



gender: dynamic

The Newsletter of the Gender Studies Program at Northwestern University

FALL 2007, VOLUME 18 ISSUE 1

Political Theory, Feminist Theory: an Interview with Mary G. Dietz

The political theorist Mary G. Dietz arrived at Northwestern this fall as a joint faculty appointment in Gender Studies and Political Science. Dietz, who holds the Board of Lady Managers of the Columbian Exposition Chair, earned her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. She comes to Northwestern from the Political Science department at the University of Minnesota, where she was also affiliated with the Women's Studies Department and the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies. To introduce some of the issues she is interested in, we asked Professor Dietz to talk about her scholarship and teaching, past, current, and future.



Mary G. Dietz

You've written two books on the thought of particular women in political theory—*Simone Weil and Hannah Arendt. Did you set out to tell a story about women and twentieth-century political thought?*

MGD: Not at all!—that is far too demanding and grand a narrative task for me. My interest in Weil grew out of a graduate seminar at Berkeley

on “Political Theory as Rhetoric” with the late Norman Jacobson. The research paper assignment involved interpreting a political theory text with a view toward its rhetorical strategies and effects. I was searching for something off the beaten path and happened upon a reference to Weil in *The New York Review of Books*, in an article primarily on Arendt. It called Weil the “other” most famous “female philosopher” of the twentieth century — so I decided to follow up.

In the library I found about fourteen volumes of Weil's writings: notebooks, essays, monographs, and one posthumously published “systematic” work that qualified as a single text: *The Need for Roots*. Weil was working in London, as a kind of administrative researcher for the organization of the Free French and was “tasked” to write a kind of policy brief concerning post-war reconstruction in France. But it turned into something quite other than that. Just a brief glance revealed the visceral, rhetorical power of the text as both a *consolatio* and a reinvigoration of life, and revealed its strangeness. The text is replete with spiritual and bodily invocations of belonging to country, of war and the violence of uprooting (*déracinement*), and of the ethical and political requirements for sustaining earthly community.

So *The Need for Roots* became the object of the seminar paper, and my curiosity only intensified. I decided to write a dissertation on the complexities, ambivalences, and tensions in Weil's thinking, especially in relation to politics.

Early on it became clear to me that Weil presented some serious challenges for thinking “woman” in conventional terms—she persistently disrupted the female identity imposed upon her, repressed her sexuality, cross-dressed, and quite literally (and tragically in the end) ravaged her flesh and eviscerated her body.

So assessing her as a “woman” was problematic from the start—no doubt this is also when I began to suspect that gender was a far more complicated category of interpretation than the heteronormative male/female binary allowed.

2007 AWARD WINNERS



Julie Keller and Jessica Mathiason, co-winners of the Moses Leadership Award, with 2006-07 Director of Undergraduate Studies Jillana Enteen. (Photo: Kristina Ogilvie)

At the annual spring awards banquet in June, Gender Studies recognized its graduating seniors and presented three undergraduate prizes. Please join us in applauding the accomplishments of these new alums of the Gender Studies Program:

Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs Prize, for the best senior honors thesis written in the Program: **Jessica Mathiason '07**, for “Trans Hollywood Blockbusters and the Genital Reveal.” The award committee lauded a “great thesis—one that is original in its analysis, makes good use of theory, and arrives at quite a compelling conclusion about the potential of film to construct a ‘transgendered gaze,’ in turn, to transform the dominant discourse on trans identity.”

George C. Casey Prize, for the best undergraduate essay on any topic relating to the situation of gender in society: **Poornima Yechoor '07**, for “Beauty and the Final Solution: The Unique Horror of Women's Experiences in Auschwitz,” written for Professor Tessie Liu's course “Race, Gender, and the Politics of Beauty.” The award committee praised Yechoor's “poignant, sensitive and illuminating study that brings out the complex intertwining of aesthetics and racial ideologies.” Honorable Mentions went to **Megan Ballard '08** and **Jessica Mathiason '07**, for papers written with faculty members Amy Partridge and Jillana Enteen, respectively.

Rae Arlene Moses Leadership Award, presented to a graduating senior who has fostered initiatives and demonstrated leadership, both within the classroom and in co-curricular Program activities: shared by 2006-07 Undergraduate Board co-chairs **Julie Keller '07** and **Jessica Mathiason '07**. Under their direction, the board organized two colloquia: a screening and discussion of the documentary *Transparent* with filmmaker Jules Rosskam, and a panel discussion, “Queer in High School: The Integration Question of the 21st Century.”

From the director's desk

Gender Studies begins this academic year with growth and dynamism on a number of counts, and there are many people and initiatives to welcome.



Jeffrey Masten

We are thrilled to have Professor Mary Dietz joining us as one of our foundational, senior faculty lines in the Program (see above). Prof. Dietz will be teaching seminars this year at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, focusing on feminist approaches to political theory, from Plato and Aristotle through major thinkers in the twentieth century.

This fall, we've also been visited by Professor Amanda Gouws, a political scientist from the University of Stellenbosch (South Africa). Prof. Gouws joined us as an Edith Kreeger Wolf Vis-

continued on page 2

continued on page 3

From the director's desk

continued from page 1

iting Professor, and taught a course in "African Feminisms."

We also welcome to Gender Studies Ramón Rivera-Servera, a new Assistant Professor in Performance Studies. Prof. Rivera-Servera brings to Northwestern his expertise in performance, Latino/a Studies, and gender and queer studies, and this fall he taught the Gender Studies course "Queer Sexualities and Popular Culture."

We're very pleased again to have Visiting Assistant Professor Amy Partridge in a leadership position in the Program, serving as Director of Undergraduate Studies and Associate Director. Prof. Partridge also advises the Undergraduate Board on their events and activities.

2007-08 is the inaugural year of our new interdisciplinary graduate "cluster" program through the Graduate School, and we welcome our first cohort of Gender Studies graduate fellows—Greg Mitchell, who comes to us through Performance Studies, and Chris Shirley, through English. This coming admission season, we will again select applicants for fellowships from a competitive, transdisciplinary pool. These fellowships are an exciting development in the Program, and our graduate curriculum continues to grow.

The Gender Studies Reading Group is running strong this year under the direction of Professor Kasey Evans of the English Department. The group meets quarterly to discuss recently published books in gender and sexuality studies.

Under the organizational guidance of Ph.D. student Sarah Mesle, meetings of the Gender Studies Doctoral Colloquium have attracted students from a wide range of Northwestern graduate programs, including Anthropology, English, History, Performance Studies, Political Science, and Radio/Television/Film, among others. The group meets to discuss work-in-progress by Gender Studies graduate students and to provide a space for discussion of gender studies methodologies and approaches in an interdisciplinary context.

Gender Studies Program Assistant Katy Weseman has been coordinating our work with the Chicago Area Women's and Gender Studies consortium—designing a new website for that group, and planning a job fair for area women's and gender studies majors. Katy, who brings her training as a Women's and Gender Studies

graduate of Carleton College to work for us, also spoke eloquently on an alumnae/i panel at the job fair, discussing the range of career opportunities for students with a degree in women's and gender studies.

This newsletter features several articles on faculty research, including the interview with Prof. Dietz; I hope you'll enjoy this opportunity to see what our active research faculty are currently thinking about.

A final set of welcomes: to our work-study students Marissa Faustini and Jessi

Reber; and to the graduate teaching assistants working with us this year, Kelby Harrison and Mary Pagano (2007-08), and Hollis Griffin (Winter). Both groups are central to the work of the Program.

Watch the Gender Studies website for news of upcoming events, which we'll report on in the spring issue.

—Jeffrey Masten

Reflections on "Gender and Sexuality in the Contemporary Middle East"

by Ashley Keyser '09

In each newsletter, *Gender Studies* asks a student to introduce a course to our readers. Ashley Keyser '09 contributed this description of a Spring 2007 course.

In the rhetoric of some conservatives, the Veiled Muslim Woman in the Middle East has become a stock character. Always silent and subservient, this woman is a symbol of the Middle East's alleged backwardness, one that provides a "feminist" reason for invasion and colonialism. Last spring, however, Öykü Potuoglu-Cook complicated these stereotypes and over-simplifications in her class, "Gender and Sexuality in the Contemporary Middle East."

We looked closely at three specific sites—Iran, a model of religious conservatism; Turkey, of extreme secularism; and Egypt, which lies in the middle. Öykü stressed the complicated, often contradictory nature of these countries and called our attention to the oppressive aspects of secularism and the liberatory aspects of some oppressive regimes. For example, we read thought-provoking texts like Afsaneh Najmabadi's *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards*, which queered mainstream notions of homosexuality in the Middle East through its historical look at Iranian same-sex relations. In addition, I found our discussion of Turkey and belly dancing particularly in-

teresting. With its desire to join the EU, the country markets itself as modern. But at the same time, trying to seduce tourists, Turkey orientalizes itself by presenting its belly dancers as exotically sexual.

Throughout the quarter, we kept returning to one central question: can the Veiled



Photo: Mohammad Namazi

Muslim Woman speak? The answer, of course, is complicated, as is the veil itself (different styles of veils have different meanings). While many women, as well as people who have sex with same-sex partners, suffer under patriarchal, oppressive laws, they are still humans with agency, not caricatures. Öykü taught us that, in order to work toward understanding, to listen and learn, we must first "lift the veil" of essentialisms.

continued from page 1

Political Theory, Feminist Theory: an Interview with Mary G. Dietz

And Arendt?

MGD: Again my graduate studies at Berkeley were definitive. My interest emerged out of seminars with Hanna Pitkin and centered upon Arendt's peculiar mode of theorizing politics and power. Not as domination, mastery, or control over another, but rather as the plurality of different selves in relation with others and as "speech and action in concert."

Only much later did I become interested in Arendt's significance in relation to feminist theory and started to think about both the "woman question in Arendt" and the "Arendt question in feminist thought."

Both Weil and Arendt are compelling and powerful diagnosticians of modernity. It would be interesting to explore their significant differences with students in a seminar, something I've not yet done.

How would you describe your approach in the *Weil and Arendt* books?

MGD: Well, the books are in some respects quite different. My scholarship (like the field of political theory itself) tends to be rather eclectic in its approach and takes its guidance from the demands that the problem, the text, or the theorist throw forward for me to consider.

My study of Weil—primarily a work of critical reconstruction and interpretation of her texts framed by problems of politics—also drew upon psychoanalysis, political histories of the interwar years and Vichy Regime in France, intellectual history, and religious studies.

Also, as a political theorist with certain critical emancipatory as well as text-interpretive and feminist commitments,

"Feminist political theory may be at its best when it directs its attention to imaginative projects of emancipatory critique..."

I almost always gear my scholarship (or it gears me) toward what might be called a "practical-normative" intent. I am concerned to engage in acts of interpretation that press upon me (and others) the complexities of the human condition and the necessity to "think what we are doing"

(to borrow from Arendt) as political beings in the world.

Thus my interest in theorizing feminism in terms of political action and democratic citizenship, and my tendency to bring significant thinkers and texts in the Western tradition (e.g. Aristotle, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Weber, Weil, Arendt) to bear upon problems of modernity and contemporary politics.

As the editor of *Political Theory*, the major journal in that field, what's your sense of the current role of feminism and feminist theory within that field? How would you say that role has changed in recent years?

MGD: These are exceedingly difficult questions that require a kind of "eagle's eye" perspective that I simply do not have, even as the editor of a journal that aims to encompass the entire field. My impression is of a mixed picture.

Certainly feminist and gender-inflected interpretations of canonical and contemporary theorists and texts, along with studies of particular female thinkers, continue to appear and make significant contributions to political theorizing.

But it is difficult to discern much activity in feminist political theory on what might be called the "programmatic," "grand theory," or "first-order" level—whether by way of projects engaged in the systematic critique of existing structures and relations of power, production, and domination, or in more prescriptive modes of theorizing, say, democratic practices, or global politics, or the ethics of citizenship, or a theory of justice or freedom.

There are important exceptions, of course, including Linda Zerilli's recent *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* and Chandra Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders*. But neither of these works set out to formulate a feminist "theory."

Still, I'm not entirely sure that the absence of grand systematic works that attempt to articulate a "feminist politics" (in the way that, say, Rawls articulates a theory of justice or Habermas a theory of discourse ethics or Arendt a phenomenology of the human condition) is a bad thing.

Perhaps the strength of academic femi-

nist political theory lies not so much in the effort to articulate "a" theory (of politics, democracy, globalization, citizenship, or anything else), but rather in its capacities for discomfiting conventional views and unexamined assumptions, disclosing "hidden" structures of domination, order of rank, injustice, discrimination, subjection, and subordination, challenging the corrupting influences of hegemonic powers, identifying poisons and debasements (including those that impose a system of morality "the same for all") in the body politic, and so on.

Of course what I've just said already begins to constrict and "contain" feminist political theory. But all I mean to suggest, speaking only for myself, is that feminist political theory may be at its best when it directs its attentions to imaginative projects of emancipatory critique, rather than to systematic efforts that posit universal norms or principles (whether essential or experiential) in the name of "women" or "maternalism" or a quasi-transcendental ideal that the term "feminism" is then made to represent.

You mentioned your work on feminism and citizenship—what would you say are the most important contemporary issues there?

MGD: Feminism and citizenship is for me a continuing project. One of the most important contemporary issues—or dilemmas—of citizenship that feminist political theory needs to engage involves justifications for "humanitarian" intervention in the name of "universal human rights" or "western values" within both international and national contexts of war, civil war, genocide, etc. Attendant to this question is another problem of citizenship namely, displaced persons, asylum seekers, immigrants, stateless peoples, non-citizens, and so on, who are the casualties of global upheavals, imperial interventions, inter-necine conflicts, and so on, within and across regions and states. What sort of contributions can feminist political theory make to our understanding of these conditions of *déracinement* and displacement?

What about feminism and citizenship in the upcoming U.S. elections?

continued on page 7

Faculty News, Honors, and Achievements

Peter J. Carroll (History) spoke on “The Place of Prostitution in Early 20th c. Suzhou” at conferences in Taipei, Taiwan, and Chongqing, China, this last summer and at Oxford University this fall. He will also present work on urban preservation and development at the Association for Asian Studies in 2008.

Nick Davis (Gender Studies and English) recently completed two new essays, one on Dorothy Arzner’s *The Wild Party* and the other on Brad Bird’s *The Incredibles*, to be published in a forthcoming anthology from Routledge. He is now finishing a third essay for the same volume, about Ang Lee’s *Brokeback Mountain*.

Micaela di Leonardo (Anthropology) co-edited and contributed to an anthology entitled *New Landscapes of Inequality: Neoliberalism and the Erosion of Democracy in America* which will be released this spring from the School of Advanced Research Press and features articles by Northwestern colleagues Nancy MacLean (History) and Dorothy Roberts (Law). Di Leonardo also published “Dwight Conquergood, Political Economy, Performance Studies” in *Cultural Studies* and the entry “City” in the recently published *Keywords in American Studies* (NYU Press).

Alice Eagly (Psychology) published “Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership” in the *Harvard Business Review* in September. In October, Harvard Business School Press published *Through the Labyrinth*:

The Truth About How Women Become Leaders, a book Eagly co-authored with Linda Carli about the challenges women face (and often overcome) in attaining and excelling in leadership roles.

Jillana Enteen (Gender Studies) published “On the Receiving End of the Colonization”: Nalo Hopkinson’s Nanny Web” in a March 2007 special issue on Afrofuturism in *Science Fiction Studies* and gave a presentation entitled “Gay Bangkok Online” at the Royal Geographic Society in London this last summer. Enteen was recently promoted to Senior Lecturer in Gender Studies.

Lane Fenrich (History) was honored as the recipient of the Weinberg College Community Building Award at the 2007 WCAS teaching awards luncheon. The award recognizes faculty who foster a sense of community both inside and outside the classroom. Fenrich was also co-coordinator of Northwestern’s Fall 2007 “One Book, One Northwestern” project, devoted to James Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on the Mountain*.

Phyllis Lassner (Writing Program and Jewish Studies) gave an invited lecture at the University of Trondheim, Norway, on the theme of her forthcoming book, *Anglo-Jewish Women Writing the Holocaust*. Her essay “Negotiating the Distance” was published in the Modern Language Association volume *Approaches to Teaching Wiesel’s Night*.

Graduate Student Updates

Katy Chiles (English) was awarded a Mellon Foundation Grant by Northwestern’s Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities for Fall Quarter 2007. Her essay, “Becoming Colored in Occom and Wheatley’s Early America” is forthcoming in the journal *PMLA*. This spring she will be teaching as a Visiting Assistant Professor in Northwestern’s English department.

Hollis Griffin (Radio/Television/Film) recently had his article “Ambivalent Text, Ambivalent Pleasures: Queer Masculinity, the Quality Audience, and Comedy Central’s Reno 911!” accepted for publication in the journal *Television and New Media*. In May, he participated in the Urban Representations conference co-sponsored by Northwestern’s Center for Screen Cultures, the Center for Contemporary Metropolitan Cultures, and the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities. In October, he is presenting “Red/State/Queer: Geography and Sexual Difference in Contemporary American Media Culture” at the American Studies Association conference.

Kelby Harrison (Philosophy) was named the Human Rights Campaign’s Chicago area Student of the Year for the 2006-07 school year. She received the award for her LGBTQ activism on Northwestern’s campus: including her involvement with the Safe Space Program, and LGBT Support Network. Harrison also founded and is the co-president of Northwestern’s Queer Pride Graduate Student Association, and is a member of the university’s Graduate Leadership Council.

Margo Miller (Radio/Television/Film) presented papers at the “Film, Television, and the 1950s” and the “Flow, Framework, and SCMS” conferences last year. Miller’s review of Ron Becker’s *Gay TV and Straight America* appeared in a recent issue of the journal *Framework*. Miller has been awarded a Visiting Researcher Stipend from the UCLA Film & TV archive.

Jeffrey Masten (Gender Studies and English) gave the keynote address at the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies annual Shakespeare Symposium in May. His talk, on race and sexuality in modern editions of Shakespeare, was titled “All is not glossed: Editing Shakespeare and the History of Sexuality.”

Frances Freeman Paden (Gender Studies and Writing Program) and William D. Paden (French and Italian) published *Troubadour Poems from the South of France* (D. S. Brewer). In July, Fran Paden gave an invited paper, “Quilting a Life: Adelene Moffat in 1882,” for the Autobiography Group of the British Sociological Association at Trinity College, Dublin.

Michael Sherry (History) published *Gay Artists in Modern American Culture: An Imagined Conspiracy* (University of North Carolina Press). He also received a Northwestern Humanities Institute Fellowship to support his current project, *Go Directly to Jail: The Punitive Turn in American Life*.

Carol Simpson Stern (Performance Studies) published *Arthur Symons: Critic Among Critics: An Annotated Bibliography* with co-authors C. Jay Fox and Robert S. Means. In October, she spoke at a Symposium sponsored by the Knight Commission in Washington, D.C., on the role of faculty in intercollegiate athletic reform.

Undergraduate Student Updates

Adam Gauzza (2009) spent June at the Ruth Page Center for the Performing Arts, where he studied ballet and Graham technique. This summer, he danced in the independent film *Were the World Mine* (dir. Tom Gustafson), participated in the Summer Stages Dance intensive in Concord, MA, and performed in the DUMBO Art Under the Bridge Festival in New York City.

Sharlyn Grace (2008) and **Chelsea Ostendorf** (2009) continue to run a weekly Women and Trans Night at the Evanston bike shop The Recyclery. Allowing people to come in and work on and learn about their bikes at no cost, Women and Trans Night offers a safe and welcoming space for groups not traditionally welcome in mechanics and bike culture.

Going Public: Pedagogy and Politics

The following essay is excerpted from a paper Sarah Mesle gave at the 2006 Modern Language Association Convention in Philadelphia, on a panel entitled “Public Engagement and the New Professoriate.” The panel was organized by the MLA Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession. Mesle is an advanced Ph.D. candidate in Northwestern’s English department and the organizer of the Gender Studies Doctoral Colloquium.

I learned one of the most pivotal lessons of my time in graduate school on election night 2004. I was standing near Claire McCaskill, then a Missouri gubernatorial candidate, on whose behalf I had helped organize a large-scale Women’s Vote initiative. She was preparing to give her concession speech, having just learned that she had lost to an objectively inferior candidate.

I looked at her and thought: I’ve failed. As I student, I’d spent so much time developing ideas about politics, gender, and language, yet when I had the chance to make these ideas be “ideas that matter,” I had not turned them into meaningful public speech.

Like many of us, I assume that there is a political and social value to the work I do as a graduate student. But community organizing has forced me to think differently about the roles we play as academics. What I have concluded is that we cannot learn to do better as public agents—public “speakers” in the broadest sense—unless we start to revalue our role as learners, and as students, in general.

Since my research focuses on the history of women’s political engagement, I initially felt prepared for campaign work. But it was jarring to go from an intellectual investigation of gender to an equally compelling engagement with a political initiative. As an academic, for instance, I had long dismissed rigid ideas of gender binaries and identity politics. But as an organizer, I had my greatest success registering voters through “woman only” events publicized with “Barbie-pink” flyers.

What I realized was that ideas about gender which seemed obvious to me were radical in the environment where I was

working. Speaking at gatherings of women from various social strata—at book clubs and bridge clubs—I realized that for most women I met, the most pressing question was very simple: how could they begin to think of women as political agents, as any kind of political constituency, at all?

In this context, it was tempting to revert to a familiar pose and bemoan the backwardness of the public. As an academic, I felt well prepared to diagnose the many problems of the political world I had entered. Yet as the 2004 election cycle proved to me, sitting in judgment did not necessarily make me effective as a public speaker.

So how else might graduate students speak? First, I think I might have been more effective as a political speaker had I spoken less as an academic “professional” and more as a pedagogue.

“Constructivist” theories of pedagogy teach us that we have to understand what our students “know” in order to help them build new ideas successfully. Students do not compartmentalize what they learn, but rather graft new ideas onto their prior knowledge, thereby building their own

“How can we connect our dialect with the public dialect in which ‘feminism’ is still often assumed to be a radical position?”

information systems.

Students do this inevitably, regardless of whether or not teachers tell them to, and regardless of whether or not the ideas they put together cohere. So to ensure that they don’t construct dissonances or contradictions, educators are responsible for learning about students’ prior information, what it means to them, and how it will be relevant to the new ideas they gather.

If graduate students were to apply this idea to our public engagement, I think we could enable more successful communication between our ideas (of politics, social



Claire McCaskill, right, the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from Missouri.

formation, language acts, etc.) and public experiences of those concepts. If we hope for academic ideas to be useful to public dialogue, we cannot simply dismiss the content of public speech.

Instead, we must learn to understand the ideas that undergird the public political arena. We must remember that we too are part of that dialogue, and that we must find a way to connect our dialect in which, for example, being a “feminist” is almost a given, and the public dialect in which “feminism” is still often assumed to be a radical or marginal position. If as scholars we cannot build the bridge between these two languages, we cannot hope for our public audience to do it for us.

Graduate students must also remember that learning to speak to the public is not separate from learning to be professors. Undergraduates come to our classrooms with ideas about gender developed through their own lived experiences.

Through specifically discussing the points at which mainstream and academic ideas of gender converge and diverge, we can help students articulate their own ideas and hopes about the way gender influences their lives.

This is the point that I originally hoped to make when conceiving this talk: that if graduate students thought about our public speaking in relation to our roles as teachers, we would become both better speakers and better teachers.

But, and this is key, the mode of teaching I am advocating—constructivist pedagogy—emphasizes the teacher’s role as a student. It is dangerous to assume that the goal of our pedagogical relation to the public would always be to teach, and never to learn ourselves. So, as a practical conclusion

continued on page 6

Introducing the Gender Studies Teaching Assistants

Each year, Gender Studies selects two teaching assistants through a competitive process. The assistantships are an excellent opportunity for graduate students to diversify their teaching portfolio by teaching outside their home departments. Applications for next academic year will be due in March 2008. We welcome this year's TAs:

Kelby Harrison is a Gender Studies certificate and fifth-year doctoral student in Philosophy. Kelby's dissertation, on the "Ethics of Passing," critically examines the role that ethics and morality have played in the scholarly literature and public perception of passing as a form of identity falsification, with a particular focus on sexual-orientation passing. In addition to assisting Jilana Enteen with the lecture course "Sexuality as Transnational" in Spring Quarter, Kelby will be teaching Gender Studies 345, "Ethics and Sexual Politics (Queer Ethics)" for the Program in Winter Quarter 2008.



Mary E. Pagano is a Gender Studies certificate student and Ph.D. candidate in Radio/Television/Film. She is currently completing her dissertation, "Moving Beyond the Single Girl: Femininity, Feminism, and Mobility in American Television, 1962-1972," which explores intersections among the emergence of second-wave feminism, the persistence of traditional femininity, and increased economic and social mobility for American women, as filtered through the lens of popular television sitcoms and variety shows. During Spring Quarter, Mary will teach Gender Studies 373, "Gender, Sexuality, and Film" with a focus on feminist media theory.



We're pleased that **Hollis Griffin**, a Ph.D. student in Radio/Television/Film, is also assisting with Nicholas Davis's course, "Introducing Queer Cinema" in the Winter Quarter.

Faculty Sabbatical Research

Toward a Democratic Theory of Judgment

by Prof. Linda Zerilli

As a 2006-07 Marta Sutton Weeks Fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center, I worked on my current book project, *Toward a Democratic Theory of Judgment*. This book examines the problem of political judgment in the context of the wide-spread value pluralism that defines modernity. I am interested in the question of what the standards of judgment can possibly be in the context of multiethnic and multiracial societies like the United States and, increasingly, Western Europe.

In light of recent political events and the so-called "clash of civilizations," we find ourselves increasingly called upon to make judgments about practices and cultures not our own, judgments that require, among other things, an ability and willingness to imagine how the world looks to people whose standpoints we do not necessarily share. The temptation here is to adopt the position of the rationalist and employ our own concepts as universal rules or standards with which to judge foreign practices and cultures. But then the question arises as to whether we have in fact engaged in the act of critical judging—or have we, rather, applied the

rules of "our" culture to the particulars of "theirs," all the better to confirm what we already know and claim to be?

With this question arises another temptation, namely, if we reject such a rule-governed practice of judgment as, say, uncritical and ethnocentric, then perhaps we have little choice but to adopt the position of the relativist. As radically divergent views can be equally valid depending on one's standpoint and membership in any particular culture, so the relativist holds, it is best not to judge at all. Who are we—outsiders—to judge? I try to show the problems associated with both approaches to the problem of judgment and to suggest alternatives.

I have completed three chapters of the manuscript, one of which, "Truth and Politics," was published in *Theory and Event* and another of which, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Judgment," is forthcoming in 2008 in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*.

We will feature Prof. Ann Shola Orloff's description of her 2006-07 sabbatical research in the Spring issue of gender:dynamic.

continued from page 5

Going Public: Pedagogy and Politics

from my own campaign experience, I believe everyone is better served when we enter the public sphere as specialists in the exchange of knowledge—as expert learners—rather than as repositories of special knowledge itself.

It's my claim that if we hope for a more successful engagement with the public, we must reward graduate students not only for specialized acts of criticism but also for the ability to meaningfully exchange ideas with a wider audience. The necessary pre-condition for this shift, I think, is that we cease to place the "student" part of our grad school experience under erasure. Instead of moving as quickly as possible towards an authoritative voice, we should respect and encourage our need to ask honest and open-ended questions.

Is this a valuable goal? I hope so. I suspect I am not the only one who found the election results of 2004 devastating, who realizes that the gains of the 2006 election happened

almost in spite of a lack of articulate new leadership on the left, who feels a pressing need for a new articulation of the debates about sexual and reproductive freedoms, who is outraged by the misinformation spread by government-funded sex-ed programs and the suppression of information about women's economic status, who believes that the 18- to 22-year-olds in Iraq need our engagement as much as the 18- to 22-year-olds in our classrooms do, and who, in the wake of these social imperatives, has become willing to learn a different way of speaking as an intellectual.

We are in a moment of crisis, when our voices and our skills are needed. By cultivating our ability to engage with the public, the new professoriate will learn to participate in meaningful social change. One of these changes, I hope, will be a shift in the social culture of our own professional world.

continued from page 3

Political Theory, Feminist Theory: an Interview with Mary G. Dietz

MGD: One of the great practical challenges for feminism as a liberatory (not just a partisan political) movement in the United States is how to negotiate the possible tension between two positions. First, a politics that rightly valorizes and fights for the equality and rights of "women" (and on these grounds systematically supports female candidates for higher office). And second, a politics of democratic freedom and equality that may find itself seriously at odds with such candidates, especially those who consider the "projection of force" a crucial element of foreign policy, and use the discourse of the "war on terror" to legitimate government surveillance, violation of civil rights, invasions of privacy, unlawful detentions, and the suspension of *habeas corpus*, among other acts of violation of constitutional and democratic citizenship.

Your work has engaged with the full range of Western political theory—Aristotle, Machiavelli, and into the twentieth century (just to name some greatest hits). Recently you've been thinking about gender in Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan of 1651*.

MGD: Yes—this work is in the early stages, so this is just a promissory note.

Moving beyond the feminist critique of the "social contract" in Hobbes, I am thinking about Hobbes' famous "laws of nature" in Part One of *Leviathan*, and how they appear to privilege a code of behavior or a complex of virtues (gratitude, mutuality, modesty, the capacity to pardon, seeking of peace) that are at some distance from the

"manly" virtues lauded by classical Roman republicans and later Italian Renaissance humanists, including Machiavelli.

Whether or not we can characterize Hobbes' laws as "virtues feminized," I want to suggest that, at the very least, they function to *domesticate* rather than "activate" (as the classical republicans do) males as citizens of the commonwealth. My interpretation of the gender dynamics of the commonwealth will challenge the idea that *Leviathan* simply grants "freedom" to men and assigns women to subordination. In my reading of the commonwealth, things are far more complicated than that. If not necessarily more liberated.

In the Winter Quarter, you're teaching a new undergraduate seminar, "Feminist Interventions in Western Political Thought."

MGD: Yes—we will be bringing a variety of feminist theorists to bear upon Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Locke, John Stuart Mill, and Nietzsche.

My interest here is both in feminist critique of these thinkers and texts and in ways that feminist theorists have appropriated them for other projects and purposes in political theory, philosophy, literature, cultural studies, and so on.

For more on Prof. Dietz's work, see *Between the Human and the Divine: The Political Thought of Simone Weil (Rouman and Littlefield)*; *Turning Operations: Feminism, Arendt, and Politics (Routledge)*; and "Current Controversies in Feminist Theory" (Annual Review of Political Science).

"Autonomy and Solidarity": Fall Quarter with the Undergraduate Board

by Marissa Faustini '09

The 2007-2008 Gender Studies Undergraduate Board had an exciting fall quarter. We planned three events unified by the theme of "Autonomy and Solidarity."



In November, we hosted a presentation by Rachel Mehl, the Alternative Economy Coordinator for the Mexico Solidarity Network. The Alternative Economy Program works in partnership with a Zapatista women's weaving cooperative in Chiapas to distribute the crafts they make in the U.S. at

a fair trade price. Rachel discussed the use of crafts to start dialogues about Zapatismo, the role of women within the Zapatista movement, and viable alternatives to neo-liberal economic policies and development strategies.

In addition to this event, the board hosted two "teach-ins." At the first, we discussed women, gender, and Zapatismo. At the second, we read and discussed recent work by Professor Angela Davis, who spoke at Northwestern on November 29.

The Gender Studies Undergraduate Board provides a great opportunity for majors, minors, and other interested students to participate in programming Gender Studies events throughout the year. For more information about the board, or to get involved, contact the Gender Studies office at gender@northwestern.edu.

Alumnae/i Updates

Shana Naomi Krochmal (1999) is working to have a short film script made into a film in collaboration with two other Northwestern alums (Liz English and Dylan Rice). When not working on this and other scripts, she blogs on out.com.

Jeffrey McCune (Graduate Certificate, 2007) is now an Assistant Professor in Women's Studies and American Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Sheetal Prajapati (2002) is the new Director of Educational Programming at the Mary and Leigh Block Museum at Northwestern.

Christina Saenz (2002) received an M.A. in sociology at Columbia University in May and has begun doctoral research on post-9/11 police organizations.

Melanie Wang (2007) is the new Coordinator of the Annual Fund and Membership at the Chicago History Museum. In the coming year, she will serve

as chief liaison overseeing membership participation in all Museum programming, including its breakthrough "Out at CHM" series on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual history. Past "Out at CHM" events have included panel discussions with historian John D'Emilio, presentations on the early history of AIDS activism, and a seminar on the censorship of twentieth-century gay and lesbian art.



Gender Studies faculty, staff, and class of 2007 seniors at the annual spring awards banquet.
(Photo: Kristina Ogilvie)

identities

Gender:dynamic is published twice annually by the Gender Studies Program at Northwestern University. Copies may be obtained at the Program Office, Kresge Hall 2-360; 1880 Campus Drive, Evanston, IL 60208-2211.

Gender Studies at Northwestern is an interdisciplinary program, with faculty affiliates drawn from more than twenty-five departments across four of the University's schools.

Phone: 847.491.5871

Email: gender@northwestern.edu

Web: <http://www.wcas.northwestern.edu/genderstudies/>

Program Director & Director of Graduate Studies: Jeffrey Masten
Associate Director & Director of Undergraduate Studies: Amy Partridge
Program Assistant: Katy Weseman
Newsletter design: Robert Grillo Creative

The Gender Studies Advisory Committee

Nicola Beisel (Gender Studies & Sociology)
Nicholas Davis (Gender Studies & English)
Mary G. Dietz (Gender Studies & Political Science)
Jillana Enteen (Gender Studies)
Lane Fenrich (History)
E. Patrick Johnson (Performance Studies)
Tessie Liu (Gender Studies & History)
Jeffrey Masten (Gender Studies & English)
Ann Orloff (Gender Studies & Sociology)
Alexandra Owen (Gender Studies & History)
Frances Freeman Paden (Gender Studies & Writing Program)
Amy Partridge (Gender Studies)
Helen Thompson (English)
Jane Winston (Gender Studies & French)
Linda Zerilli (Gender Studies & Political Science)



gender:dynamic

Northwestern University
Gender Studies Program
1880 Campus Drive
Evanston, IL 60208-2211

First Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 205
Evanston, IL 60201