmental activism. For my next project, I will undertake a comparative analysis of gendered experiences in anti-toxic and antinuclear initiatives in the U.S. using oral history, and explore their implications for national politics and policy. I am also interested in examining women’s contributions to environmental policy-making in the U.S. throughout the twentieth century. 2. Name a feminist you admire. I really admire Jessica Valenti. Her unabashed, honest, and accessible writing, in addition to her online activism at Feministing.com, have made an important impression on me--and my students. I use Full Frontal Feminism in my class and have recommended it to many of my friends. She's really inspiring. 3. What are you currently reading? Fiction is definitely my guilty pleasure. I just finished reading a collection of Kurt Vonnegut's work and am now absorbed in Erin Morgenstern's The Night Circus. Journalistic non-fiction also holds a special place in my heart, particularly Barbara Ehrenreich's Nickel and Dimed and Jonathan Kozol's Savage Inequalities, both of which I also started reading this month.

Namrata Mitra
**Meet the Graduate Staff**

**Michaela Null**

1. **Give a short description of your research.** Broadly, I am interested in sex and gender, sexuality, race, identity, stigma, and body & embodiment. My dissertation is based on in-depth interviews with women who identify as fat and who are working to accept their body size. I am interested in the process of size acceptance, especially as recent research claims that size acceptance has a positive effect on health and wellness, contrary to accepted logic about weight and health. In particular, I am interested in the social psychological and embodied aspects of size acceptance and how both experiences of fatness and size acceptance intersect with gender, race, and sexual orientation.  

2. **Name a feminist you admire.** There are so many feminists I admire, it is hard to pick just one. But few feminists have blown me away like Mia Mingus. She literally takes my breath away.

3. **What are you currently reading?** The newly reworked "Big Big Love" by Hanne Blank, as I was lucky enough to win a signed copy. This book has been influential both in my personal life and my academic work.

**Stephanie Allen**

1. **Give a short description of your research.** My research is concerned with the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality in Black communities. I am particularly interested in studying representations (or the lack thereof) of Black lesbians in contemporary American literature and culture. In my research I explore the ways in which social and cultural norms have precluded Black lesbians’ full participation in cultural (and academic) discourses, theorize these exclusions, and analyze Black lesbian cultural workers’ responses to them.  

2. **Name a feminist you admire.** The feminist I most admire is Audre Lorde. As a Black feminist, lesbian, mother, warrior, and poet, she embodied the type of feminism I hope to aspire to. She recognized her own privilege, but never apologized for challenging persons, systems, and institutions that continue to oppress marginalized groups.

3. **What are you currently reading?** I'm studying for my prelims, so I feel like I’m reading everything! At the moment I’m reading *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* by Toni Morrison. This is a must read for anyone doing work in American literature.

**Kendra Unruh**

1. **Give a short description of your research.** My dissertation argues that the Lindy Hop has a history of being associated with freedom, escape, and rebellion. Each chapter focuses on a different group of people—Black, working-class women; Black, working-class men; White women during WWII; and White men during the swing revival—and argues that race, class, and gender shape their interpretation of the Lindy Hop.  

2. **Name a feminist you admire.** Right now, I'm a big fan of the Slate Double X Gabfest, so I would say the three commentators for that podcast. They do a great job of discussing issues in the news and popular culture that affect women's lives in a succinct, accessible way.

3. **What are you currently reading?** I'm currently reading a lot of Australian novels from WWII. My third chapter looks at Australian women's experiences dancing with American G.I.'s during WWII.

**Caroline McKenzie**

1. **Give a short description of your research.** My research examines various rhetorical strategies used by each “wave” of American feminists, which includes problematizing much of the rhetoric used to classify feminisms—especially the use of “waves.” Feminist rhetorical strategies have political and social significance and reveal the nuanced workings of gender and sex throughout American culture.  

2. **Name a feminist you admire.** A feminist who I admire is Adrienne Rich. She’s one of the first feminists I read when I first came to feminism. Rich’s writings, both her political essays and poetry, have inspired me.

3. **What are you currently reading?** *Feminism, The Public & The Private* by Joan B. Landes; *Feminism Meets Queer Theory* Edited by Elizabeth Weed & Naomi Schor; *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy* by Allan G. Johnson.
Professor Cheryl Cooky Travels to Montenegro

Cheryl Cooky (joint faculty, Department of Health and Kinesiology and Women’s Studies) traveled to Podgorica, Montenegro in September to present the findings of the report, “Gender and Sport in Montenegro, 2011: Barriers and Facilitators” to key stakeholders in government, NGOs and in sport organizations-- including the Ministry of Education and Sport, the Ministry of Science, the Office of Gender Equality, the UNDP Office of Montenegro, and the Montenegro Olympic Committee.

During her visit, the UNDP office of Montenegro held a press conference to distribute the results of the study to the media. The story was covered on Pink TV and IN TV; two of the most widely watched channels in Montenegro, as well as in Pobjeda, the second most circulated newspaper in Montenegro.

Cooky was the Principal Investigator of the multi-cultural collaboration among researchers in the U.S. and Montenegro and the Women’ Sport Foundation. Funded by the Montenegro Olympic Committee with support from the International Olympic Committee and in partnership with the UNDP Office in Montenegro, Game Set Peace Program, and the National Office for Gender Equality of Montenegro, the report is the first empirical study on women’s sport participation in Montenegro. The research identified participation rates in the seven most popular sports in Montenegro and examined the facilitators and barriers to women’s sport participation. The findings from this study were used to develop evidence-based policy recommendations.

Cooky and her Montenegrin collaborator, Marko Begovic, are developing a 5-year plan to build upon the findings. This includes the design of two research projects. The first will examine school-based physical education and recreational sports participation using a nationally representative sample. The second will examine the impact of sport participation on various health outcomes. In addition to these studies, the research team will continue to partner with NGOs and Montenegrin educational and governmental institutions to implement evidence-based programs and strategies for change to increase girls and women’s participation in Montenegro.

For more information visit:

http://www.un.org.me/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=313&cntnt01origid=15&cntnt01returnid=127

Women’s Studies Film Festival

The Women’s Studies 4th Annual Film Festival, “Women, Islam, and Feminisms in the Middle East,” was well attended and generated lively discussions. We would like to thank the following people for making this year’s film festival a huge success:

Discussion Leaders:
Dr. Stacy Holden for “Veiled Voices”
Dr. Ayse Ciftci for “Voices Unveiled: Turkish Women Who Dare”
Dr. Valentine Moghadam for “They Call Me Muslim”
Dr. Lynne Dahmen for “Caramel”

We would like to especially thank Dr. Alicia Decker for organizing and securing funding for the event. Special thanks also goes out to Namrata Mitra and Suzanne Thompson Clemenz for all their hard work.

This year’s Film Festival was generously co-sponsored by the Women Studies Program and Research & Policy Center, Film and Video Studies, and the Departments of History and Anthropology.
News and Updates from the Women's Studies Joint and Affiliated Faculty

Cheryl Cooky (joint faculty Health and Kinesiology and Women’s Studies) had three refereed journal articles accepted for publication this summer/fall. Her comparative research on the United States and South African news media frames of Caster Semenya will be published in spring 2012 in the Journal of Sport and Social Issues. Continuing her research on the Don Imus/Rutgers University controversy, a paper examining the displacement of blame will be published in Critical Studies in Media Communication in spring 2012. And an article examining the “unfinished gender revolution” in women’s sport will be published in the winter 2011 edition of the American Sociological Association’s journal, Contexts. Acknowledging her important contributions to the field, this fall the Tucker Center invited Dr. Cooky to be an affiliated scholar. In addition to writing, Dr. Cooky has traveled extensively this summer, presenting her research at a number of different forums. In June, Dr. Cooky was invited to participate in the “Fair Shot Project” at Columbia College, Chicago. She delivered a lecture at the “Fair Shot Summit” on gender and sport media to key stakeholders, advocates, academics, and athletes. The Fair Shot Project is training Chicago-area high school girls in investigative journalism, Title IX, and gender and race in media analysis, to empower girls to create positive social change in sport. Dr. Cooky worked with the Fair Shot project team to develop and design curriculum. She also gave an interactive presentation to the Fair Shot high school girls participants on representations of female athletes in the media. Afterwards, the girls conducted their own media analysis (see their blog posts at http://fairshotproject.net). In August 2011, Dr. Cooky was an invited panelist at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference in St. Louis, MO, and spoke to journalists, journalism professors and members of the media on the coverage of women in sport media. Also in August, she also presented at the Society for the Study of Social Problems conference in Las Vegas, NV. The first week of November, she will be in Minneapolis, Minnesota for two conferences. She will present the findings from the “Gender and Sport in Montenegr0 Report” (see article on page 6) and will moderate a panel titled, “The past, present and future of gender and sport media research” at the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sports at the University of Minnesota. Also that week, she will present two papers at the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport conference. The first paper is on the findings from the Montenegro study, and the second paper is an interrogation of Caster Semenya as a “fallen hero.” Dr. Cooky continues her public engagement, publishing in mainstream news media outlets. Commenting on the United States’ women’s soccer team’s appearance in the World Cup this summer, Dr. Cooky wrote several op-ed articles that appeared in the Detroit Free Press, the Indianapolis Star and the Journal & Courier.

Alicia Decker (joint faculty History and Women’s Studies) recently signed a contract with Oxford University Press to publish Africanizing Democracies: 1980 to the Present, a book she is co-authoring with Dr. Andrea Arrington. She currently has two scholarly articles and one peer-reviewed book chapter that are forthcoming. These include “Teaching History with Comic Books: A Case Study of Violence, War and the Graphic Novel,” co-authored with WS graduate certificate student Mauricio Castro (The History Teacher); “An Accidental Liberation? Ugandan Women on the Frontlines of Idi Amin’s Economic War” (Women’s History Review); and “On the Promotion of ‘Certain’ Ugandan Women: Was Idi Amin Feminist or Foe?” which will be published in Women, Gender and Sexualities in Africa, edited by Toyin Falola and Nana Akua Amponsah (Carolina Academic Press). She also has two articles under review including “Militarism, Nationalism, and Marriage: An Intimate Portrait of Idi Amin’s Five Wives (Afrique e Orienti)” and “‘Sometime you may leave your husband in Karuma Falls or in the forest there’: A Gendered History of Disappearance in Idi Amin’s Uganda” (Journal of Eastern African Studies). Dr. Decker recently participated in an international conference at the Bellagio Center in Italy titled, “Women’s Studies North and South: Addressing Global Gender and Social Justice Issues.” She also gave an invited lecture at Indiana University in October titled “Women, War and Militarism: Reflections on the Ouster of Idi Amin (1978-1979).” She will be participating in a roundtable discussion on “Women’s Studies North and South: Theory, Policy, Activism” at the forthcoming NWSA meetings in Atlanta. In addition to coordinating the fourth annual Women’s Studies Film Festival and the new Women’s Studies in Uganda program, she is teaching two sections of Introduction to Women’s Studies (WOST 280) and the Making of Modern Africa (HIST 210).

Jennifer Freeman Marshall (joint faculty English and Women’s Studies) is currently on research leave and is completing her book manuscript on Zora Neale Hurston’s canonization within American literature and anthropology. She will be delivering a paper at the upcoming National Women’s Studies Association Conference in Atlanta, titled “‘How you know it was you?’: Motifs of Friendship and Desire in Black Women’s Fiction” for a panel that she co-organized on black women’s popular and contemporary fiction. In the spring of 2011, Prof. Freeman Marshall received the Women’s Studies Outstanding Faculty Teaching Award. She looks forward to returning to the classroom in the spring of 2012.


Become a Friend of the Women's Studies Program

Your gifts of any amount make it possible for us to publish this newsletter every semester, in addition to providing funds for awards for both undergraduate and graduate students, organization of on-campus Women’s Studies events, helping sponsor events organized by other university programs, and travel support to attend and present at conferences. You may make your gift check payable to Purdue University (with “for the Women’s Studies Program” on the memo line) sent to the Women’s Studies program, 6164 Beering Hall, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2098.
F.A.C.T. News

Feminist Actions Coalition for Today (F.A.C.T.) the Purdue Women’s Studies Organization is kicking off its third year on campus. We are an all-inclusive organization and invite all Purdue students to join us to promote equality and combat gender oppression. F.A.C.T. is an active organization that is continuously planning events to raise awareness about sexual assault, violence against women, discrimination and other issues that women face.

This year a major goal of F.A.C.T. is sexual assault awareness and education. Our first event is a walk to raise awareness about sexual assault on campus and to speak out against victim blaming. This walk is called “Clothes Not Consent” and the primary focus is to stop the use the clothing choice of the victim to belittle or excuse sexual assault. It took place at noon on October 28th. They drew a large crowd and sparked discussion about how sexual assault is viewed not only on campus but throughout society.

F.A.C.T. Officers:

President
Jenna Lee

Vice President
Tiffany Gavros

Treasurer
Melissa Litwicki

Secretary
Kristen Dziepak

Come join us!
F.A.C.T. meets every Tuesday 4:30 - 5:30 in BRNG 1243

Photos courtesy of F.A.C.T. President Jenna Brown.