

Center for WOMEN'S STUDIES

Race Matters

by Carol Wolfe Konek

Cornel West, one of the world's great public intellectuals and professor of religion and Black Studies at Harvard University, energized our community with his address in January on behalf of Mayor Bob Knight's three-year initiative to end racism. West, speaking as part of the Building Bridges project of the National Council for Community and Justice (NCCJ), encouraged us to be self-critical, rather than self-righteous, as we ask ourselves how we curtail arbitrary power in our search for democracy.

He reminded us that as Americans we have a legacy of denial in a democracy with no reference to slavery in our Constitution. He reminded us that John Dewey considered communication "the life blood of democracy." He reminded us of the fragility of a democracy that accommodates apartheid. He admonished us to remember that Race Matters.

Leadership for Mayor Knight's initiative to end racism in Wichita is provided by Melanie Anderson, community dialogue coordinator of NCCJ's *Building Bridges: A Community Process to Heal Racism*, who organizes dialogue circles to formulate action plans for community transformation. These dialogue circles foreground race matters.

My participation in these dialogue circles has prompted me to reflect on the notable women working locally for racial equality and social justice to whom I am grateful:

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Women's History: Forecasting the Feminist Future

by Gayle Davis

This year, the Center for Women's Studies welcomed back one of its first faculty members, Dr. Sally Kitch, as its featured speaker for Women's History Month. Professor Kitch, now at Ohio State University, was a faculty member at WSU from 1969-1992 and served from 1988-1992 as the chair of Women's Studies.

On Tuesday, March 13, Dr. Kitch presented a lecture entitled "Forecasting the Feminist Future: The Dangers of Utopia" to an appreciative crowd of more than one hundred students, faculty and community audience members. Her topic was taken from her work on her most recently published book, *Higher Ground: From Utopianism to Realism in American Feminist Thought and Theory*. For years Dr. Kitch has researched utopian thought as it appears in fictional literary works and in real-life visionary communities in the United States such as the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Woman's Commonwealth.

In *Higher Ground*, she turns her expertise on utopianism to the analysis of this century's feminist efforts for social change,

resulting in new theoretical perspectives and suggestions for modes of reform for the future. Her presentation was rich with examples from her research as well as her own life of ways in which the United

States itself was founded on utopian visions and is still characterized by utopian thinking. Her talk took her listeners through the problems related to utopian views as she suggested a more incremental approach to reform, one that encourages liaisons with those of different political stances but with whom feminists can find common ground.

A thoughtful discussion session closed the evening's presentation and left the audience with engaging new ways to consider feminist efforts for change. The discussion continued during a noontime seminar on Wednesday of interested students and faculty.

Both sessions were successful events for Women's History Month because they

opened doors to new perceptions about women's contributions to social change. And thanks to Dr. Kitch's expert and accessible presentation, WSU and the community will continue to benefit from her carefully considered and provocative viewpoint towards reform.



photo by Alex Jinks, WSU Sunflower

Dr. Sally Kitch was the featured speaker during Women's History Month.



photo by Valda Lewis

Attending a reception in honor of Sally Kitch (pictured second from the right) were WSU faculty Ellie Shore, Beth Cupp-Criss, Carol Konek, Ramona Liera-Schwichtenberg and Gayle Davis.

SPRING
2001



“Although feminist thought has long been compatible with utopianism, it does not need utopianism to flourish. Indeed, without utopianism, feminist thought and theory can more easily embrace its mission and celebrate its diversity.”

excerpt from *Higher Ground: From Utopianism to Realism in American Feminist Thought and Theory*

Women's Studies

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Dr. Dorothy C. Miller, chair, presented a paper, "Reflections on Getting Married: The Shifting Sands of Cultural Meaning for Gays and Lesbians," at the 10th Annual Cultural Studies Symposium at Kansas State University in March. The theme of the conference this year was "Family, Kinship and Cultural Studies."

Dr. Miller continues her position of Membership Chair and member of the Governing Council of the National Women's Studies Association. In January, she attended the two-day mid-year meeting of the NWSA's Governing Council in Tampa, FL.

Dr. Gayle Davis, associate professor of Women's Studies and associate vice president for academic affairs, coordinated the Center's 2001 Women's History Month activities that featured a visit by former WSU Women's Studies faculty member Dr. Sally Kitch. (*Details of her presentations can be found in this newsletter's article on page 1.*)

Dr. Davis presented a slide/lecture on "Frontier Quilts and Diaries: Women's Creative Expression" to United Methodist Women at Calvary United Methodist Church in February. In April, Dr. Davis is a guest speaker in the WSU Honors Program course entitled "Genius" where she will present a talk on the attribution of genius in the visual arts. In WSU Fine Arts' "Interrelated Arts" course, she will speak on the topic "Social Activism in the Fine Arts: What Led Us to the Guerrilla Girls?"

In the summer 2001, a book entitled *Presidential Partners*, edited by Vice President Jim Rhatigan, will be published. The book documents the lives of WSU's "First Ladies" throughout the history of the university. Dr. Davis wrote a chapter for the book, "Sally Corbin: 'The Golden Girl.'"

In her administrative role, Dr. Davis continued to represent WSU on the Board of Regents committee on

department chairs' professional development. She hosts a pilot program for department chairs in the Regents system on April 19-20 at WSU, bringing in speakers from the KU Management Center.

Dr. Davis has been appointed to the Publications Committee of the Kansas State Historical Society and continues her work as the Board of Director's President and member of the Society's Editorial Advisory Board.

Dr. Deborah Gordon, associate professor, traveled to the West Bank in January to interview Palestinian feminists about their reactions to the current intifada. She revised a conference paper for a volume on travel, literature and art published by Sun-Yat Sen University in Taiwan.

In February, she discussed "Palestinians in the Throes of Oslo" in Dr. Dorothy Billings' course, Global Issues, and in April she spoke about the impact of Israeli occupation on Palestinian women in Dr. Carol Konek's course, Global Women's Movements.

Dr. Gordon continues to serve on the Board of Directors of the Global Learning Center of Wichita. On April 1, she was master of ceremonies for the Center's program on Arabs in America held at Byblos Restaurant. Arab speakers from Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories addressed the cultural diversity of the Arab world, the impact on Palestinian Christians of U.S. churches' support for Israeli policy and the negative racial stereotypes of Arabs in the U.S. media

In May, Dr. Gordon travels to McGill University in Montreal to present a paper, "We Can't Move': Postmodernism from the West Bank," at the Canadian Anthropology Society annual meeting.

In June, Dr. Gordon will return to the West Bank to continue research on Palestinian feminism after the collapse of the Oslo Accords and to present some of her findings to the

Women's Studies Institute at Birzeit University.

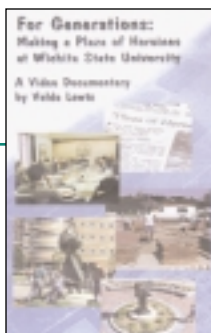
Dr. Carol Wolfe Konek, professor, Carol Wolfe Konek presented "Contesting Patriarchy: Writing By Japanese Women" at the Japanese Studies Association Conference in New Orleans in January. She was a participant and a group facilitator in Building Bridges: Overcoming Racism, the mayor's initiative to end racism coordinated by Wichita's National Council for Community and Justice.

This spring, Dr. Konek spoke at the First Annual Take Back the Night March in El Dorado and spoke on the topic of violence against women in WSU classes outside the Women's Studies department. She presented "Writing Family Narratives" to several chapters of PEO, the Downtown Lion's Club and the Scottish Rite Temple.

Dr. Konek has had three presentations accepted for the National Women's Studies Association annual meeting scheduled in June. She contributes a regular column entitled "Thinking Globally, Acting Locally" to *The Artemis Arrow*, and has contributed a chapter to *Presidential Partners*, a book outlining the contributions of WSU president's wives. She continues her service on the Ulrich Museum Alliance.

Dr. Ramona Liera-Schwichtenberg, associate professor was appointed graduate coordinator of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program for the Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, presented two papers in November at the National Communication Association meeting in Seattle: "What's the Difference? Latina Looks in Fashion Advertising" and "Feminist Scholarship in Communication: Visions, Dilemmas, Action." In October, she was a key planner for the Sole Sisters 5K Run/Walk to benefit the Wichita YMCA Women's Crisis Center. With 400 registrants, this woman-only event, co-sponsored by Women's Studies, was such a success that it will be an annual event.

Dr. Liera-Schwichtenberg's other professional activities included planning the yearly MALS student/faculty reception, working as a facilitator on gender and organizations for the annual Student Leadership Summit at Koch Industries and presenting talks at Pleasant Valley Middle School for at-risk girls.



The Kansas Association of Broadcasters has awarded Valda Lewis its 2000 Student Award for her work filming, directing and editing the documentary, "For Generations: Making a Plaza of Heroines at Wichita State University," that premiered in September. Copies of the documentary video are available for purchase. Call (316) 978-3358.

From the Director

by Dr. Dorothy C. Miller



In the fall and spring of the school year 1999-2000, the Center conducted an alumni survey as a part of our state-mandated assessment process. The Board of Regents requires all programs to assess themselves to see if they are in fact teaching what they think they are. That is, do “student outcomes” reflect the mission and goals of the department?

One way of finding out is to survey our graduates for their opinions, and to find out how they have used their degrees. I'd like to share here some of the findings of our latest survey.

The survey, sent to 67 people, got a 51% “response rate” to our mailed questionnaire, which is outstanding in social science research. In the survey, we found that 38% of the respondents had gone on for master's degrees and one had a doctoral degree. None were unemployed, but almost a quarter are employed part-time. The graduates represent a wide variety of occupations, including social services for women, administration, sales, law enforcement, graphic design, higher education, teaching, and law.

We're very proud of the results of the survey. In comparing the teaching of Women's Studies faculty to that in other departments, a full 68% rated the Women's Studies faculty superior, and 32% rated us above average. Asked whether the material taught in Women's Studies enhanced or enriched the material covered in their other courses, 64% of alums answered “a great deal,” and 18% “substantially.”

The vast majority of graduates reported that they found their knowledge and under-

standing of the following topics were increased either a “great deal” or “substantially” by their Women's Studies classes: women's experiences, women's achievements, corrections to common misconceptions about women, the history of the women's movement, feminism and feminist theory, gender-related social problems and designs to remedy these social problems.

Many people in the academy and in society have the impression that Women's Studies isn't an important part of the curriculum in higher education because gender issues are now addressed everywhere. We were interested in how our graduates would report on their experiences in this regard. We asked them “To what degree did you find that matters of gender were covered comprehensively in classes outside of those offered by or cross-listed with Women's Studies.” A full 41% answered “not at all,” and 47% checked “somewhat.” Via this survey question and the narrative comments made, we know that we are teaching material that is often not comprehensively taught elsewhere.

In addition to these areas, we were also interested in how our graduates' lives were influenced by our program. The majority of the respondents reported that Women's Studies influenced positively the following aspects of their lives: sense of autonomy, personal relationships, family relationships, ability to perform in a job, volunteer contributions to the community, and the quality of one's citizenship. We are proud that our goal of enhancing these aspects of our majors' lives has been affirmed.

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WSU FOUNDATION
Cathy Green



COURSE OFFERINGS

Summer 2001

classes begin May 21

Assertion Training for Women

Sec 05007 8:30-4:30 Sat
June 23-June 30

Class meets at WSU Downtown, 127 N. Market

Examines barriers that exist to assertive behavior and teaches women to develop assertion skills. Considers today's social changes and how these create a need for women to be assertive in their lives.

Minority Women in America

Sec 05016 9:50-12:00 Daily
June 4-June 29

Examines the lives of contemporary women of color and low income white ethnic women. Cross-listed as Minority Studies 240

Women in Society: Social Issues

Sec 05025 9:50-12:00 Daily
July 2-July 27

Class meets at WSU Westside, 7011 W. Central

Considers women's efforts to claim their identity through the examination of historical, legal and social perspectives. Considers recent laws relating to women; contemporary issues such as rape, daycare and working women; and theories of social change.

Queer Politics

Sec 05034 2:00-5:00 Daily
May 21-June 1

Explores some of the major political issues of concern to the lesbian experience, such as lesbians in politics and feminist theoretical notions about political priorities and practice.

Women & Violence

Sec 05043 9:50-12:00 Daily
June 4-29

Class meets at WSU Westside Center, 7011 W. Central

Surveys the relationship between women and violence within culture and society. Explores the continuum from women as victims to women as aggressors. Addresses the dynamics of gender, class, race, generational influences and cultural variation.

Women & Sports

Sec 05052 9:00-1:30 Daily
May 21-June 1

Studies the history of women in sports through accounts of female athletes, literary treatments of women and sport, film representations of women in sports, concept of women and team work and the life of sports legend Babe Zaharis.

WS 150C 1 cr hr
MT Cupp-Criss

WS 240 3 cr hrs
ML Sanchez

WS 287Q 3 cr hrs
JL Ayres

WS 380C 2 cr hrs
DC Miller

WS 380F 3 cr hrs
JL Green

WS 380Y 3 cr hrs
R Liera-Schwichtenberg

Fall 2001 classes begin August 25

Assertion Training for Women

Sec 14223 8:30-4:30 Sat
October 27 & November 3

Class meets at WSU Downtown, 127 N. Market

Examines barriers that exist to assertive behavior and teaches women to develop assertion skills. Considers today's social changes and how these create a need for women to be assertive in their lives.

WS 150C 1 cr hr
MT Cupp-Criss

WS 190G 3 cr hrs
R Liera-Schwichtenberg

Examines how women of various races, classes and ethnicities are represented in a wide variety of popular media. Encourages critical analysis of why and how these popular representations are politically and socially significant in shaping society's perceptions of "the American woman."

Women in Society: Social Issues

Sec 14241 11:00-1:45 TTh
August 21-October 4

Sec 14250 11:00-1:45 TTh
October 16-December 4

Sec 14259 7:05-9:45 T N

Considers women's efforts to claim their identity through the examination of historical, legal and social perspectives. Considers recent laws relating to women; contemporary issues such as rape, day care and working women; and theories of social change.

The American Male

Sec 14268 9:30-10:20 MWF

Examines the male role in America from various sociological perspectives. Cross-listed as Sociology 316

Human Sexuality

Sec 14277 8:00-9:15 TTh

Provides a forum for information and discussion on topics relating to physical, psycho-social and cultural components of human sexuality. Cross-listed as Sociology 340

Women & Disordered Eating

Sec 14286 8:30-4:30 Sat
October 13 & 20

Class meets at WSU Westside Center, 7011 W. Central

Analyzes the range of explanations for disordered eating patterns in the U.S. Examines societal influences, cultural and racial issues, poverty and violence in women's lives. Studies coping mechanism many women develop for their survival. Cross-listed as Sociology 399

Women & Religion in the U.S.

Sec 14295 12:30-5:00 Sun
Aug. 26, Sep. 9, 23; Oct. 7, 21; Nov. 4, 18; Dec. 2

Survey of women's religious history in U.S. Considers women's experience, status and roles in Native American and Asian traditions, Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Islam, and various alternative religious movements. Cross-listed as Religion 380M

WS 150C 1 cr hr
MT Cupp-Criss

WS 287Q 3 cr hrs
CW Konek

CW Konek

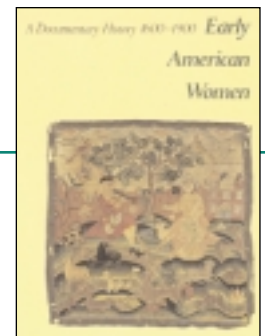
MT Cupp-Criss

WS 316 3 cr hrs
RR Matson

WS 340 3 cr hrs
Barrett/Breckbill

WS 380A 1 cr hr
SA Endsley

WS 380M 3 cr hrs
Klaus/Andrews



COURSE OFFERINGS

Black Women Writers

Sec 14304 12:30-1:45 MW

Explores selected poetry, fiction and non-fiction of Black women writers from the 18th century to the present. Emphasizes elements of style and recurring themes. Cross-listed as English 399 & Ethnic St 380

WS 380S 3 cr hrs

VE Lewis

Minority Women In A Changing Economy **WS 380B** 3 cr hrs
10:30-11:20 MWF ML Sanchez

Examines the role and participation of minority women in the current American economy, with a particular focus on the effects of welfare reform. Cross-listed as Ethnic Studies 380B

Motherhood

Sec 14313 7:05-9:45 W N

Explores the meaning of mothering and motherhood, its function in society and how it affects women. Studies mothering expectations, images, roles and its relationship to feminism.

WS 380Z 3 cr hrs

JL Ayres

Women in Society: Cultural Images **WS 387Q** 3 cr hrs
Sec 14322 9:30-10:45 TTh DA Gordon
Sec 14331 11:00-12:15 TTh DA Gordon

Analyzes the roots of ideas about women in society and women's responses to those ideas as they have attempted to define themselves. Explores images of women in literature, art, myth, philosophy, religion, psychology, education, politics and other cultures.

Women & Early America: 1600-1830

Sec 14376 8:30-9:20 MWF

Traces women's contributions and experiences in early U.S. history. Cross-listed as History 511

WS 511 3 cr hrs

GR Davis

Psychology of Women

Sec 14385 12:30-1:45 TTh

Examines various psychological assumptions, research and theories of the roles, behaviors and potential of women in contemporary society. Cross-listed as Psychology 534

WS 534 3 cr hrs

SJ Hargrave

Writing by Japanese Women

Sec 14394 2:00-4:40 W

Studies Japanese women writers working in various genres, including fiction, poetry, autobiography and essays, and their explorations of women's roles. Considers the challenges and limitations in reading gender across cultural boundaries. Cross-listed as English 536

WS 536Q 3 cr hrs

CW Konek

Women, Children & Poverty

Sec 14403 4:30-6:50 M N

Studies the problem of poverty among women and children in the U.S., including public policy responses. Cross-listed as Social Work 541

WS 541 3 cr hrs

DC Miller

PREREQUISITES

Women & Health Care

Sec 14412 7:05-9:45 T N

Studies issues pertaining to current health care concerns of women, including family planning, menopause and body image. Promotes positive self-care. Cross-listed as Nursing 543

WS 543 3 cr hrs

ML Koehn

Directed Readings

1-3 cr hrs Arranged

Designed for students who wish to pursue special readings or research projects not covered in regularly scheduled coursework. Instructor's consent required prior to enrollment.

WS 570/870

staff

Medieval Women

Sec 14448 7:05-9:45 M N

Surveys the roles and experiences of European women during medieval times, from the fall of the Roman Empire through the Crusades. Cross-listed as History 577

WS 580B 3 cr hrs

A Gythiel

Women & Aging

Sec 14457 4:10-6:50 M

Introduces issues in aging that are unique to women and research methods appropriate for studying aging women and their life experiences. Cross-listed as Gerontology 515

WS 580T 3 cr hrs

MC Corrigan

Arab Women

Sec 14466 4:30-6:50 T N

Examines the lives of Arab women in 20th century Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan. Illuminates the role of European Jewish migration and the creation of Israel in the development of Arab women's perspectives on national identity, Israeli expansionism, women's rights and the relationship between the Arab and Western world. Cross-listed as Anthropology 597

WS 580U 3 cr hrs

DA Gordon

Ready to take a Women's Studies class? It's easy to register!

There are a number of ways you can apply for admission to Wichita State University:

- by mail: write to the WSU Office of Admissions, 1845 Fairmount, Wichita, KS 67260-0124
- on the WSU website: www.wichita.edu
- in person at the WSU Admissions Office, 111 Jardine Hall
- in person at WSU Downtown, 127 N. Market; WSU Westside, 7011 W. Central; or WSU Southside, 4501 E. 47th St South

Current students can enroll by phone — call (316) 978-6500.

Questions? Call the Office of Admissions at (316) 978-3085 or 1-800-362-2594. If you are a current or former student, contact the Registrar's Office at (316) 978-3055.

Wichita State does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policies: Director, Office of Affirmative Action, Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount, Wichita, Kansas, 67260-0145; telephone (316) 978-3371.



- Wanda McDaniels, president of the Wichita Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons (NAACP), is determined to increase voter registration and participation, as well as to continue her efforts to heighten community awareness and group action in race relations.
- Deema deSilva, one of the NCCJ's 2001 Brotherhood/Sisterhood honorees, has long provided support services for and guidance to WSU's first-generation and minority college students, as well as speaking out for cross-cultural cooperation and understanding.
- Bonita Gooch, editor and publisher of *The Community Voice*, provides a vital source of information for the community. An example is her recent article exposing the targeting of local social justice activists by segregationists and hate mongers through various Internet hate sites.
- Jean Elliott, academic advisor and long-time lecturer in the WSU Department of Ethnic Studies, teaches Hate Crime in America. She reports that students in her class also discovered numerous examples of targeting efforts by groups opposed to our community's initiative to end racism.
- Daisy Kabagarama, chair of the WSU Department of Ethnic studies, is a co-host of KPTS Channel 8's series on diversity and cross-cultural understanding and cooperation.
- Mary Harren, social justice advocate and peace activist, helps to organize various peace vigils, including the March to Topeka sponsored by the Peace and Social Justice and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Her direct actions remind us that the death penalty is a direct expression of racism and is disproportionately imposed on poor people of color.
- Jamie Morales, at age 17, has become a nationally visible advocate for HIV/AIDS awareness. Jamie, encouraged by Sandy Hysom, her adoptive mother and well known health advocate, has received national honors for her activism and plans to take her educational mission to



South Africa where education, intervention and medical treatment are disgracefully inadequate.

- Vashti Lewis, community leader and visiting adjunct professor in Women's Studies, teaches Black Women Writers (see fall schedule of courses on page 5). She has coordinated the Black Book Club that meets monthly at the Maya Angelou Public Library for more than four years, and leads discussion groups on books by black authors and intellectuals.

These women working for racial equality confirm that the heartland is a thriving center for advancing the struggle for social justice. Audre Lorde reminds us that "in the transforma-

tion of silence into language and action, it is vitally necessary for each one of us to establish or examine her function in that transformation and to recognize her role as vital within that transformation."

Working in the Center for Women's Studies, we encourage students to transform knowledge for the improvement of lives. Our goals are practical, action-oriented, justice-centered. Those among us who work to realize the American dream understand that social justice requires heightened imagination and deepened compassion. We need to remember our past and acknowledge that those of us whose people came on slave ships have a legacy of deep and abiding pain that must be assuaged in the name of justice for all. Working and speaking against oppression brings us closer to the day when we achieve democracy, when each citizen has a voice, when it is certain all voices are heard and when all Americans care for one another.

Did you know...

The U.S. has the highest per capita imprisonment in the world. Almost one in four (23%) Black men in the age group 20-29 is either in prison, jail, on probation or on parole on any given day. A college-age African American man is more likely to be in prison than in college.



Ruth McClymonds was recently honored with an engraved brick in the Plaza of Heroines at Wichita State University by her niece, Susan McKnight. "I wanted to acknowledge Aunt Ruth's importance to my life and I couldn't think of a better way than in the Plaza." For information about the Plaza, call (316) 978-7161 or visit the Plaza online at <http://Plaza.twsu.edu/heroines>

Teaching Theories of Feminism

by Deborah Gordon

When Women's Studies courses, departments, and programs began in the 1970s, the small but institutionally-influential cohort, or group, who designed the undergraduate major created what is today an almost universally required course for graduation — Feminist Theory or Theories of Feminism. Known in Women's Studies academic curriculum as the "theory" course, this course has been a mechanism for feminists inside Women's Studies to draw lines around valued feminist contributions to social justice.

In the 1970s, turning feminism into an object of knowledge via "theory," meant that you used a map of various "types" of feminists — liberal feminist, radical feminist, socialist feminist — to identify who

The power of any single cohort or group to define feminism via theory and to reduce what was many women's movements to one was short-lived.

was what kind of feminist thinker. This map, however, was presented as a historical narrative that turned the rich and diverse origins of feminist thought into stages of devel-

opment. In the process, the fact that feminism was about multiple debates taking place simultaneously was lost to an overvalued and ritualized debate among a relatively small cohort of feminist scholars.

The power of any single cohort or group to define feminism via theory and to reduce what was many women's movements to one, however, was short-lived. By the early 1980s, U.S. women of color began demanding accountability for racism among white women, not only in terms of their political activities but more significantly in terms of the "logics" of their intellectual tools.

Chela Sandoval showed that what she called "hegemonic" [illegitimately influential] feminist theory, with its identifying "liberal," "radical," and "socialist" feminism dependent on types of consciousness that white women inherited from post-World War II movements to decolonize the Third World. She also argued that U.S. women of color had developed a different kind of politics that did not depend on identifying "types" of feminists.

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by Ramona Liera-Schwichtenberg

I confess to keeping a secret. But now I feel the need to get it off my chest (so to speak). Until recently, my guilty feminist secret has been that I am the willing recipient of *Victoria's Secret* catalogues. This may not seem like a big thing, but initially, when the company was in its nascent stages, I spurned its advances, offering scathing critiques of the scantily clad women to my feminist colleagues. We would perform quick ideological critiques

of patriarchy as it emerged from the bra and panty pictorials, and would then glean the most offensive pictures to be used in our classes on Images of Women. But this was before. I finally had to be honest with myself. In the years that followed, I found myself looking forward to the relentless attention *Victoria's Secret* offered — soliciting my attention every few days with new covers and rearranged photo layouts. I finally had to confront my feminist fascination with pictures of buxom models in bras and panties, looking wistfully in my direction. Could I order from here with a clean conscience? Could I dress-up my desires in pedagogy or scholarship and examine fetishism and desire or homosocial-erotics?

The double D bras are out of the question, but maybe ordering the black leather miniskirt and performing a reflexive analysis will put my guilty feminist conscience to rest. After thinking about the issues of desire *Victoria's Secret* raises, I have a few general, preliminary observations I'd like to share. Although *Victoria's Secret* may be voyeurized by men, it constructs a fantasy of femininity that few women inhabit, but most can imagine. Unlike other types of catalogues (for instance, the casual-chic of *J. Crew*, the earthiness of *J. Jill*, or the trashiness of *Venus Swimwear*), *Victoria's Secret* plays with excess and tacticity. A bra may be a bra to most of us, but in *Victoria's* world, it is satin, sequins, rhinestones, silk, chiffon, with all levels of décolletage. The utilitarianism of underwear is elevated to clothing status, which, in turn, validates (and romanticizes) what we do in our boudoirs. Nothing rushed for us women; we want to give ourselves the luxury of time and attention demanded by sensuous undergarments — *Victoria's Secret* provides us with this opportunity.

Victoria's models never leave their

penthouse, forever luxuriating in gold lame or bodacious sateen — what a life! To “pleasure oneself” in clothes that are totally inappropriate for everyday life is a fantasy of excessive femininity that is not “pretty in pink” but rather “sultry in leather” and willfully “slutty” in stilettos. The models have a direct and knowing gaze that beckons us to participate in the

VICTORIA'S SECRET

fantasy of opulent woman-ness. These models are larger than life, sexier than life and all part of a clothes fantasy that permits fetishism and exhibitionism: having it, flaunting it and playing with it in different provocative guises — that is what *Victoria's Secret* is all about. It's about the naughty girl in all of us, just waiting to slip into black leather pants or intimidating spiked heels.

So, I have been interpellated by the buxom blonde with the dreamy look in her eyes as she gazes off into space — relaxed, content, confident, pleased, getting pleasure from her own body. Her eyes ask that I join her in this femme celebration; and I say “why not,” and order the buttery smooth black leather miniskirt. A feminine fantasy can also be a feminist fantasy.

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As a result of the work of scholars such as Sandoval, I teach the WSU Center for Women's Studies' Theories of Feminism course with an eye toward students doing research to reconstruct the origins of feminism. We examine neglected writings by U.S. women of color and study contemporary theory by Third World feminists. Rather than asking students to apply what turns out to be a very small and temporary corner of historical reality, we work to identify forms of feminist thought that do not take “women” as their only or central subject.

In Theories of Feminism class, we set neglected theories in motion. We assume that all theory exists within a “traffic” of race, sex, class, national identity and geographic location. We pay close attention to historical timing. For example, we hear contention among white women trying to decide whether to invite Black women to a conference on women's liberation in 1970 and ask what logical maneuvers combined with institutional clout made it possible for some voices to become known theoretical positions while others faded from historical memory. By looking for historical contention in ways that do not fall into ritualized or predictable debates, students get to see theory as a form of political action.

From The Director

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In the last newsletter we shared some of our graduates' comments from the survey. Here are some more:

- “After attending three universities and obtaining a Master's Degree, I still can say that the instructors I had in the WSU Women's Studies Department were the finest, most scholarly and professional professors that I've encountered.”
- “The faculty were fabulous. They taught me to think for myself, write and develop my opinions. I learned from my Women's Studies classes rather than memorizing facts.”
- “My experience at WSU has been extremely life-altering and Women's Studies has been a huge part of my consciousness raising, my learning to be reflexive in the world. I often say that everyone should take Women's Studies classes and the world would truly be a healthier place to live for all of us.”
- “The Women's Studies program was a “gift” to me ... even if it differed from their own reality. I am strong and capable today because the Women's Studies staff affirmed me 15 years ago.”
- “As I am looking towards other departments for (a Ph.D.), I hope I can find the kind of professor I've had in Women's Studies. I appreciate the diversity of research and areas of interest among the faculty.”
- “Enhancing my understanding of constructs of race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic backgrounds, etc. has enabled me to effectively work as an advocate for all girls in my professional life and all peoples in my personal life.”
- “The women in the Women's Studies department at WSU were intelligent, wonderful role models and teachers who inspired me to work for the betterment of all marginalized peoples.”

7 CENTER FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES



This chart illustrates alumni responses to the following question: *What degree did you find that the information and perspectives presented in your Women's Studies classes enhanced or enriched the material covered in your non-Women's Studies courses?*

Center for
WOMEN'S
STUDIES

Wichita State University
1845 N. Fairmount
Wichita, KS 67260-0082

Honor the special women in your
life in the Plaza of Heroines at
Wichita State University

WSU Faculty Member, Poet Wins Literary Prize

Jeanine Hathaway, associate professor of creative writing and frequent presenter in the Kay Closson Women Writing Series, has been awarded the Vassar Miller Prize in Poetry for 2001. The award includes a cash prize and publication of her latest collection of poetry, *The Self as Constellation*, by the North Texas Press in early 2002.

Hathaway is also author of *Motherhouse*, a novel of a former Dominican nun whose search for her true calling leads her to writing.

Women's Studies is pleased to include one of Jeanine's poems in this issue.



photo by Michael Pointer

THE TURNING POINT

I watch my daughter at her dressage lesson.
Technique and confidence override
metaphor. And I, separate observer,
cannot ever know how
such a brave, slim beauty
will one day assume control, take up
the reins in her quiet hands and ride
through field and forest, dark water and city.
How a girl outgrows the high fence
of a sandy, soft arena, outgrows the fear
of open space and its thousand ways
she and that horse could go.

How one afternoon when the wind ruffles through
my hair, thoughts aloft and balmy,
my maternal arms resting heavy on the gates —
that will be the afternoon she decides to open them
and asks me to step back to safety.
There, I am brought up to the point
of so many lessons. What can I do but nod
in recognition of all that might be sent sprawling?
What can I do but swing wide those gates,
walk back to the barn for a mount of my own?

Jeanine Hathaway

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