



The Newsletter of the Gender Studies Program at Northwestern University

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Guest Lecture: Jane Collins on Gender, Labor and Commodity Chains in the New Global Economy

THREADS

PEADS By Ella Myers (Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science)

How are work experiences within the global economy shaped by gender ideologies? What strategies have low-wage women workers created for contesting the conditions under which they labor? These questions are among the important lines of inquiry guiding the work of University of Wisconsin, Madison Professor Jane Collins. On November 1, Prof. Collins spoke at Northwestern on the subject of "Gender, Labor, and Commodity Chains in the New Global Economy."

Prof. Collins' talk drew on research conducted for her book *Threads: Gender, Labor, and Power in the Global Apparel Industry*, an ethnographic analysis of four factories engaged in the manufacture of clothing, two in the U.S. and two in Mexico. As Collins explained, the apparel industry is a particularly important case for understanding the way in which workers, both at home and abroad, are subject to the dynamics of globalization. In addition, the apparel industry, comprised predomi-

nantly of female workers, offers a rich site for exploring feminist theories of work.

Collins stressed four key points of analysis. First, she discussed the ways in which managers use the existence of a global labor market to threaten workers and secure their compliance with increasingly unreasonable standards of productivity. She then described the process of "deterritorialization," a phenomenon which profoundly affects workers' ability to organize against unfair labor practices because it is frequently unclear who is responsible for their work conditions. Because owners are often located overseas and depend on subcontractors, workers' access to decision-makers is limited. (See *Collins*, p. 4)

The Fall 2005 Leslie Hoffmann Colloquium: "Radical Chicago"

By Corey Robinson (WCAS 06)

The Gender Studies Undergraduate Liaison Committee's fall quarter theme was "The History of Radical Chicago." This theme was taken up in the Leslie Hoffmann Colloquium, "Radical Chicago: Jane, ACT UP, and the ongoing struggle for civil rights," which featured three speakers: Judith Arcana, a member of the underground abortion service known as "Jane," Jeffrey Edwards, a long-time member of ACT UP Chicago, and Doria Johnson, an Evanston-based civil rights activist. (Additional photos, p. 8).

Judith Arcana, who received a B.A. in English from Northwestern in 1964, currently dedicates her life to writing poetry and prose focusing on aspects of motherhood that are rarely addressed in what she calls "Hallmark America." In her presentation she described how she became a Jane and learned to perform safe, illegal abortions for



women and girls before *Roe v. Wade*. Arcana, who was fired from her position as a high school teacher because she was (wrongfully) assumed to have communist affiliations, said it was her students in the 1960s that (see *Radical*, p. 3)

A Word from the Director



Gender Studies Program Director Jeffrey Masten

As we approach the beginning of 2006, I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Director of the Gender Studies Program at Northwestern and say a few words about what promises to be another banner year for us in a number of ways.

Gender Studies is currently participating in two faculty searches that will add significantly to our program faculty and course offerings. Our search for a distinguished senior scholar in a number of social-science disciplines has begun to bring in candidates for campus visits. We have also begun to review candidates for an assistant-professor position jointly with the English department. We continue to add faculty to our growing list of affiliates, and we are also planning a major speaker event in the Kreeger Wolf Endowment series for April. (Stay tuned for details.)

In the graduate certificate program, the fall has brought the inaugural meeting of our new Gender Studies Doctoral Colloquium. This colloquium will bring together graduate students outside our regular courses to talk about shared questions and challenges of doing research on gender and sexuality, from the perspective of our different disciplines. The colloquium will also bring to Northwestern visiting scholars working on topics of common interest. (Graduate students who would like to participate in this colloquium should email me at j-masten@northwestern.edu or gender@northwestern.edu.

As you will see in pages of this newsletter, our undergraduate "liaison committee" has been extraordinarily active this fall, planning a hugely successful Leslie Hoffmann Colloquium that considered the radical past of Chicago, on topics ranging from abortion-rights advocacy to anti-lynching activism to AIDS. The committee, led by co-chairs Corey Robinson and Lindsay Shadrick, has also inaugurated the Gender Studies Scholars Group, a student-run reading and discussion group that is focusing this year on conceptions of gender in popular culture.

We also continue to sponsor the popular Gender Studies Reading Group. Led this year by faculty members Harvey Young (Theatre) and Helen Thompson (English), the reading group brings together faculty and students to read and discuss current books and articles that focus on critical theories and methods in gender and sexuality studies.

And that's just to recount our activities *outside* the curriculum. Gender Studies continues to be the host for about ten undergraduate and graduate courses a term, some of which you'll read about in the pages that follow. In the Winter term, Helen Thompson returns to teach one of the cornerstones of the undergraduate major, (**continued on p. 3**, *Director*)

Anna Kate Bishop is the Program Assistant for Gender Studies. You will find her in the office, Kresge 2-360, M-F from 8:30-5pm. Hailing from North Carolina, Anna Kate graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill in 2003 and recently started the MA Literature program at Northwestern. She has enjoyed being a student again and is pursuing a concentration in African-American literature. She completed the Safe Space Training in October.

The Gender Studies Advisory Committee

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(*Director*, continued from page 2) "Voices and Visions," a course highly recommended for students considering a major in Gender Studies. Among our other course offerings are several new courses, including Nicki Beisel's undergraduate course "Reproductive Politics," and two new graduate courses, including a seminar that Patrick Johnson and Sandra Richards will co-lead on dialogue between Black Feminist and Queer Theories. As even this small cross-section of our courses suggests, our curriculum continues to grow in terms of topics, disciplines, methods, theories, and histories.

The energy, creativity, and work of a lot of people sustains and builds Gender Studies, and I want to extend mid-year thanks to a number of them. First, thanks to our faculty, who serve on the Gender Studies advisory committee and teach our consistently highly-rated courses. I also want to single out for thanks Jane Winston, who served as Director of the program last year. Much of what you see in the following pages is a tribute to the energy and organizational skills of Amy Partridge, who served as Director of Undergraduate Studies and interim Associate Director this fall, and who has worked with all aspects of the undergraduate program, from advising, to guiding our honors thesis-writers, to event planning. Our Program Assistant Anna Kate Bishop does amazing work, most of it behind various scenes, to keep Gender Studies running efficiently and effectively. Anna Kate is ably assisted in the office by Corey Robinson. I'm grateful to all these contributors to the work of our program, and for their commitment to Gender Studies.

Scholarship and teaching on gender have had a place at Northwestern for more than thirty years, beginning with the

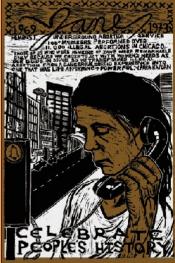
founding of an interdisciplinary Program on Women in 1971. That first program grew into the Women's Studies program, became an adjunct major in the college, and eventually underwent a name-change to "Gender Studies" in 2000. Building on that history, we have only continued to expand on the range of approaches we use and topics we study. You'll get a taste of that breadth in this newsletter. It's a pleasure to work with a program that brings such expansive programming and curriculum to Northwestern. —Jeffrey Masten



Judith Arcana, Jeffrey Edwards, and Doria Johnson

(*Radical*, continued from page 1) propelled her to political consciousness. Both her experiences as a suburban high school teacher and as a woman afraid of an untimely pregnancy were the catalysts for her dedication to feminist activism, which has inspired her work for almost four decades.

Jeffrey Edwards's experience as a 23 year-old gay man in the midst of the 1980s AIDS crisis incited him to join the Chicago chapter of ACT UP. Edwards, who is now a professor at Roosevelt University, addressed the inequities of America's healthcare institutions and detailed the poor treatment that women, people of color, and working-class people with AIDS received during the Reagan era, in addition to describing the crisis that gay men faced at the beginning of the AIDS crisis. In contrast to ACT UP New York, the Chicago chapter of ACT UP was a working-class, grassroots organization that took an intersectional approach in its fight for effective and humane HIV/AIDS treatment. Edwards remains an activist and argued that there is still much radical work to be done in the queer community including reviving a pro-safe sex culture that can resist the more heteronormative models that currently dominate the discourse within the gay and lesbian communities.



Doria Johnson recounted the story of how her great great-grandfather was lynched in the town of Abbeville, South Carolina. Mr. Crawford was a successful cotton

farmer and the richest black man in town. When white men were offered more for their cotton than he was, he condemned it as racist. Because he refused to be paid less for the same product, he was dragged behind his own buggy, stabbed, and shot hundreds of times. After the lynching, his family was forced to leave and migrated to Evanston, as did a large portion of Abbeville's black community. Johnson was a member of the United States Senate Steering Committee for the Anti-Lynching Apology and was critical in the passage of Resolution 39 last June. She continues to fight for financial reparations for descendants of African-American slaves and victims of lynchings.

Northwestern History, Gender Studies, and American Studies professor Lane Fenrich responded to the panel. He described the various ways in which these three disparate sectors of activism are intertwined and inform one another. He praised each of the speakers for demystifying activism. For Fenrich and for the audience, the critical question was "What next?" In an era when the conservative Right has won the culture wars and controls all branches of the government, and when the rights of women, people of color, and sexual minorities are under threat, what can we do to protect ourselves, our values, and our morals? All the speakers pointed to youth culture as an important site and source of activism and suggested that social change depends, at least in part, on the energy of college students. But we need to get started because, as all the activists said, we are in danger.

(Collins, continued from page 1) Collins also discussed the ways in which the low wages of apparel industry workers are "bound up with gender relations." In particular, gender ideologies allow managers to justify the very low wages paid to women workers by arguing that their wages are merely "supplemental" to the income of a wage-earning husband. Finally, Collins described the extent to which "skill" itself is a contested category. She noted, for example, that many of the managers she interviewed argued that women in the United States no longer possessed the skills for apparel industry work and that this explained the movement of these jobs from the U.S. to other countries. Collins deftly exposed the ways in which this argument works, first, by positing a flaw or lack in the U.S. work force and, second, by depicting women's sewing as a natural resource rather than a learned "skill." As Collins pointed out, the "naturalization of skill" is a paradigm that has historically depressed wages and con-

tinues to do so.

"This book tries to work against the gender neutral...categories of traditional economic analysis to shape our understanding of new global processes of industrialization and deindustrialization."

Do the women workers harmed by the flows of global capital have any strategies available to them for challenging these practices? Collins closed her talk by highlighting the new forms of "community-based unionism" that have emerged in Mexico. These unions, in which women workers play a large leadership role, are comprised of workers from multiple factories and industries, allowing for a broader membership base and attention to a range of issues. Collins suggested that these

new union movements, coupled with transnational efforts to end sweatshop labor, offer some hope for the transformation of working conditions within the global economy.

The Gender Studies Undergraduate Liaison Committee



Lindsay Shadrick and Corey Robinson

By Lindsay Shadrick (Co-Chair, Liaison Committee)

The Gender Studies Undergraduate Liaison Committee is a group of majors and minors who commit a few hours each week to help guide the Program's course offerings and programming. This year, the Liaison Committee co-chairs, Corey Robinson and Lindsay Shadrick, and an enthusiastic core membership, have expanded its scope to include volunteerism, activism, and a student-run discussion group.

This fall, the Liaison Committee inaugurated the Gender Studies Scholars Group. Once a month, interested students come together to discuss a prearranged topic. In October, the discussion was built around selections from *The L-Word, Sex and the City*, and *Nip/Tuck* and this past month the group watched *Super Size She*, a short documentary on female bodybuilding. The group will remain active throughout the year. Each month a different participant will choose the topic and lead the discussion.

This quarter, the Liaison Committee also organized "Radical Chicago," a Leslie Hoffmann Undergraduate Colloquium. The event featured local civil rights activist Doria Johnson, "Jane" member Judith Arcana, and ACT UP Chicago member Jeffrey Edwards each of whom addressed the state of local activism past and present and reflected on the intersections between these seemingly disparate types of radical activism. The Liaison Committee is already planning the Winter and Spring quarter Leslie Hoffmann Colloquia.

In the upcoming months, the Committee will be participating in a week of events to mark the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, volunteering at local feminist organizations, and continuing their involvement in planning programming. This year's involvement in and enthusiasm about the Liaison Committee is dependent upon the continued support of the Gender Studies faculty and staff and the commitment of majors and minors in the Program. The Gender Studies Liaison Committee meets bimonthly, and is always eager to accept new members. Please contact Corey Robinson (c-robinson2@northwestern.edu) or Lindsay Shadrick (l-shadrick@northwestern.edu) to become involved.

The Gender Studies Undergraduate Scholars Group

By Jessie Mathiason (WCAS 07)

The Gender Studies Scholars Group held its first event on October 11, 2005. The group's intention is to provide a forum for interested students to come together once a month to discuss



their observations, insights, and opinions on a range of topics relating to gender, race, class, and sexuality. Each month, a different student or group of students will take responsibility for selecting the topic and preparing a short presentation in order to focus the group's discussion.



The Scholars Group's October session, organized by Corey Robinson and Lindsay Shadrick, was entitled "Questions of Performativity and Fluidity: Exploring Identity in Popular Television." We began by watching clips from three contemporary shows: Nip/Tuck, Sex and the City, and The L

Word.

By depicting characters that represent marginalized sexualities and defy mainstream gender roles, all three shows have changed the rules about which groups of people get to be portrayed on TV. For example, the clip we watched from *Nip/Tuck* follows a transsexual woman in her quest for pro bono surgery, while *Sex and the City's* Samantha, known for transgressing the boundaries of "appropriate" female sexuality, dates a woman who we can only guess has been modeled after the painter Frida Kahlo. Perhaps most surprisingly, *The L Word* introduced a "male-identified lesbian" named Lisa, whose bisexual partner says in the heat of the moment, "You do lesbian better than any lesbian I know." This clip in particular captured our attention; if someone biologically male can perform "lesbian," then what is lesbian?

While no definitive answers could be reached, the discussion prompted us to evaluate how much of our personal identifications are defined by internal states of being and how much they are defined by our cultural practices.

Television, and popular culture in general, is intended for a mass audience. *Nip/Tuck, Sex and the City*, and *The L Word* not only entertain the public but educate us as well. We discussed what it is that these shows are teaching us and explored what important information is being left out. These TV shows do offer more complex depictions of gender and sexuality, but we are still eagerly awaiting the arrival of the economically disenfranchised *Sex and the City* friend, *The L Word's* butch lesbian, and *Nip/Tuck's* well-adjusted and successful transgender plastic surgeon.

By Julie Keller (WCAS 06)

Five members of the Gender Studies Liaison Committee gathered on one of the coldest evenings yet this Fall quarter to discuss *Supersize She*, a documentary about female bodybuilder Joanna Thomas, on November 9th for the second meeting of the Scholars Group. Though technical difficulties

with the VCR made some of us question how many Gender Studies majors it really takes to play a videotape, we were enthralled once the film began. It followed Joanna Thomas's quest to be crowned Miss Olympia, the highest achievement for female bodybuilders. As a group, we questioned whether the hyper-masculinized body of Joanna Thomas constituted a (dissident) performance of gender. We compared her use of steroids and breast augmentation to transgendered persons' use of hormones and gen-



der reassignment surgery to change their bodies to reflect their sense of self. We also reflected upon Thomas's statement that being married with four children and going to the pub every night seemed abnormal and the challenge her entire career poses to heteronormative femininity. After much discussion, as well as some open-mouthed awe at the lengths to which bodybuilders go to transform their physical selves, we ventured back out into the cold with much to think about.

Gender Studies Reading Group

The Gender Studies Reading Group (GSRG) provides a stimulating forum for reading and discussing recent works in the field of gender studies. Open to all faculty and graduate students, the GSRG currently consists of over 60 members. If you are interested in joining, please e-mail Harvey Young at harvey@northwestern.edu. Selected readings, determined by faculty organizer Harvey Young or recommended by GSRG membership, are announced several weeks before the quarterly meeting and circulated by campus mail to interested members. Readings tend to vary in style (from theoretical texts to critical studies) and disciplinary base.

The GSRG will next meet on Thursday, 19 January 2006 at 4:30pm and will discuss Afsaneh Najmabadis Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity. Deemed "extraordinary" by Joan W. Scott, the book "provides a compelling demonstration of the centrality of gender and sexuality to the shaping of modern culture and politics in Iran [and] skillfully demonstrates how using gender as an analytic category can provide insight into structures of hierarchy and power and thus into the organization of politics and social life."

Gender Studies Course Reviews

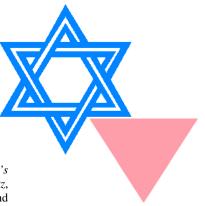
GS 390: Race, Gender and the Holocaust

Instructor: Phyllis Lassner

By Cassie del Pilar (WCAS 07)

Jews. However, few discussions those involved in it. delve into exactly how Nazi theories about race and gender led to the suffering and mass murder of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and others considered unfit. Professor Lassner's course, "Race, Gender, and the Holocaust," demonstrated the importance of understanding this aspect of Nazism if we want to interrogate modern race and gender theory. Course materials included both literature (fiction and nonfiction), such as The Kommandant's Mistress and Survival in Auschwitz, and films like The Gray Zone and Aimee and Jaguar. Our discussions

touched upon the range of Holocaust experience--including the experiences of Most Holocaust discourse focuses victims, survivors, perpetrators and byon Hitler's dream of a master race and standers and forced us to challenge our his extermination of millions of own understanding of the Holocaust and



GS 390: Gender, Public Policy and the Law

Instructor: Cynthia Bowman

By Veronica Percia (School of Communications 06)

Imagine that another person's life is in grave danger and that their survival is dependent upon your consenting to invasive and dangerous surgery. Does the court have a right to make you consent? What if the person in question is a twentysix week old fetus? What if you are not conscious and so cannot make the decision What implications might a decision in this case have on women whose circumstances are not as dire, or on pregnant women more generally?

These are some of the questions that have troubled and shaped feminist jurispru-

dence over the last several decades and questions that students in "Gender, Public Policy, and the Law" grappled with during the quarter. In this course, the limits of privacy, debates over the commodification of women's bodies, and tensions around issues of autonomy and bodily integrity were interrogated in the context of the American judicial system. Students also examined the impact of law on the lives of women and men and the (often critical) role gender plays in the formation and enforcement of the law. The course pushed all of us to develop our own opinions and to consider the extent to which a persistent tension between legality and morality inform all of our visions of, and hopes for, a more just future.



GS 390: Critical Race Studies and Feminist **Theory**

Instructor:Ella Myers

By Cassandra Malik (WCAS 06)

This course interrogated the relationship between race and gender. We began with the question "what is race?" and examined a number of theoretical perspectives including social constructionism, essentialism, and one that denied the existence of race altogether. After comparing and evaluating these competing theories of race, we applied a similar approach to the study of gender. One thing became obvious: while most theorists present fairly compelling critiques of other people's perspectives, they consistently fall short in their attempts to offer unproblematic alternatives. This illusory



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quest the single best theory was the topic much class discussion as we observed similarities between and gender theorists

successes and struggles. But we did not just draw parallels; the final part of the course focused on the intersection of race and gender, attempting to discern how these seemingly disparate concepts were (or were not) interrelated. This final investigation of the intersection of race and gender demanded a more nuanced and multidimensional take on identity and revealed the extent to which an overly narrow focus on gender obscures the interplay between the multiple facets of subjectivity.

News and Notes

Graduate News

Margo Miller's (RTVF) essay on masculinity and men's relationships in 1990s sitcoms appears in the recent volume *The New Queer Aesthetic on Television: Essays on Recent Programming*. Miller also presented a paper at the Gerber/Hart Library and Archives.

Oyku Potuoglu-Cook (Performance Studies) who works on Turkish belly dance, won the Sylvia Forman feminist anthropology prize this year. She will participate in the awards ceremony at AAA in D.C.

Alumni News

Megan Chawansky (1999) is working on her Ph.D. in Sport and Exercise Humanities at The Ohio State University. Her current research project examines the ways in which norms of gender and sexuality structure the discourse surrounding the recruitment of female athletes.

Lauren McConnell (2004) is a Visiting Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley. She is also serving as visiting dramaturg for the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, which is producing the Czech operas *Brundibar* and *Comedy on the Bridge*.

Sumitha Ganji (2005) was accepted into Tulane's Medical School. She is currently studying at the Harvard School of Public Health.

Alison Pflepsen, a 2000 summa cum laude graduate in Journalism and Women's Studies, has been awarded the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship. She will use the money to fund an MS in Development Management at American University.

Faculty News

Nicola Beisel's article "Abortion, Race and Gender in Nineteenth-Century America," co-authored with Tamara Kay, was published in the August 2004 issue of *The American Sociological Review*. It won two prizes from the American Sociological Association, one from the Political Sociology section and one from the Race, Class, and Gender section.

Micaela di Leonardo was awarded the Society for the Anthropology of North America Prize for Distinguished Achievement in the Critical Study of North America.

Phyllis Lassner published "The Literature of World War II" in *Literature and Politics: Censorship, Revolution, and Writing* (Greenwood Press, 2005). She also gave a paper at the Second Annual Rebecca West Conference in Sept. in N.Y: "Redefining the Fight Against Fascism: Rebecca West and Naomi Mitchison in the 1930s."

Rebecca Rossen defended her dissertation, "Dancing Jewish: Jewish Identity in American Modern and Postmodern Dance" in October, 2005. In November, she and her husband welcome the birth of their first baby.

Linda Zerilli published *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Undergraduate News

Stephanie Chin (WCAS 06) was awarded an Undergraduate Research Grant to support research for her Gender Studies Honors Thesis, "Regulating Race and Imperializing Space."

Student Group News

News From Rainbow Alliance

By: David A. Sternberg, ASG Senator, Rainbow Alliance

Rainbow Alliance hosted a fall reception at the Alumni Center in conjunction with the LGBT Resource Center, the LGBT Support Network, the Women's Center, and the Center for Student Involvement. celebration of National Coming Out Day (October 11th), Rainbow Alliance sponsored a week of campus activities and invited Conscious Soden to speak about her experiences as an HIV+ lesbian. Rainbow Alliance will host its 3rd annual Drag Show in Winter quarter and Rainbow Week, a week of events celebrating the LGBT community at Northwestern, in the spring. Rainbow Alliance holds general meetings every other Thursday, and all students, faculty, and staff are more than welcome to attend! For more information, website at http://groups.northwestern.edu/ visit our rainbow/.

News From The College Feminists

By: Rupal Vora, Director, College Feminists

The College Feminists began the year with our annual "meat and greet" BBQ at the Women's Center. On November 15th, The College Feminists and For Members Only brought editorial director of *Essence* magazine, Susan Taylor, to campus. During Winter quarter, we will sponsor a week of events to celebrate the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* in conjunction with the Gender Studies Liaison Committee, and Rainbow Alliance. Our annual production of *The Vagina Monologues* is scheduled for February 10th and 11th, and Take Back the Night, a march against sexual violence, is scheduled for April 11th. College Feminists hold general meetings every Tuesday at 8:00pm at the Women's Center (2000 Sheridan Road). All interested students are welcomed! Please contact Rupal Vora at **r-vora@northwestern.edu** with any questions or suggestions for the group.

Gender Studies Doctoral Colloquium

The Gender Studies Doctoral Colloquium met for the first time on November 8th and will continue to meet once a month in Kresge 2-360. The next meeting is scheduled for <u>Tuesday</u>, <u>December 6</u>. Funded by WCAS, the group will discuss and workshop pre-circulated papers and dissertation chapters by graduate students whose work deals with gender or related topics. The colloquium provides an opportunity to think about gender, sex, and sexuality scholarship across disciplinary boundaries, to meet Northwestern graduate students from a range of departments, and to receive feedback on work-in-progress. For more information about the group or to join the Colloquium please contact <u>gender@northwestern.edu</u>.

Hoffmann Colloquium



Jeffrey Edwards and Doria Johnson



History Chair and Professor Nancy MacLean and Gender Studies Major Annie Lee (WCAS '05)



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