

Intersections



Fall 2004

Newsletter of the Macalester College Women's & Gender Studies Department

WGS Kick-Off



On September 28 WGS welcomed new faces and old friends to our first "In the Kitchen With WGS" at the Cultural House. Over twenty students and faculty enjoyed visiting in that lovely space, sharing crock pots and dishes full of chili, stew, couscous, cookies, and other yummy treats made by our affiliated faculty and friends (thank you!!!). Students came from Sonita Sarker's WGS first-year course, visiting faculty Rachel Raimist's course, and our core and cross-listed courses. We saw familiar faculty faces including Nancy Fischer (Sociology), Hilde Hoogenboom (Russian), and Harry Waters Jr. (Dramatic Arts and Dance), and welcomed our new affiliates Jumi Hayaki (Psychology) and Alexandra Cuffel (History).

After munching and chatting together, Sonita inspired us with word of our students' many recent accomplishments, including the community engagement and graduate school preparation projects students completed over our last two years of funding by the Ford Foundation. We then spent time brainstorming ideas for activities that WGS can sponsor in our new year of programming, including ideas for a thematic series of spring events. (Keep note of announcements, coming soon, from the WGS students who will be convening planning sessions for the spring activities!) We look forward to hosting more events like the Cultural House gig this year, to welcome people already linked to WGS, and to invite the new and curious to meet us and keep building our great department.



Golden Opportunity

Here is a golden opportunity for you to get involved in the Women's & Gender Studies Department. Each month we sponsor a Speaker Series Forum, bringing in speakers from around the world. We are looking for a team of students to assist us in finding relevant speakers for next semester. Possible topics of interest are Anti-Discrimination Efforts or Anti-Slavery Efforts.

If you are available to help with this project, please contact Sonita Sarker at: sarker@macalester.edu, or Betsy Salvatore at: wgs@macalester.edu

Student and Community Collaborative Event

We invite students to present at the *WGS Student and Community Collaborative Event*, to be held on December 9, 2004.

We are looking for students to report on their subject of community internship experience, along with your community partner.

Send with your topic and name of community partner to Sonita Sarker at: sarker@macalester.edu, or Betsy Salvatore at: wgs@macalester.edu

My Philosophy

Rachel Raimist

My teaching life is deeply connected to my work outside of the classroom. I am a documentary filmmaker, an activist, and a feminist who teaches coursework invested in feminist pedagogy. My areas of expertise are film/video production, post-production, film studies, feminist thought and theory, women of color feminisms, hip-hop feminist thought, and feminist media making. All of this coursework, built upon strong theoretical frameworks, takes a hands-on approach to learning. My classroom is a space that bridges theory and practice, with the ultimate goal of arming students with the knowledge and tools that will serve them well beyond the academy.

I believe in education as the practice of freedom. I am a passionate teacher who values critical thinking and engaged discussion. I practice a pedagogy that exemplifies a commitment to experiential learning, built upon a collaborative learning model, which requires students to take responsibility in the process of learning. I provide the structure and the framework, while remaining flexible, allowing the classroom community to shape the coursework according to need.

I integrate lecture methods with visual media (overheads, films, videos, images, cd-roms and music) to provide learning opportunities to varied types of learners. I often use call-and-response discussion methods, initially sending out a “call” perhaps using a passage from a text as the “call”. I ask students to respond, a student’s response becomes the next call for the next student, and so on. I stay engaged in the discussion, ready to issue the next call, but allow students the space to take the lead. I require students to work through dense theoretical texts, read personal narratives, deconstruct film clips, analyze photographs and other cultural artifacts, often staging encounters between texts. It is amazing to witness the discoveries they make in connecting how each text informs theorization of the others. What results are classrooms of scholar-artists who have developed the vocabulary, astute critical frameworks, and theoretical foundations they can then apply to the creative work they in turn produce.

I find embodied learning requires students to work through fear and insecurities, to take risks, and to find their individual and collective voices. In this process, teaching and learning practices are demystified, critical questions are raised, and knowledge becomes relevant and

empowering. I firmly believe what students experience outside of the classroom informs how learning happens inside the classroom and vice versa. I introduce the students to the work of scholars in the field, integrate guest speakers into the course, require students to watch films outside of class, attend cultural events, and engage in projects in the local community. Discussion and dialog is ongoing through email and weekly student postings to the class message boards.



Unfortunately, I’ve discovered that many students who have been rewarded academically for imitation and regurgitation of course materials do not know how to think critically or how to clearly articulate their thoughts. They often enter my classroom blocked and unable to channel their ideas into their writing and the creative work they are required to produce. Simply put, at the start of my courses, many do not have the basic tools necessary to tell stories in their own voice, complicated by the fact that many lack confidence and are hindered by fear. Using theater exercise techniques, including forum and image theater of Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed, students learn to trust themselves, each other, and me.

My overall methodology requires all of my students to become critical media literates who must learn to write, to listen, to light, to film, to edit or whatever specific tasks a course requires. Students are transformed by these transgressive educational practices, imbued with the confidence that comes from possessing a cache of theoretical tactics. Academically they thrive, learning to frame the world looking through sharp analytical lenses cognizant of intersecting spaces of gender, race, class, sexuality, and as a result, they learn to empower themselves by amplifying their voices, sharing with the classroom community and beyond, and by engaging critical thinking.

Rachel Raimist is a Visiting Instructor in WGS, teaching Women of Color Feminisms/Third Wave Theory, Practice and Activism.

Why De-Constructing is Sometimes Easier than Constructing: The Internet & How it Doesn't Care about my Positionality

By Megan Stevenson – (WGS Major – '04 graduate)

Through my Ford Foundation Stipend for Social Entrepreneurship, I was able to spend the better part of this summer working on various projects for the Transgender Living Initiative (TLI), the start-up non-profit organization that I helped co-found during my senior year at Macalester. This project was the focus of my classes in Local/Global Sexual Politics (Morgensen) and my Senior Seminar (Sarker), and in retrospect, really was the defining endeavor of my Macalester career.

During the months after graduation, I attended meetings of the TLI Board of Directors and the Transgender/GenderQueer Coalition of the Twin Cities, and helped organize the first ever Twin Cities Trans Town Hall Meeting and plan for a Transgender Employment Conference that will take place at Metro State University next year. I had the chance to network in the community and build alliances for upcoming trans and genderqueer projects.

The most challenging piece of this summer's work, however, involved the planning and building of the TLI website, a venture that threw me into the unforgiving world of web design, and put the book *Dreamweaver for Dummies* at the top of my poolside reading list. Although my tenure at Macalester had prepared me to write with clarity, read with discernment, and argue with confidence, I graduated without any knowledge of how to create a rollover image or design an effective web template. With the very patient help of library staff person Ron Joslin, I fought my way through cryptic code in my attempt to produce an attractive and accessible website.

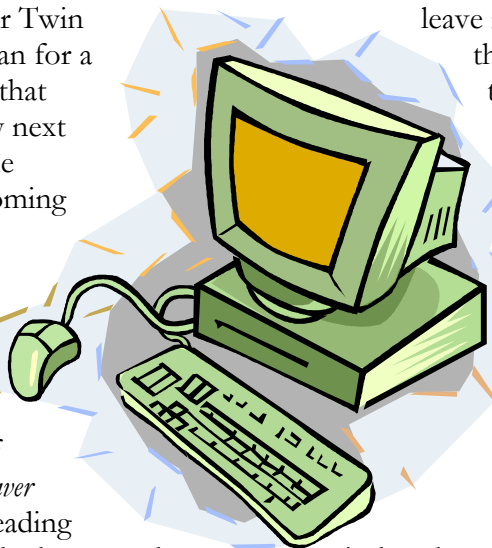
And, in all honesty, much of my work ended tragically, in links that would not link, and navigation bars that (somehow) navigated to nowhere. These perceived "failures" were not simply a product of my

ineptitude, nor did I assume an impossibly difficult task. Rather, I set myself to work on something totally foreign to my post-grad brain. I realized that it had been a long time since I'd been asked to tread new ground, to wrestle with languages and technologies that I have no knowledge of, and to potentially fail. And, as it turns out, it was incredibly difficult.

In the end, I did not finish the website before September 1st rolled around, and my stipend deadline arrived. But I fight to remind myself that this does not indicate failure, although the lack of a finalized product that I could show off to all my web-savvy friends did leave me feeling a little inadequate. However, the hours I spent in the tiny back room of the library basement were about the process of learning, not simply the product, and I comfort myself (however foolishly) with the knowledge that it was indeed better that I accepted the challenge of unfamiliarity, rather than stagnate on the road-well-traveled. And unfortunately, overcoming that challenge is going to take some more time.

So TLI still doesn't have a website, but it does have a volunteer committed enough to do anything, to learn anything, in order to get the organization off the ground: not the most practical short-term outcome, but a promising sign of a successful and sustainable future. I invite you to watch for and attend any upcoming TLI sponsored events or set up an internship with the organization. Just don't look us up on the web. At least, not quite yet.

For more information on the Transgender Living Initiative, please email megantli@yahoo.com



WGS Events Calendar



Tue., Sept. 14th
12:00–1:00 pm
4th Flr Lounge
Old Main

Rachel Raimist - is a feminist filmmaker, scholar, educator, hip-hop feminist, activist, community organizer, and mother.

"LOOKING FROM THE INSIDE OUT: Feminist Filmmaking Praxis Within Prison Walls".

Raimist will discuss her recent work filming incarcerated poets. For the past eight months Rachel has collaborated with Twin Cities poets Reggie Harris and Desdama to connect local poets and performers with the Stillwater Poetry Group (SPG) inside Stillwater Correctional Facility. In a series of critical interdisciplinary workshops designed to promote positive reconceptualizations of self, community, and social justice, the artists use poetry to address themes like manhood, fatherhood, American dreams/nightmares and the value of a man/woman. The workshops, co-facilitated by both inside and outside artists, produce spaces of potential and possibility, where all can expand their critical thinking and work to affect change both inside and beyond the prison walls. She will share video clips and stories of this work.

Tue., Oct. 12th
4:30–6:00 pm
4th Flr Lounge
Old Main

Ann Kranz - Creative writer/poet and Director of Violence Against Women

Online Resources at the U of M

"Snapshots of Identity: Tales from a Queer Crip"

Kranz will read from her manuscript, "Welcome To My World: Exploring Disability Through Poetry and Prose," which she completed as part of her Master of Liberal Studies degree from the University of Minnesota. Kranz is a program director at the Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota. She has recently been selected as one of the 2004–05 President's Emerging Leaders at the University of Minnesota.

Thu., Nov. 11th
12:00–1:00 pm
4th Flr Lounge
Old Main

Margo Okazawa-Rey - Visiting Professor of Women's Studies and Director of the Women's Leadership Institute.

"GI Jane' or Johnetta and Juana": Gender, Race, Class, and Nation of US Militarism"

War is *sine qua non* of militarism – the apex, the climax, the peak experience – the point of all the preparation. Militarism and militarization are broader phenomena that involve institutions, practices, values, ideology, cultures, and that are inextricably intertwined with patriarchy, misogyny, racism, ethnocentrism, and fundamentalism. Talk will focus on the various processes and outcomes of increased militarization of the US, using analytic lenses of gender, race, class, and nation.

Thu., Dec. 9th
7:00–10:00 pm
4th Flr Lounge
Old Main

Student/Community Collaborative

Students will present on their community internship experience with their community partner.

Women's & Gender Studies Department
Macalester College
1600 Grand Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105
651-696-6318