2009 GUIDE TO WOMEN'S STUDIES

WHETHER LOOKING FOR A DEGREE, A CAREER OR JUST SOME GREAT COURSES, HERE'S THE PLACE TO LEARN ABOUT THIS BURGEONING ACADEMIC FIELD

CONTENTS
Introduction | Community Colleges | NWSA | Legacy
Undergraduate | Data Crunch | Intersections | Staying Strong
Master's | Online | Voices | Contributors
Ph.D. | NCRW | Theory and Practice | 67

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FORTY YEARS OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

Women's studies, as a distinct entity within U.S. higher education, made its debut in 1970 with the establishment of the first program at San Diego State University. Forty years later, there are more than 900 programs in the U.S., boasting well over 10,000 courses and an enrollment larger than that of any other interdisciplinary field. And women's studies has gone international in a big way: Students can find programs and research centers everywhere from Argentina to India to Egypt to Japan to Uganda—more than 40 countries in all, from nearly every region of the globe.

As it has developed on individual campuses, women's studies has also reached out to a wider audience by creating a wealth of scholarship in print. The U.S. can now boast more than 30 refereed women's studies journals, and hundreds of monographs in the field have been published by university presses and trade houses.

Want to earn a doctorate in women's studies? You have 13 choices of programs in the U.S., plus those in Canada, Australia and England. Want to teach? Colleges and universities across the nation routinely advertise faculty searches in women's studies programs and departments, and award prestigious endowed professorships in the field. Want to put your degree to work outside of higher education? There is a growing domestic and international market for women's studies graduates in government, policy and research institutes, foundations and nonprofit organizations.

During the 1970s, the pioneers of women's studies focused on establishing the field as a separate discipline with autonomous programs. In the 1980s, the focus expanded...
to include "mainstreaming" women's studies throughout the established curriculum, incorporating feminist scholarship within many academic disciplines. In that way, women's studies wouldn't remain in an academic ghetto, but could begin to transform and gender-balance every aspect of the curriculum.

Also in the '80s, women of color began to critique both women's studies and gender-focused curriculum projects for their relative lack of attention to questions of race, ethnicity, class and cultural differences. One of the hardest-hitting examinations of the insensitivity of women's studies to difference can be found in the pioneering work of feminist theorist bell hooks, especially her book *Feminist Theory From Margin to Center* (1984), in which she illuminated the impact of employing a monolithic conception of women's experiences in the new scholarship on gender and sexuality.

Responding to such critiques, a new field of study emerged—black women's studies, which now provides a framework for moving women of color from the margins of women's studies to its center. The 1982 book *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (edited by Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith) helped catalyze this transformation of women's studies, providing a theoretical rationale for incorporating "minority women's studies" and "intersectional" analyses into all teaching and research on women.

In these 40 years since its inception, women's studies has revamped and revitalized major disciplines in the academy. It has challenged curricular and pedagogical practice. It has disrupted the male-centered canon. It has altered or blurred the boundaries between disciplines. It has introduced the social construction of gender and its intersections with race, class, ethnicity and sexuality as a major focus of inquiry. And it has experienced phenomenal and unanticipated growth, becoming institutionalized on college and university campuses, spurring the hiring of feminist faculty, adding graduate courses of groundbreaking content, generating a large body of educational resources and providing the impetus for the establishment of feminist research centers. It has stimulated the development of other academic fields as well: gay and lesbian studies, cultural studies, gender studies, men's studies, peace studies and more.

Even more compelling, perhaps, are the profound changes that have occurred over the past 40 years as a result of the feminist activism, teaching and research stimulated by women's studies. There is heightened consciousness and advocacy around rape, incest, battering, sexual harassment, sex trafficking, the feminization of poverty, and health disparities related to race, gender and class. In addition, there is more intense dialogue about government-subsidized child care, health-care reform, sex equity in education and spousal leave. It is unfortunately still the case that empowerment strategies for women do not necessarily address the particular experiences and needs of women of color or poor women, but this just gives women's studies scholars and activists a challenge for the future.

Because of its potential for societal transformation, women's studies should be supported more than ever during this paradoxical period of assault or backlash, on the one hand, and increased demand from students plus the growing imperatives of diversity and inclusion on the other. A well-organized right-wing movement, inside and outside of higher education, still employs outdated but persistent racist, sexist and homophobic schemes to try

WOMEN'S STUDIES
HAS EXPERIENCED
PHENOMENAL GROWTH.

and reverse progressive reforms. We cannot let that happen. We need to advocate even more loudly and clearly for the revamping of mainstream curricula that remain insensitive to racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual and class differences—a campaign in which women's studies plays a crucial role.

Women's studies must also work more closely with other interdisciplinary programs, and provide expertise—along with ethnic studies—to the important multicultural initiatives taking place on many campuses. Feminist scholars must continue to conduct research and generate data to inform public policy debates and decision-making that will affect women and families in the U.S. and around the globe.

This is the greatest challenge for our field: to transcend the boundaries of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, geography and language in the interest of a feminism that is expansive and responsive. After 40 years, we know that women's studies is more than up to it.

—BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTALL
## UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

How do you measure education that changes lives? You can’t, of course, except to note a few facts about undergraduate women’s studies programs in the U.S.: There are programs in over 700 colleges and universities, serving more than 90,000 students. You might also focus on the figure 30 percent—the percentage of women’s studies teachers, undergraduate and graduate, who are faculty of color.

That grand diversity can also be found in the wide range of course offerings, from social sciences to biology, sexuality to literature, theory to activist practice.

It’s impossible to quantify what students absorb from a women’s studies education and how it changes their perspective on what they can accomplish. Michigan State Rep. Lesia Liss puts it like this: “I minored in women’s studies and that is why I am a state representative today.”

Of the more than 18,000 women’s studies majors and minors in school today, few may end up in state office, but count on this: There will be thousands of other women’s-studies-inspired success stories to tell.

—ALLISON KIMMICH

### School Name | Program Name | Year Established | Minor # Enrolled | Major # Enrolled
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2. Allegheny College (PA) | WS | 1982 | 12 | 10
3. American Univ. (DC) | WGS | 1985 | 18 | 28
4. Appalachian State Univ. (NC) | WS | 1977 | 12 | 1
5. Arizona State Univ., West (AZ) | WS | 1984 | 10 | 13
6. Augsburg College (MN) | WGS | 1982 | 3 | 7
7. Augusta College (IL) | WGS | 1985 | 8 | 8
8. Bell State Univ. (IN) | WS | 1971 | 69 | 27
9. Barnard College (NY) | WS | 1977 | Y | 22
10. Bates College (ME) | WGS | 1989 | 6 | 25
11. Beloit College (WI) | WGS | 1995 | 5 | 10
12. Bennett College for Women (NC) | AS | 2005 | 2 | 5
13. Berry College (GA) | WS | 1991 | 16 | 12
14. Berry College (GA) | WGS | 1995 | 15 | 1
15. Bowdoin College (ME) | WGS | 1974 | 4 | 12
16. Bowdoin Green State Univ. (OH) | WS | 1978 | 25 | 15
17. Brandeis Univ. (MA) | WGS | 1975 | 24 | 13
18. Brenau Univ. (GA) | GS | 2000 | 12 | 16
19. Bucknell Univ. (PA) | WGS | 1992 | 15 | 1
20. Calif Poly State U, Pomona (CA) | EWS | 1973 | 15 | 85
21. Catholic Univ. (MD) | MGS | 1970 | 50 | 15
22. Catholic Univ. (DC) | WS | 1971 | 10 | 28
23. Catholic Univ. (MD) | WGS | 1981 | 54 | 52
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26. Catholic Univ. (CA) | WS | 1974 | Y | Y
27. Catholic Univ. (CA) | WS | 1994 | 26 | 39
28. Carleton College (MN) | WGS | 1975 | 40 | 1
29. Case Western Reserve Univ. (OH) | WGS | 1994 | 3 | 4
30. Clark Univ. (MA) | WGS | 1979 | 30 | 4
31. Colby College (ME) | WGS | 1987 | 12 | 10
32. College of New Jersey (NJ) | WGS | 1975 | 34 | 96
33. College of William & Mary (VA) | WS | 1969 | 3 | 42
34. College of Wooster (OH) | WGS | 1975 | 6 | 8
35. Colorado College (CO) | FGS | 1962 | 12 | 8
36. Connecticut College (CT) | GWS | 1978 | 7 | 24
37. Cornell College (IA) | WS | 1964 | Y | Y
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41. Denison Univ. (OH) | WS | 1981 | 15 | 24
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76. Miami Univ. (OH) | WS | 1986 | Y | Y
77. Middlebury College (VT) | WGS | 1992 | Y | Y
78. Mills College (CA) | WS | 1974 | 1 | 8
79. Minn. State Univ., Moorhead (MN) | WS | 1976 | 30 | 5
80. Montclair State Univ. (NJ) | WGS | 1976 | 31 | 33

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A master's degree in women's studies can unlock a variety of doors to doctoral study, or to numerous arenas of work and social change-leadership, where specialized knowledge of women, gender, sex, sexuality, feminism or womanism is an asset. The 31 institutions that offer freestanding master's degrees in women's and gender studies serve a diversity of populations and locales, from vibrant regional institutions such as Southern Connecticut State University to populous urban campuses like the University of South Florida. Some provide a women's studies master's degree with another degree, such as J.D.

— LAYLI PHILLIPS

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Ph.D. Programs

Women's Studies Ph.D. Programs ensure that a core of experts is gaining advanced knowledge not only about women's issues but also feminist and womanist critical perspectives. Graduates will be ready to serve all societal sectors, from academic and research institutes to government, the professions, media, nonprofits, corporations and the creative arts. Furthermore, since women's studies is interdisciplinary, people with advanced degrees will by definition be equipped to think broadly about a wide range of social problems, drawing from multiple bodies of knowledge and diverse methods of problem-solving.

The oldest and largest of the Ph.D. programs is at Emory University, which has graduated more than 40 women's studies Ph.D.s in the past two decades, many of whom now serve on other women's studies faculties. Emory boasts a Ph.D. in women's studies that is linked with the Feminist and Legal Theory Project, and has made recent hirings in feminist science studies as well. Another trailblazing program is the feminist studies Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, which stands out both for calling itself feminist and for integrating women's studies with gender and queer studies.

Since the 1980s, the number of freestanding women's and gender studies Ph.D. programs has more than tripled. Two of the programs house important women's studies journals—Feminist Studies at the University of Maryland and Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society at Rutgers—while Ohio State boasts a women's studies library housing over 20,000 volumes and 100 journals. Indiana University at Bloomington maintains a connection with the famous Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction, and the University of Arizona is similarly tied in with the Southwest Institute for Research on Women.

Two programs are unique in their emphasis on women's spirituality: The Claremont (Calif.) Graduate University offers a Ph.D. in women's studies in religion, while the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco offers a Ph.D. in women's spirituality, allowing academic study of the spiritual quest as well as spiritually informed womanist and feminist approaches to eco-social concerns.

—Layli Phillips

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS

WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES COURSES are part of the curriculum at community colleges all over the country, from schools with large programs offering certificates or associate in arts (AA) majors to colleges offering only a few courses. As of January, community colleges educated 46 percent of all U.S. undergraduates, and within that population the number of students seeking women's studies courses continues to rise.

There is a natural affinity between women's studies and significant numbers of community college students. Sixty percent of the students are women, and the average age of all community college students is 29. Of the "nontraditional" (commonly defined as older or part-time) women students, many are parents, first-generation college students, place-bound and employed part time or full time. They have made a significant change in their lives by deciding to start or return to college. Further, U.S. community colleges are increasingly diverse, with 33 percent of those enrolled being students of color and 8 percent international students (with many urban campuses exceeding these percentages).

Almost no faculty member has a primary appointment in women's or gender studies at a community college, but perhaps because so many of their students overcome daunting obstacles to achieve their goals, faculty are willing to add women's studies to already heavy teaching loads. Depending on state standards, many of these courses fulfill general education requirements, but students value them for much more than that. As a student at my school, Tebuhu Kabamba, recently put it, "Women's studies helped me look within myself, and challenge society and how it views me as a woman. I feel as if I changed for the better, and [women's studies] will benefit me for the rest of my life."

—JUDITH ROY

DATA CRUNCH

ONE OF THE KEYS TO FUNDING PROGRAMS ON COLLEGE and university campuses is solid data, because that's what decision-makers look at to determine how many students a program serves, or where a department ranks in relation to its peers nationally. Unfortunately, both of these questions have posed challenges for women's studies, because women's studies students are often double majors—and on some campuses only the first major counts in campus record-keeping.

For graduate rankings, research universities look to figures established by the National Academy of Sciences, but here, too, women's studies programs do not get counted because the Academy only ranks programs that graduate at least 500 Ph.D.s annually. As a relatively new field, with a history of doctoral education that began only in the 1990s, it will be many years before women's studies graduates 500 Ph.D.s a year.

To remedy the dearth of data, the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) set out to measure the scope of the field in 2007 with generous support from the Ford Foundation. The association partnered with the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center to conduct a survey of U.S. women's studies programs, and more than 650 programs responded out of 724 contacted.

While NWSA has not yet addressed the issue of program rankings, it has gathered solid numbers that will allow programs to compare themselves with peer institutions. That data is available on its website at www.nwsa.org/msmag. Ms. also used the NWSA-gathered data—along with additional research compiled by Ms.—to provide information on 673 four-year college and university women's studies programs, listed here and on the Ms. website at www.ms magazine.com/womensstudies.

Both NWSA and Ms. know that there are other women's studies programs that have not yet been included in the data. If yours is one of them, please be in touch and let us know all about it!

—ALLISON KIMMICH

www.feminist.org
STUDENTS SPEND A MAJORITY OF THEIR DAYS
attached to some sort of technical device, whether
laptop, BlackBerry, cell phone or iPod. In order for
women’s studies programs to remain relevant, they must
also reach out to this new generation of student—and
that’s where online courses enter the picture. They allow
programs to work with students whom they otherwise
couldn’t—and isn’t that the point of women’s studies?

Take Anne: She wanted to earn a minor in women’s
studies at her university but, with just one semester left
before completing her degree, thought it would be impos-
sible. Online courses allowed her to pursue that academic
interest, however, even though she’d moved across the
country.

Online programs serve everyone from the working stu-
dent to the stay-at-home parent to the international stu-
dent to those who just prefer technology over traditional
learning. These courses provide the same content, but al-
low students to work at their own pace. Depending on the
instructor’s interest and needs, they can employ a variety
of digital tools, from video lectures to PowerPoint to dis-
cussion boards.

Here in the women and gender studies program at
Arizona State University (ASU) where I teach, we have
definitely risen to the technical challenge of the digital
age. We offer a dozen online courses, ranging from “Sex &
the City: Women’s Sexuality and Popular Culture” to
“Gender, Race and Class,” providing students with a
media-rich environment and challenging materials—with
just a little help from technology.

ASU is part of a burgeoning movement for women’s
studies programs to offer online courses, minors and even
certificates, at both the undergraduate and graduate lev-
els. ASU offers an online minor and an online concentra-
tion in women and gender studies for students pursuing a
bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary studies.

The women’s studies program at ASU is also the first
in the nation to receive a grant from the National Center
for Academic Transformation to redesign the large in-
troductory class in women’s studies into a hybrid for-
mat—a class that meets half in person, half online. Stu-
dents complete their weekly online assignments at
their own pace, and engage in smaller online discussion
sections that would be impossible in a large classroom
setting. National studies have shown greater student
success and higher overall grades in hybrid courses, and
student evaluations from both online and hybrid courses
at ASU indicate that students enjoy the flexibility, the
way the online activities reinforce what is learned in lec-
tures, and the opportunity to take these courses from al-
most anywhere in the world. In the works at ASU is also
an online B.A. and an online post-baccalaureate leadership
certificate.

In today’s wired world, feminism must remain at the
digital forefront in order to keep pace with academic
progress and social change. Though to many they might
seem an unlikely couple, women’s studies and cyberspace
are, in fact, a perfect match and destined for a happy,
long-term relationship.

—MICHELLE MCGIBNEY VLAHOULIS

www.msmagazine.com
NWSA: TEACHING FEMINISM

For more than 30 years, the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) has been the leading national organization dedicated to advancing women's studies scholarship, teaching and community activism. Its 2,000-plus worldwide members are not just feminist faculty and administrators in colleges and universities, but also women's-center directors, K-12 teachers, women's studies students and community activists. The organization hosts an annual conference, sponsors undergraduate and graduate student scholarships, and develops print and electronic resources to support the work of women's studies professionals.

NWSA makes active efforts to dismantle racism and build a multiracial, multicultural structure and programs. For example, NWSA has a thriving Women of Color Leadership Project that provides support and training for women of color interested in the field, with a focus on women's-center and NWSA leadership.

NWSA's annual conference regularly draws more than 1,200 attendees and is the only yearly meeting in the U.S. solely dedicated to featuring the most recent feminist scholarship. This year's conference, in Atlanta from November 12 through 15, will address the theme: "Difficult Dialogues." Featured speakers include writer, scholar and activist organizer Angeli Y. Davis and award-winning writers Pearl Cleage and Nawsha Teelheyew.

To learn more, visit www.nwsa.org.

-Vivienne Heston-DeMirel
www.feminist.org
INTERSECTIONS

As a Black scholar writing about women's issues in the late 1970s, I joined others in arguing that women's studies needed to incorporate a more complex approach to understanding women's lives. My colleagues and I contended that the gender analyses of that period were too often derived from the experiences of White middle-class women, and ignored the oft-untold stories of women of color and those without economic privilege. We wanted feminist theory to incorporate the notion of difference, beginning with race, ethnicity, class and culture.

Today, one of the first things students learn in women's studies classes is how to look at women's lives through these multiple lenses. The concept of intersectionality has been a key factor in this transition. Intersectionality has brought the distinctive knowledge and perspectives of previously ignored groups of women into general discussion and awareness, and has shown how the experience of gender differs by race, class and other dimensions of inequality.

For example, one impact of gender in schools is that girls are more likely than boys to be steered away from math and science. Class differences then compound the effects of gender, because low-income girls interested in math and science are likely to attend schools with poorly equipped labs and fewer certified teachers—thus their training may make it harder for them to compete successfully at higher levels. Race adds another layer of differentiation because White and middle-class teachers—who are the majority of educators—are likely to have higher expectations of White girls than of Black girls. As research has shown, they give White girls tasks that develop their academic abilities while giving Black girls tasks that focus on their social maturity and caretaking competencies.

Women's studies students tend to grasp the concept of intersectionality most readily in relationship to personal identity. They understand immediately that their sense of self is multifaceted, that they have been shaped by a number of different (and sometimes conflicting) social factors and that their behaviors cannot be understood in a one-dimensional manner.

Yet intersectionality is also an important way of understanding the organization of society—the distribution of power within it and the relationship of power and privilege to individual experience. At the societal level, intersectional analysis seeks to reveal the ways systems of power are used to develop and maintain privileges for some groups and deprivations for others. As an example, well-financed and equipped public services—schools, health and recreational facilities, libraries—are more likely to be located in communities with high concentrations of middle- and upper-income White people.

Finally, intersectionality is a tool for social justice. Its focus is to transform knowledge by fully incorporating the ideas, experiences and critical perspectives of previously excluded groups. That knowledge can then be used to advocate for policies and practices that will eliminate inequality.

—BONNIE THORNTON DILL
A MATTER OF DEGREES

What has women's studies meant to your life? And what are you currently doing with your women's studies degree? Those were the questions we put out to women's studies graduates and current students, and we got responses from all corners of the nation, and even a few from abroad. Here are just a few of them; there are dozens more online at www.msmagazine.com.

Women's studies has given me a voice, and now as a crisis interventionist, I'm using it at a domestic violence center, speaking up for those who have been silenced.

—LUCE TOMLIN-BRENNER, B.A. IN WOMEN'S STUDIES (BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY, 2008)

I'm interning at the Arizona Center for Disability Law, advocating for the legal rights of people with disabilities. Women's studies gives my law degree depth and meaning. It gives me the tools and space to understand the relationship between law, gender and identity and it made me a powerful advocate for change.

—ALEXX TRACY-RAMÍREZ, CANDIDATE FOR J.D./M.A. IN WOMEN'S STUDIES (UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA)

Women's studies saved my life—literally—by encouraging me to get out of an abusive relationship. Figuratively, it showed me better possibilities for women and for myself. In teaching women's studies at Norfolk (Va.) State University, I hope that I am giving back to my students what my professors gave me—the hope and fulfillment of a better life for themselves, for their children and thereby for all of us.

—KAREN TATUM, M.A. IN ENGLISH AND WOMEN'S STUDIES (UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON, 1996)

Pursuing an M.A. in women's studies confirmed that feminism is my professional and personal passion. My degree took me to the U.N. and Congress. At the U.N., I worked on policies to improve gender parity. I then began a fellowship with Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), where I was able to help pass a resolution about rape in the Congo.

—PAMELA O'LEARY, M.A. IN APPLIED WOMEN'S STUDIES (CLAREMONT UNIVERSITY, 2008)

I conduct research on women in the U.S. military who have been deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq. I am comparing whether men and women experience the violence of war differently or similarly. I plan to use the results of my studies to change the ground combat exclusion policy for women.

—MARGIE SERRATO, CERTIFICATE IN WOMEN'S STUDIES AND PH.D. STUDENT IN ANTHROPOLOGY (TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY)

I have gained an understanding of the inequalities that exist between men and women and the role that gender plays in the construction of identities.

For my master's thesis, I intend to conduct empirical research on same-sex couples who raise children in the Netherlands and analyze the way in which these parents construct their communities and create "safe spaces" for their children.

—MARK DARTKIEWICZ, B.A. IN ENGLISH AND WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES (COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, 2006), M.A. STUDENT IN GENDER, SEXUALITY AND SOCIETY (UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM)

I am using my training in feminist studies in my classroom as a political science professor at a community college to teach the very real presence and effect politics have on the average lives of women in our communities. I think it is important to illustrate that feminism is not just isolated to a women's rights class but permeates all disciplines in a college, and all walks of life outside of our college doors.

—ELIZABETH ULRICH, B.A. IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND WOMEN'S STUDIES (CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO, 2005), M.A. IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND WOMEN'S STUDIES (PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, 2005)

I currently work in export support for a global logistics company, troubleshooting IT issues—seemingly on the opposite end of the spectrum from women studies. But I bring my education into the workplace everyday—working on committees to incorporate same-sex partner benefits, extending fair-trade agreements and investigating government policy.

—MARLENA BLOSKY, B.A. IN WOMEN'S STUDIES (UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, 2006)

I am breaking ground for women's professional sports at Sky Blue FC, the N.J./N.Y. team of the Women's Professional Soccer league (WPS). We are about to kick off our historic first season. My women and gender studies background helped to drive me to take on such
challenges; I truly believe [the WPS] will create lasting social change by providing strong, healthy, female role models to young women.

—JILL APPLEHEIMER, B.A. IN WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES (THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, 2009), M.S.W. (UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, 2008)

I hope to teach women’s studies at a community college or a women’s prison so that women who may never be able to attend a university can benefit from the wisdom given to us by women writers and activists. Women’s studies has given me the tools to change the world.

—THE REV. DANA WILSON (AGE 57, SHE POINTS OUT), M.A. STUDENT IN WOMEN’S STUDIES (TEXAS WOMAN’S UNIVERSITY)

Women’s studies filled mental and emotional voids an entire lifetime of education had not satisfied, enabling me to examine the world with a sense of clarity and purpose I’d never known. Whether I remain in academia or pursue work that benefits women outside the classroom, I’m excited about my options.

—ERIN “TONI” WILLIAMS, MINOR IN WOMEN’S STUDIES (UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA, 2008), M.A. CANDIDATE IN WOMEN’S STUDIES (UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA)

Women’s studies gave me the tools to work within the system for social change. It also gave me a sense of community during and after my undergraduate years. For the past eight years, I have worked for civic and political organizations, specifically focusing on public policy for reproductive rights advocacy organizations. Women’s studies taught me to not fear networking!

—KELLY BADER, B.A. IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES (THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, 2001) AND GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN WOMEN, POLITICS AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP (WOMEN AND POLITICS INSTITUTE AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, 2004)

Most of my life I’ve journeyed to gain perspective. Only after completing a graduate degree in women’s studies did I realize my journey has a purpose. Currently, I work for Brave New Films as a political communications associate. I’m also an online content writer for YouthNoise.com. Both organizations’ missions emphasize social justice in the new media age.

—TARA L. CONLEY, M.A. IN WOMEN’S STUDIES (TEXAS WOMAN’S UNIVERSITY, 2008)

The theory and practice of social change.

AS EDUCATOR AND ACTIVIST ANTONIA DARDER puts it, “Cut off from practice, theory becomes simple verbalism. Separated from theory, practice is nothing but blind activism.” Several women’s and gender studies programs in the U.S. have taken that notion to heart and begun to bridge the gap between theory and practice by providing students the opportunity to act on their learning.

The women’s studies department at City College of San Francisco has established Project SURVIVE, in which students learn to become peer educators, then visit college classrooms and run workshops to help eradicate sexual violence against women. Agnes Scott College, in Decatur, Ga., offers “Atlanta Semester: Women, Leadership and Social Change,” an internship and seminar grounded in history, feminist theories and contemporary social issues. The University of Cincinnati helps students apply women’s studies coursework to social problems through joint projects with its women’s center, a collaboration also practiced at other schools. The Claremont (Calif.) Graduate University offers a master’s degree in applied women’s studies.

One of the more comprehensive models for connecting theory to practice is WILL (Women Involved in Living and Learning) at the University of Richmond (Va.), where we work. The four-year WILL program combines a minor in women’s, gender and sexuality studies with social justice activism and leadership opportunities. WILL students participate in an internship, take two specific courses that connect theory and practice, complete a student-initiated social justice action project, attend diversity-related events with both theorists and activists, and serve in a student leadership organization. A recent example of this applied learning was an effort to strengthen stalking laws in Virginia. Other public and private institutions have replicated the WILL model, including the University of Michigan, Dearborn, where WILL students founded an after-school mentoring program for at-risk Latina middle-school girls. Duke University in Durham, N.C., has launched a WILL-inspired Baldwin Scholars program; challenging misogynist themes at campus parties has been one of its areas of activism.

As these programs demonstrate, women’s and gender studies are rich terrain for connecting theory and practice, and that connection benefits not just students but campuses and surrounding communities.

—HOLLY BLAKE AND MELISSA OOTEN

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BUILDING A LEGACY

At a time of shrinking endowments, cutbacks in government funding and decreases in donations to non-subsistence-oriented causes, women's studies programs will have to be more ingenious than ever to keep pace with their financial needs. Fortunately, women's studies has long taken a diversified approach to fundraising, generally receiving support from general college/university funds, endowments/gifts, grants/contracts, corporate sponsorships and the community. In the near future, it will be individual donors who need to be most inspired to take up the slack caused by hard economic times.

In the beginning, women's studies research and teaching subsisted primarily on funding from fellowships and grants. In 1972, the Ford Foundation initiated faculty and dissertation awards for research on the role of women in society, at the urging of a prescient and pioneering program officer named Mariam Chamberlain. Those awards, which bestowed recognition not only on the awardees but on the field itself, were followed by women's studies fellowships from other foundations and grants from government agencies, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities.

As women's studies grew, institutional funding followed suit. In the 1980s, endowed professorships, or "chairs," in women's studies emerged, funded by individual donors for whom the professorship was often named.

While the first individual donors to women's studies were those who grew up too late to take women's studies courses themselves, donors of the present and future will arise from the growing ranks of women who appreciated and benefited from their women's studies education and now want to give back. Over the years, a number of programs have inventively tapped donors by having them pool their contributions. For example, in 1986, with the help of a Duke University trustee, political scientist Jean O'Barr established Friends of Women's Studies, which galvanized Duke alumnae to raise an endowment of $1 million. Similarly, a Friends of Women's Studies at the University of Cincinnati, launched in the early 1970s by philanthropically inclined wives of wealthy Ohio men, remains a vibrant group—but today it is composed largely of working women.

Other departments have financed departmental programming by engaging donors with architecture and
landscape. The University of Florida presented an alumna interested in historical restoration with plans to convert an abandoned women's gymnasium into a stately building for the women's studies department—and she agreed to finance it. At the entrance to what is now Kathryn Chicone Ustler Hall lies a garden funded by the Yardley family, and donors who have contributed $10,000 toward women's studies programming honor significant women in their lives by having the honorees' names engraved along the Yardley Garden Wall. A quote from Alice Walker graces the granite: "She is involved in work her soul must have."

At the University of Arizona, a like-minded donor-supported Women's Plaza of Honor tells the story of Arizona women while providing an endowment to fund a graduate fellowship in women's studies. An arch in the plaza commemorates the accomplishments of women lawyers, while another marks the contributions of the state's Native American women. Individual tiles, bricks, benches and fountains speak of individuals, groups and families.

Says Betsy Bolding, one of the project's founding organizers and a donor herself, "My support for women's studies reflects my passion to assure that my granddaughters celebrate women's accomplishments and realize that their opportunities are limitless."

"FRANKLY, IT'S AN INVESTMENT AS GOOD AS STOCKS..." — BETSY BOLDING

Directors of women's studies programs see donors as their partners, and donors in turn see their contributions as investments in the future. "Frankly, it's an investment as good as stocks or bonds today," adds Bolding. "When I meet and visit with our students and learn about the exciting and inspiring work they and our professors are doing, I feel confident that good will come from my investments. Anything I can do will make a greater difference at this time, since the bulk of donors are drawn to what are considered basic needs. But making sure these students and their leaders can continue their search for the answers that will give us a better world is a basic need."

— DEBORAH SIEGEL

5 WAYS YOU CAN GIVE TO WOMEN'S STUDIES RIGHT NOW

1. Call your local women's studies department, or that of your alma mater, and ask the director where the department's current needs lie and how you can contribute.

2. Join—or start!—a Friends of Women's Studies organization, and encourage your friends to join as well. A bonus: Joining a giving circle offers instant access to a significant network of friends—great for job networking and a terrific resource for recent graduates.

3. Endow a lecture series on a topic close to your heart.

4. Endow a dissertation fellowship, or a travel fund for undergraduates.

5. Leave a bequest to your campus' women's studies department in your will.
STICKS AND STONES

Words hurled against women's studies from the far right cannot hurt us, but a weakened economy requires our vigilance

THE FAR RIGHT HAS BEEN AFTER WOMEN'S STUDIES FOR MORE THAN A DECADE now—Lynne Cheney's *Telling the Truth*, published back in 1995, argued that the field undermined the basis of American education by critiquing traditional Western heritage and ideas. As her title suggested, Cheney, along with other right-wing critics, argued that women's studies was politically motivated rather than fact-based scholarship.

Cheney's mantle was grabbed by conservative rabble-rouser David Horowitz, who, in his most recent anti-academia diatribe, *One-Party Classroom*, lists the "150 worst courses" in American higher education—over 60 of which center on women's, gender and sexuality issues. It appears as though Horowitz's "research" consists of surfing the Web to find course titles, syllabi and concepts that he hopes will sound unfamiliar to the lay public, such as "queer theory," and then ridiculing them as a waste of time and money.

While scholars in women's gender and sexuality studies will gladly remind the public why their scholarship is so valuable, others feel exhausted responding to routine attempts to discredit them—a tactic feminist scholar and University of Arizona professor Annette Kolodny has characterized as anti-feminist intellectual harassment. And, occasionally, right-wing arguments gain a bit of traction in conservative political enclaves: This past February, two Republican legislators in Georgia, backed by the Christian Coalition, suggested that taxpayers should not have to pay the salaries of two Georgia State University professors who have researched sexual matters. But after hearing the accused testify in a hearing, state legislators learned that Kirk Ellison is a former Army captain whose research on gay male prostitutes helps prevent the spread of HIV, and Mindy Stomblenger studies the way oral sex has become all-too-casually accepted among young teens. Even the Republican committee chair who oversaw the hearing deemed their research "legitimate."

Despite their efforts, right-wing critics have failed to discredit the flourishing field of women's studies, and its offerings have become on some campuses a core requirement for undergraduate students. "Our academic mission has been respected, and we've been encouraged to grow significantly from our humble beginnings," says Claire Moses, professor of women's studies and former chair of the department at the University of Maryland. Some of the more established women's studies programs are turning into even stronger "departments," Moses points out, with independent budgets and their own faculty.

Of concern to everyone in academia right now, however, is the faltering economy. Especially at public universities, which depend on state funding, there have been across-the-board reductions in the face of decreasing budgets. The humanities and social sciences, under which women's studies often resides, could be particularly vulnerable, says Moses, because the sciences tend to get larger grants. It may be time for women's studies to advertise the work that does bring in major grants and contributes to national questions like why there are still few girls and women in technology and engineering. Women's studies also is interdisciplinary, which can make it appealing to schools because it draws from established faculty, but in difficult times may be an easier target for faculty buybacks.

Thus, we must stay vigilant and keep fighting for our fair share of resources. We've proved our worth as an academic field, and as our graduates go forth into the world they will continue to show that women's studies produces valuable "products" indeed.

—MARSHA MCCAUHGEY

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