

THE STATE OF WOMEN'S STUDIES AT CAROLINA

News from Women's Studies at The University of South Carolina

Fall/Winter 1993

Women's Studies research series: activists, detectives and more

The Women's Studies Faculty Research Series continues to offer engaging, enlightening and entertaining presentations.

Dr. Laura Woliver opened the series on Sept. 28, 1993, with her research on ad hoc political groups. Woliver's talk was titled "From Outrage to Action: Feminism at the Grass Roots."

Woliver interviewed women brought together by a perceived injustice to determine the characteristics and motivations of the women involved and the effects their actions had on them. Woliver's premise was that more women are involved in the political process than is commonly known because grassroots groups are not normally documented and studied.

Woliver studied four groups: one that formed to recall a judge who ruled that a four-year-old's "promiscuity" led to her molestation, one to recall a judge who indicated sexual assault was not inappropriate if a woman's attire "solicited" it, one to free an innocent man, and one to seek action after a girl was murdered.

Woliver found that most of the women in these groups were humble, strongly religious, and did not recognize their own accomplishments. Some had experience from the civil rights movement, and all but three were mothers. Most of the women had not been activists before, but believed that something should be done about the injustice they perceived.

Woliver said the powerless often feel isolated, not knowing others have challenged authority. The initial reaction to this isolation is self-doubt. Women are taught to distrust their own feelings, making it difficult for them to act.

Woliver said most of the women indicated they were mobilized by fairness:

the victims were not treated fairly, the government did not respond fairly, and the women believed fairness would result if they acted. For some of the women, experiences in the civil rights and anti-war movements led them to feminism. Their belief in their religion gave them justification for their actions and they already believed the culture to be sexist and racist, setting up a climate where the women felt action was called for. As a result of the women's actions, one of

the judges was recalled. The other groups met with limited success.

Woliver argues for inclusion of these kinds of short-term political actions in research and for the use of in-depth interviews. She also promotes a fluid, non-linear view in analyzing these actions. The linear view only recognizes the activists' main goal, while the more fluid approach recognizes the activists'

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Diversity celebration marks twentieth anniversary



Students and faculty celebrated the twentieth anniversary of Women's Studies at USC during Diversity Week (Sept. 17-24). The Women's



Studies reception at the Russell House ballroom drew a diverse crowd of Women's Studies supporters. Photos by Donna Chaplin.

Call for papers

Reaching Toward the Light: Women Across the Disciplines in the 1990s

March 25, 1994

Seventh Annual System-wide Women's Studies Conference

The University
of South Carolina

We invite you to submit abstracts for individual presentations or proposals for a panel relevant to the conference theme of progress in creating, transmitting, extending, transforming, or constructing/deconstructing disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge about women. Fifteen minutes will be allotted for individual papers and 45 minutes for panel presentations. To obtain a form for submitting your abstract, call the Women's Studies office at 777-4007 or fax 777-9114. Deadlines for program submissions is Jan. 31, 1994.

The State of Women's Studies at Carolina

is published bi-annually by
Women's Studies at the
University of South Carolina

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Women's Studies gets new graduate director

Dr. Mary Crawford left Pennsylvania on her birthday this August to drive to her new home in Columbia, where she has quickly taken up her duties as graduate director of Women's Studies and professor of psychology. One of her first acts was to institute USC's first graduate course in the psychology of women.

A distinguished teacher and scholar and the author of three recent books in feminist psychology and important articles in the social construction of gender, Dr. Crawford also serves as research director of the Women's College Coalition and as consultant or adviser to a number of professional organizations.

She was chosen in a national search that attracted top candidates in the field of feminist psychology. Her colleagues describe her as an acute and original thinker who has the energy and creativity to put her ideas into action.

"Mary Crawford brings vital knowledge and leadership to USC Women's Studies," said Dr. Judith Giblin James, interim director. "We are fortunate to have her here."



Dr. Mary Crawford

In working to build the graduate program in Women's Studies, Dr. Crawford hopes to focus on developing grant support for faculty and student research. Two joint publications with students have already resulted from projects undertaken at USC this semester.

Visiting professorship awarded to Rosser



Dr. Sue V. Rosser

Dr. Sue V. Rosser is spending the fall semester as Distinguished Visiting Professor of Science and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Her work there is sponsored by a

National Science Foundation grant to improve teaching on campuses within the Wisconsin system. Dr. Rosser's many publications that link feminist pedagogy and science, including two books and a third in progress, create a great demand for her expertise.

During the spring semester, Dr. Rosser will take sabbatical leave to finish research in progress. She will return to USC officially on May 15. Dr. Judith Giblin James is serving as acting director this academic year.

A joint reception for Dr. Rosser and Dr. Mary Crawford, incoming director of graduate studies, was held at the Alumni House on August 24. Dr. Rosser's sabbatical leave caps seven years of leadership at USC, during which time Women's Studies has developed strong academic programs for undergraduate and graduate students and has gained recognition regionally and nationally as a center for scholarship and teaching about women.

She who laughs, lasts: feminist comedy troupe at USC

A standing ovation was the audience response when Sleeveless Theatre presented "The F-Word: A Fresh and Funny Look at Feminism" on Friday, Nov. 12, 1993, at Longstreet Theatre to a standing-room-only crowd. The event was sponsored by Carolina Program Union's Ideas and Issues Committee, USC Women's Studies, and the Department of Theatre, Speech and Dance.

The four talented and funny women of Sleeveless Theatre demonstrated the importance and impact of the medium of comedy. They combined tradition with originality to present a powerful and insightful look at feminism.

The 11 short skits, ranging from "The Man-Made Woman" to "The Condensed History of American Feminism," were hilarious and eye-opening at the same time. The central focus of the show was to reflect common fears of feminism and important issues that have arisen in the quest for equality. The actors conveyed their message with style, energy, and wit.

The opening skit was a take on *The Wizard of Oz*. After college student Dorothy dozed off during a lecture on Betsy Ross (the only significant woman in history?), she awoke to find herself in the past. Gloria, the Good Witch of the Left, guided Dorothy and her doll, Barbie, down the feminist path. The Wicked Witch of the Right, Phyllis, coveted Dorothy's woman symbol (Sleeveless Theatre's "red slippers") because it was so powerful.

Dorothy was accompanied by the Suffragist, Rosie the Riveter, and the ERA Activist. In their journey down the feminist path, they encountered "senators and frat boys and bosses, OH MY!" When Dorothy returned to the nineties, Gloria the Good Witch asked her what she had learned. She learned she needs to join with the feminists of the past in fighting for women's rights and to discover and appreciate *herstory*.

In "A Word from Our Sponsor," the audience learned the "solution" to women's inequality. To achieve parity in decision-making, credibility, and visibility, women may buy the "Equalizer"...a cucumber. The use of this enabling device in the world of work was graphically demonstrated. The consumer has the option of jumbo, colossal, or super-colossal (small is not



Feminist Comedy Troupe Sleeveless Theatre, clockwise from bottom: K. D. Halpin, Maureen Futtner, Kate Nuegent and Lise Channer. Photo by Elizabeth Bryant.

available). Just dial 1-800-SELL-OUT! Operators are standing by....

Sleeveless Theatre used mime with flair and originality. In "Tug-o-Woman," a pregnant woman is literally pulled among the church, Supreme Court, and the reactionary right in a "game" of conflicting interests over women's reproductive rights. The Tug-o-Woman turns into a game of *hot potato* after the baby is born as none of the institutions concerned with protecting fetuses claim responsibility for helping mothers and children.

In "Hollywood Does the Klassix," movie images of women as victims and "CBB's" (crazy bisexual bitches) were satirized, and a serious question was raised: why do movie-goers see so few assertive, powerful women? In contrast to media images, the group's "Condensed History of Feminism" recounted the diverse American women who have struggled for human rights for all: Iroquois tribal

women, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Chicana labor activists, and, not least, Susan B. Anthony (Sleeveless Theatre portrayed her as still upset that "her" dollar looks like a quarter).

Sleeveless Theatre's talents are dedicated to education through comedy, as shown in their motto, "Comedy with a Conscience." The four artists, Lisa Channer, Maureen Futtner, K.D. Halpin, and Kate Nugent note that "The F-Word" challenges the pundits who claim that feminism is dead. In their closing act, "The Feminist Olympics," the torch was passed from the seventies to the eighties, and now on to the nineties. The actors challenged the audience to continue carrying the torch by stating that the "strength of the nineties" was yet to be seen. Judging by the laughter of the Longstreet audience, Sleeveless Theatre succeeded in passing on the torch of feminism at USC.

Studies (from page 1)

main accomplishments and results in the personal lives of the women. Woliver says there can be success at the same time there is some defeat.

Woliver said the experience was so empowering for some of the women that they went on to graduate school and to law school. Woliver's book is *From Outrage to Action: The Politics of Grassroots Dissent*, University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Dr. Lee Jane Kaufman and her colleague Ann Cargill presented "Investigating the World of Fictional Female Detectives" on Oct. 19.

Cargill and Kaufman, active members of a book club that meets at Volume One bookstore, say they decided to analyze the contents of the detective stories they were reading. Kaufman designed a list of characteristics indicating how the female characters described and felt about themselves.

Despite the fact that the books had female protagonists, the tales were sometimes sexist and negative to women. Kaufman said that in spite of the biased treatment of women, there was some positive reinforcement to be gained by reading a story where a female protagonist is successful. Kaufman said that the books, for the most part, portrayed women as being sensitive, vulnerable and strong.

For their second project, Cargill and Kaufman decided to focus on housewife/housekeeper detectives. Cargill said she felt people had the perception that detectives and housewives were polar opposites; Cargill and Kaufman's research found that the women were portrayed as functioning quite well as detectives.

Cargill said it struck her as positive that the housewife-detectives used their skills as housekeepers to solve crimes. One protagonist solved the crime by detecting how a carpet was vacuumed, while another used the social invisibility of the housekeeper role to gain information.

An interesting twist emerged, according to Cargill. A significant number of the women caught the criminal by whacking him over the head with a frying pan, turning a symbol of oppression into a symbol of the transformation from bondage to control.

The flying frying pans led Kaufman and Cargill to their third paper researching the endings of their chosen genre. In

earlier books, Kaufman said, women frequently were inept and had to be rescued by a man, any man. This is not the case in most current female-detective books.

Being true lovers of suspense, neither Cargill nor Kaufman would reveal the conclusions of their third paper just yet. They did mention one other interesting finding: Cargill said they had discovered that sub-plots played vital roles in many of the books and in some cases, a more vital role than the main story line. These sub-stories, Cargill said, deal with issues of relevance to women, including child abuse, rape, battery, and homelessness.

Political leader urges women's involvement

Harriett Woods spoke on Wednesday, Sept. 8, to an audience of more than 200 and comprised primarily of women. She is the current president of the National Women's Political Caucus and former lieutenant governor of Missouri. The event was sponsored by Women's Studies, the Department of Government and International Studies, and Women's Student Services.

Woods gave a calculatedly motivating speech on the need for more women in politics, a cause near and dear to her heart. Her premise was that if women want more power over their lives, they must gain more control of politics.

Woods encouraged the attentive audience to take part in the political process, assuring them that anyone possessing the drive and determination can participate.

Woods used the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas as a model of what women can achieve when motivated. The all-male composition of the Senate Judiciary Committee became a political issue for the first time. The National Women's Political Caucus and others called for many more women to be in office in order to put an end to the kind of debacle evidenced in the Thomas hearing, resulting in "The Year of the Woman" and a significant increase in women's numbers in Congress.

Woods saved her hottest topic for last: the surge of the religious right. She carefully, but forcefully, made her position clear: the religious right is deliberately exploiting religious symbols for

Still to come in the lecture series:

The Unspeakable, the Unsayable, and the Unsaid: Silence and Narrative Voice in the Work of Marguerite Duras presented by Nancy Lane (Nov. 16, 1993, 3:30, Gambrell Hall room 250)

Women in Patriarchal Ireland presented by Rita M. Rhodes (Jan. 25, 1994, 3:30, location to be announced)

When "Yes" Means "No": A Feminist Analysis presented by Jane Harris Aiken (Feb. 15, 1994, location to be announced)

Women's Language at Work presented by Marjorie H. Goodwin (April 12, 1994, location to be announced)



Harriett Woods

political gain, and women in office are viewed by them as a threat to their agenda. She clearly identified the issue as one of power and who wields it. Using the emotionally charged topic of the religious right as a motivator, Woods declared women must participate in the political process and must have a seat at the political table.

Woods concluded by saying that the National Women's Political Caucus exists to assist women in the political process through education and networking, so women can create a society where they can assume full responsibility for their own lives.

Woods' speech was warmly received by the audience, many of whom spoke with her afterwards.

The multiple meanings of a woman storyteller



Patricia Sawin and Bessie Eldreth

Dr. Patricia Sawin of the University of North Carolina Medical School presented her research on an Appalachian woman storyteller, Bessie Eldreth, to an appreciative audience of more than 50 USC students and faculty on Sept. 30.

In the best spirit of Women's Studies, Sawin is a multidisciplinary scholar. She holds a B.A. in English from Yale, an M.A. in anthropology from the University of Texas, and a Ph.D. in folklore from Indiana University. The subject of Sawin's analysis, Bessie Eldreth, is a well-known storyteller and singer of Appalachian folk songs. Eldreth's own life story is one of hard physical work, including cutting timber for a living and bearing and caring for 11 children. According to Sawin, a lifetime spent in an unsatisfying and oppressive marriage

Asking the question, "What does the storyteller accomplish through the social act of storytelling?" Sawin showed how becoming a tale-teller was a way for Eldreth to develop a public presence and status within the limitations of class and gender imposed on her. In many of her narratives, troubles begin when a woman "steps out of line," and the storyteller can therefore position herself as a "good" woman, recounting other women's evils and their just punishments.

Equally important are Eldreth's narratives in which women are represented as having supernatural powers such as the ability to foresee the future. In the narrative from which Sawin took the title of her presentation, Eldreth's dream of a catastrophic flood was discounted by her husband with the comment,

was a catalyst for the implicit critique of gender relations in Eldreth's storytelling.

In her presentation titled "He Never Gave Me Trouble About Those Dreams...After That": Discourses of Gender in an Appalachian Woman's Stories of the Supernatural," Sawin showed that "ghost stories," while they may be frightening, are not limited to scaring people. Instead, they have multiple meanings.

"You're always dreaming something." Three weeks later, Eldreth recounts, "It started raining. And it was rain, rain, rain, raining." The storyteller is able to counter her husband's dismissal with the words, "Right here is what I told you three weeks ago." In this story, women are positioned as powerful and enabled to "talk back" to men—with a little help from the supernatural.

Stories are more than just a way of passing on traditions, Sawin concluded. They can be powerful tools for critiquing gender and class relations. Bessie Eldreth and other women storytellers play an important part in the ongoing negotiation of gender meanings.

Call for applications

Josephine Abney Faculty Fellowship for Research in Women's Studies

The Josephine Abney Faculty Fellowship for Research in Women's Studies is designed to encourage research that focuses on women or gender-related issues. The research may be interdisciplinary or it may originate in any discipline within the University System. Research on women's health, analysis of women's role in history or society, the psychology of women, and feminist literary criticism are examples (not meant to be exclusive) of topics that might be fruitful for research.

This fellowship is open to any full-time faculty member within the USC system. The fellowships subcommittee of the Women's Studies Committee will make the final selection of the recipient. The most important criteria for selection are the significance of the proposed project, the soundness and clarity of the research plan, and its potential contribution to Women's Studies scholarship.

For application forms and further information, please contact Dr. Judith Giblin James, Acting Director of Women's Studies, at 777-4007. Deadline for applications is Jan. 24, 1994, at 4:00 p.m. The recipient of the fellowship will be announced on March 25, 1994.



Recipients of the Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies at August commencement exercises: Catherine Eckman and Mosi Bayo.

Friends of Women's Studies

The following is a cumulative listing (as of Oct. 31, 1993) of friends of Women's Studies who have supported the Women's Studies Endowment by contributions. Contributors beyond that date will be listed in our next newsletter.
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Spring 1994

SCH	DEPT	CRS	SCT	TITLE	CRED	BLDG	RM	DAYS	TIME	PROF	SESS
166774	WOST	112	001	Women in Society	03			TTH	11:00-12:15P	Flerx	C002
166794	WOST	399	001	Independent Study Preq: Consent of Instructor and Director of Women's Studies	03	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	James	C002
176434	ANTH	210	001	Human Life Cycle in Different Cultures	03			MWF	12:20-1:10P	Goodwin	C002
170724	CLAS	324A	001	Women in Classical Antiquity	03	HU	315	TTH	9:30-10:45A	Castner	C002
138984	GINT/	352	001	Politics of Sex Roles	03			TTH	11:00-12:15P	Kaufman	C002
193654	WOST	352	001	Politics of Sex Roles	03			TTH	11:00-12:15P	Kaufman	C002
132694	ENGL	437	001	Women Writers	03			MWF	9:05-9:55A	Hudock	C002
179964	HIST	464	001	History of American Women	03			TTH	12:30-1:45	Synnott	C002
223574	JOUR	563M	001	Minorities, Women and the Media	03			T	5:00-7:30P	Turk	C002
153254	NURS	110	001	Self-Care Behaviors	03			MW	4:00-5:15P	Cover	C002
171744	NURS	110	002	Self-Care Behaviors	03			TTH	4:30-5:45P	Head	C002
166804	WOST	702	001	Issues & Methods in Women's Studies Research	03			TH	3:00-5:30P	Crawford	C002
166814	WOST	790	001	Directed Reading/ Research. Preq: Consent of Instructor and Graduate Director Women's Studies	03	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	Crawford	C002
166824	WOST	797	001	Seminar in Women's Studies	03			T	2:00-4:30P	James	C002
133064	ENGL	738	001	American Women Writers	03			M	2:30-5:00P	James	C002
193694	ENGL/	787X/001		Women, Language and	03			TTH	9:30-10:45	Myers- Scotton	C002
179964	LING	805		Literature							
180394	HIST	764	001	History of American Women	03			TH	5:30-8:00P	Synnott	C002
EVENING PROGRAM											
January 17-March 10, 1994											
225734	WOST	E111.801		Women in Western Culture	03	TBA	TBA	TTH	5:30-8:00P	TBA	C003
194534	WOST	E112.401		Women in Society	03	TBA	TBA	MW	5:30-8:00P	Ramsdale	C003
222814	PSYC	E310.801		Psychology of Women	03	TBA	TBA	TTH	5:30-8:00P	TBA	C003
189414	SOCY	E301.801		Sociology of Sex Roles	03	TBA	TBA	MW	5:30-8:00P	Boiter	C003
January 17-May 2, 1994											
225724	RELG	E491A.300		Women & Spirituality	03	TBA	TBA	W	7:30-10:00P	Bush	C002
220044	SOCY	E305.092		Sociology of the Family	03	TBA	TBA	S	9:00A	Carlson	C002
March 14-April 29, 1994											
225784	WOST	E112.851		Women in Society	03	TBA	TBA	TTH	5:30-8:15P	TBA	C004

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