Women’s Studies Graduates Honored

Graduation from college represents a culmination of hard work, good memories, and personal growth for both undergraduate and graduate students. Women’s Studies was represented this May by some outstanding graduates, many with double majors or minors in disciplines such as criminology, nursing, public relations, sociology, history, philosophy, and economics.

This year’s guest speaker for April’s Honors Ceremony was Sharon Hurt Davidson (MALS 1993), communications and development director at a secondary school in Pittsburgh.

Several students were recognized at the honors ceremony.

Outstanding Senior Julie Goldberg, a double major in women’s studies and sociology/anthropology at WVU, brings a unique perspective to her courses and extracurricular activities at WVU. She has been involved in a variety of academic experiences and challenges during her undergraduate program. As one professor noted, Julie is “an emerging leader among deaf women … who will benefit greatly from her knowledge, experience, and abilities.”

Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Laura Trent has been a tremendous asset to women’s studies as a teaching assistant for four years in the Introduction to Women’s Studies and Women in Movies courses. She earned her master’s degree in secondary education and plans to continue teaching English at the high school level. Laura stated in her application, “I love my work, and have always had a strong passion for social justice and women’s issues.”

The Sallie Lowther Norris Showalter Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Related Disciplines was awarded to Veronica Betancur Calle, a sophomore in mechanical and aerospace engineering. An instructor described her as someone who immediately rose to the top of his class, “distinguishing herself as a bright, inquisitive, and energetic scholar.” Veronica’s dream is to work as a scientist at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The Velma Miller/West Virginia Alliance for Women’s Studies Graduate Scholar Award recipient is Cate Johnson, a master’s student in geography and a graduate certificate student in women’s studies. She is doing research on gender and empowerment, especially in the area of education among girls and women. This award will partly support her fieldwork in the Southeast Asian Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste where she works with Topu Honis, a non-governmental organization that provides shelter for orphans and vulnerable women.

The Winifred South Knutti Graduate Scholarship in Women’s Studies was given to Melissa Chesanko, a doctoral student in the curriculum and instruction program who focuses on teaching women’s studies. She received a master’s degree in counseling and a graduate certificate in women’s studies. Chesanko has been a graduate teaching assistant in women’s studies since 2007, teaching Introduction to Women’s Studies both in the classroom and online. In addition to her teaching and coursework, Melissa is president of FMLA on campus and has presented her women’s studies research at the National Women’s Studies Association and Georgia Information Literacy conferences.

More complete information about the graduates and honorees can be found on our webpage under News and Events.

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http://wmst.wvu.edu/
A Message from the Director

The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience. Eleanor Roosevelt

In many ways this quote from an early 20th century activist and proponent of social justice reflects the year of transition and accomplishments at the Center for Women’s Studies. May graduation saw fourteen of our best and brightest walk across the stage to receive their diplomas and transition to a new stage in their lives. I am very proud to have been part of their WVU experience and wish them all the best as they go on to graduate schools, jobs, and travel. Two of these graduates, Laura Trent and Jayne Chapple, were graduate teaching assistants for our program over the past year.

In addition, this summer marks the end of my second year as director of the Center. I am pleased to work with such an energetic, motivated, and committed group of people. The women’s studies network at WVU extends across campus where faculty associates and students are involved in work on topics that include women in the STEM fields, women and leadership, and outreach programs addressing domestic violence and women’s health issues. This network also extends into our community where supporters of the Center are committed to advance the status and improve the conditions of women in our region and across the globe. You will find more information about many of these initiatives and activities in this newsletter.

Changes at the Center inevitably reflect current transformations in higher education and in the world outside our academic walls. With the economy and job prospects undergoing significant restructuring, many students are looking for ways to make their educational experience more relevant and to better prepare them for the job market. I always claim that women’s and gender studies offer a range of exciting courses and field experiences that will benefit our students in their search for challenging jobs and graduate training. Gender and women’s studies enrich the curriculum in higher education through courses in communication studies, international relations, history, English, public health, geography, and journalism, to name a few. I encourage students to explore these topics in order to give them a different perspective on traditional disciplines and to provide a field of study that will strengthen their background and experience.

As one of our graduates stated, “The Women’s Studies program is the only truly interdisciplinary undergraduate field of study at WVU. It enabled me to critically evaluate subjects in a more nuanced and holistic way than students who did not take women’s studies. Overall, I would say that the caliber of students and teachers in women’s studies outweighs those in other departments.”

So, as Eleanor Roosevelt said, go forth and embrace the challenges that tomorrow brings. I look forward to the upcoming year of continued growth, change, and transition at the Center for Women’s Studies.

As always, we welcome your input and involvement in making this a great place to work and study.
New Faces in Women’s Studies

The Center for Women’s Studies is excited to welcome several new people to our program this fall. Our two new graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) Allyson Perry and Sera Mathew will help teach the Introduction to Women’s Studies courses. Allyson received a bachelor’s degree in history at St. Vincent College in Pennsylvania. This fall, she will begin the master’s program in history at WVU, with an emphasis in women’s history. Allyson is particularly interested in women during the Civil War era, and is working for the Gettysburg National Park’s interpretive program this summer.

Sera Mathew is enrolled in the curriculum and instruction doctoral program in the College of Human Resources and Education. She has a master’s degree in public health, and has worked with WELL WVU and as a graduate assistant with Ruth Kershner in the Department of Community Medicine. Sera is originally from India and received her undergraduate degrees from Madura and Mumbai universities.

Another addition to our program is Brian Jara, who will join us as a senior lecturer this fall. Brian will supervise the graduate teaching assistants and teach several women’s studies courses, including a course on men and masculinities. He is completing a dual-degree PhD program in women’s studies and curriculum and instruction at Pennsylvania State University, where he has taught a wide variety of courses and advised students in the Department of Women’s Studies. Brian brings a unique perspective to women’s and gender studies, and promises to increase our student recruitment through his strong teaching background and commitment to diversity.

Finally, Cynthia Ford joined us in May as the new administrative associate in the Center. Our previous staff member, Cathy Jasper, left in late February to work as program coordinator of the WVU ADVANCE Center. After working at the Center for 11 years, she was truly the “institutional memory of the program.” Nonetheless, Cynthia is quickly learning how to manage the Center’s finances, personnel, scheduling, and even supervising building operations for Eiesland Hall. Cynthia previously worked as a school-to-work coordinator for the Doddridge County Board of Education and as a marketing director for a construction firm. Please stop by the office and introduce yourself to these new students, faculty, and staff in our program.

Social Linguist wins the 2011 Stitzel Award

Catalina Méndez Vallejo, a teaching assistant professor in the Department of Foreign Languages at WVU was awarded the 2011 Judith Gold Stitzel Endowment for Excellence in Women’s Studies Teaching and Learning.

Catalina earned a PhD in linguistics and hispanic linguistics from Indiana University where she specialized in syntax in Colombian Spanish. She has taught courses in linguistics and Spanish at WVU for two years. Her project for the Stitzel Endowment is to develop a new course on gender and language to help students understand gender issues by observing how people speak and write. One of the references for her application noted that Catalina’s cross-cultural and cross-linguistics experience enhances her interactions with people from many different backgrounds. The field of sociolinguistics is an important contribution to the women’s studies and linguistics programs at WVU.

The award was founded by Dr. Judith Gold Stitzel in 1998 and was the first WVU fund created by a faculty member to continue her/his work after retirement. The endowment fosters the creation of new, and enrichment of existing, courses and was established to ensure a continuing and vital presence for women’s studies as an academic discipline at WVU. This award is given to a faculty member engaged in women’s studies teaching and learning in a way that is sensitive to gender and which places women’s concerns, ideas, perspectives, and interests as much at the center of the scholarly and teaching enterprise as men’s have been.
For the first time in more than 15 years, the WVU community hosted a Cuban visitor on campus this spring. Dr. Norma Vasallo Barrueta, chair of the Women’s Studies Program at the University of Havana, spoke to students, faculty and community members as part of a lecture tour focusing on the diversity of Cuban women and their response to the challenges from the US blockade of Cuba.

Since the Cuban Crisis in the 1990s, women have had more access to education and currently represent 60 percent of college graduates in Cuba. They also score better on college entrance exams than males. This increased education has given women more access to jobs previously held by men, but there are still barriers to overcome. “Women are still not able to participate in all of the same aspects of life as males,” Dr. Barrueta noted “A glass ceiling still exists within Cuba for females.” Political and legal action has been taken to protect the equality of men and women but altering people’s views on this issue will be the most difficult change to make, she said.

“Her visit is revolutionary, and a move forward for scholarly exchanges between Cuba and the U.S.” said Ann Oberhauser, director of the Center for Women’s Studies.

Since the Obama administration eased the travel restrictions to Cuba, there has been an increase in communication and educational linkages between the two countries. Barrueta’s lecture tour was organized by the US Women and Cuba Collaboration whose local advisory member, Carydad Morales Nussa, is herself a WVU alumna. Dr. Barrueta’s visit to WVU was sponsored by the Center for Women’s Studies, the Office of International Programs, and the Office of International Students and Scholars.

For more information about the women’s movement in Cuba and Barrueta, visit www.womenandcuba.org.

Women’s Studies Residency in Honor of Judith Gold
Stitzel Hosts Renowned Neuroscientist

Dr. Lise Eliot, an associate professor in the Department of Neuroscience at the Chicago Medical School, visited WVU for four days in February as the eleventh Women’s Studies Resident. Her visit included speaking in several women’s studies classes, meeting with faculty and students, and delivering a public lecture, “Pink Brain, Blue Brain: Truth and Fiction about Sex Differences.”

The topic of gender and the brain drew interest from many scientists at WVU, starting with faculty and students at a Psychology Department Colloquium. In addition to visiting psychology and women’s studies classrooms, she met with faculty and trainees at the WWU Center for Neuroscience and shared her experiences with colleagues at the National Center for Excellence in Women’s Health.

Her public lecture was given on February 16th to a full house. Dr. Judith Stitzel introduced Dr. Eliot and the event, reflecting on the range of topics covered over the years as part of the residency program. Dr. Arthur J. Ross, Jr., Dean of the WVU School of Medicine and a friend and former colleague of Dr. Eliot, spoke warmly about her accomplishments. A discussion period after the lecture was followed by a reception and book signing.

Dr. Eliot’s visit was co-sponsored with the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences, WVU Center for Neuroscience, Department of Psychology, Division of Sociology and Anthropology, National Center of Excellence in Women’s Health, and the WVU ADVANCE Center.

Dr. Lise Eliot
Student Activities

Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance Update

The past year was a success for our student organization, the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA). During the spring semester FMLA hosted two major events: a production of “The Vagina Monologues” and Take Back the Night.

FMLA partnered with the theater department in February to produce a sold out, three-night showing of “The Vagina Monologues” at the Creative Arts Center. FMLA was able to use the proceeds to donate $300 to both the V-Day Haiti Relief fund and the Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center (RDVIC) of Monongalia County.

About 200 people attended this year’s Take Back the Night (TBTN), an international event to shatter the silence around sexual assault and violence. TBTN was held in the Mountainlair ballrooms on April 14. FMLA partnered with Well WVU, PRSSA, and the Queer Student Union, among others, and raised $150 for RDVIC. A capella group Anarchapella and national folk singer/songwriter Judith Avers performed while a speak-out provided people in the audience an opportunity to share violent experiences from their lives. FMLA is grateful to Dr. Ruth Kershner, Deb Beazely, and keynote speaker Jaime (Cochran) Petta for their contributions to the event, which was followed by a late-night march downtown and a candlelight vigil outside the courthouse.

FMLA will participate in WVU’s Diversity Week this October 17-22, with Love Your Body Day and The Clothesline Project. FMLA also has reached out to the theater department to plan next year’s spring production.

The new FMLA officers are president, Melissa Chesanko; vice president, Kate Burns; secretary, Matt Burns; and treasurer, Miranda Miller. For more information or to become involved in FMLA, contact WVUFMLA@gmail.com. Find us on Facebook as WVU’s Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance.

West Virginia Women’s Day at the Legislature

The weather forecast called for a possible snowstorm when women’s studies students and director Ann Oberhauser left for Charleston, WV last January to attend the 2011 Women’s Day at the Legislature. Although the snowstorm extended their stay by one day, the trip was informative and provided useful networking opportunities for all of the participants. This annual event is organized by the West Virginia Women’s Commission to address issues of importance to women in the state and around the country. Naina Dumera (WMST and Public Relations major), Vanetta Morris (WMST major), Wendy Spaw (WMST minor), and Rachel Watson (MA student in Community Medicine) attended sessions on how the legislative process works, domestic violence, and Title IX during the two day conference. They also attended a legislative session recognizing all of the women who serve in the West Virginia House of Delegates and the Senate. The WVU students were especially thrilled to meet with local delegates Barbara Evans Fleischauer and Amanda Pasdon who shared their experiences as women in state politics. Participants at this event represent non-profit organizations, academic institutions, government, and businesses that deal with policy implementation and outreach efforts concerning women’s issues in the state. The trip to Charleston was made possible through the Center for Women’s Studies 30th Anniversary and the Difference funds.
Alumni and Student News

Seela Aladuwaka (WMST Graduate Certificate, 2003) accepted a position at Alabama State University where she is assistant professor of geography in the Department of Humanities. She continues to conduct research on micro-enterprise development in Sri Lanka.

Eileen McCormick (WMST major, 2009) serves as a Peace Corps volunteer in Cambodia where she is working as a health educator. She is organizing workshops for educators from small, rural villages that teach them how to prevent domestic violence and provide resources to women affected by it.

Cassandra Rice (WMST major, 2010) is employed as a prevention educator/volunteer coordinator with the Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center in Morgantown, WV. She continues to work with the Center for Women’s Studies FEMLA group on various activities such as Take Back the Night and “The Vagina Monologues.”

Valetta Keener-Shuppe (WMST major, 2005) graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a MA in History where she worked on an oral history project about the status of women and related organizations at the university.

Muriel Yeboah (WMST Graduate Certificate, 2008) is assistant professor of geography in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Virginia Union University. She has returned to Ghana on several occasions to research gender and livelihood strategies in Accra.

Mousumi Banikya-Leaseburg (WMST Graduate Certificate) attended the 2011 Women and Public Policy Seminar in Washington D.C. to support her work in community medicine and international development. The Women’s Studies Mossburg Fund sponsored part of her trip.

Saya Bobick (WMST GTA and MALs, 2011) and Melissa Chesanko (WMST GTA and EdD in C & I) presented papers at the Northwest Women’s Studies Association Regional Conference in Spokane, WA. Bobick’s paper “Issues in Identity Formation for Alaskan Natives: Who Gets to Decide?” stems from her research on gendered tasks among Yup’ik women in their tribal village nation. Support for their attendance was provided through the Difference Fund.

Rosemarie Calvert (WMST-directed MALs) is publisher and director of LiveBetter magazine and the Center for a Better Life. She recently received a grant from the Office of Naval Research to develop a STEM iPhone application to educate kids about the benefits of college, particularly those students pursuing science-related majors.

Suzan Walsh Clemens (Psychology PhD, Women’s Studies Graduate Certificate) graduated with a MS in Psychology in 2010. Her thesis analyzed women’s decisions to use epidural anesthesia in childbirth in relation to their experiences with anxiety, self-esteem, depression, and social support.

Miranda Miller (WMST minor) traveled to Vendee, France this summer as part of the WVU Vendee Study Abroad Program. Her trip was partially funded by the Women’s Studies Mossburg Fund.

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What is the purpose of a Visiting Committee? According to guidelines established by the university, “The principal function of Visiting Committees is to bring the teaching and research activities of the University into closer contact with those elements in the life of the State and the Nation to which they should be most intimately related.” The Women’s Studies Visiting Committee consists of friends and alumni of WVU who represent a broad spectrum of occupations and backgrounds in government, business, and non-profit organizations.

During the past year Kitty L. Dooley, Charleston; Susan E. Kelley, Orlando, FL; and Carrie Koeturius, Sherman Oaks, CA, were joined on the committee by Seema Aggarwal, New York City; Aly Goodwin-Gregg, Morgantown; Patricia Harrison, Morgantown; Sharon Hurt Davidson, Pittsburgh; and Carroll Wilkinson, Morgantown.


The Visiting Committee will continue to provide valuable insight into the development of the Center as we grow and build new programs.
Frances Burney’s maternal narrative at the
awarded a research fellowship to work on
Eighteenth-Century Studies. She also was
conference for the American Society of
Fractured Families,” at the national
English) presented a paper titled “Burney’s
Royal University for Women.
participated in a panel discussion at the
Southern Conference for Slavic Studies in
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Cari Carpenter (Associate Professor,
English) was invited to present at “Pathways
through the Joint PhD Program and
Beyond,” sponsored by the Women’s
Studies Program at the University of
Michigan, Ann Arbor. She also presented on
the roundtable “Difficult Dialogues: Creativity
and Resistance” at the National Women’s
Studies Association Conference in Denver.

Karen Culcasi (Assistant Professor,
Geography) led a study abroad program
with fifteen WVU students to Jordan and the United
Arab Emirates during spring break. The goal of
the program was to gain first-hand experience of the diversity and
complexity of the Arab world. This trip was
part of a semester long on-campus course
which sought to dispel stereotypes about the
Arab world and the Middle East.

Lisa DeFrank-Cole
(Clinical Assistant Professor
and Director, Leadership
Studies) is a candidate for the Fulbright Specialist
Program. She plans to travel to Bahrain next year
to teach a leadership class to WVU and Middle Eastern students at the
Royal University for Women.

Marilyn Francus (Associate Professor,
English) presented a paper titled “Burney’s
Fractured Families,” at the national
conference for the American Society of
Eighteenth-Century Studies. She also was
awarded a research fellowship to work on
Frances Burney’s maternal narrative at the
Burney Centre at McGill University in 2012.

Ruth Kershner (Associate Professor, Social
and Behavioral Medicine) received the
Women in Science and Health 2011 WISH
Award for her work as a health coordinator and faculty-student liaison in WVU’s
Department of Community Medicine.

Virginia Kleist (Associate Professor, Management
Information Systems) received a Fulbright
Specialist award and will teach classes in information
technology at the National Mining University in the
Ukraine next fall. Her work will focus on helping students translate
technical terms to English in their respective
disciplines.

Janice Spleth (Professor, French) presented papers
on the works of African filmmaker Fanta Regina
Nacro at the 2011 meetings of the African Literature
Association (Athens, Ohio) and the Conseil
International des Études Francophones
(Aix-en-Provence, France). Her article on the
representation of genocide by two women
writers appears in the spring volume of the
West Virginia University Philological Papers
dedicated to the memory of Armand E. Singer.

Kate Staples (Assistant Professor, History)
published Daughters of London: Inheriting
Opportunity in the Late Middle Ages and
presented a paper, “Letting Women In:
Female Fripperers in Late Medieval Towns,”
at the Berkshire Conference of Women
Historians.

Donley Studlar (Eberly Family Professor,
Political Science) published “The British
Monarchy in Contemporary Elite Political
Culture: Closet Republicans in the House
of Commons,” in Comparative Politics (with
Ryan Norbauer) and “Tobacco Control in
the EU-15: The Role of Member States and the
European Union” in Journal of European
Public Policy (with Kyle Christensen and
Arnita Sitason) in 2011.

Hollee Schwartz Temple (Lecturer, Law
School) has been traveling the country
promoting her new book, Good Enough Is
the New Perfect: Finding Happiness and
Success in Modern Motherhood (Harlequin
Nonfiction, Spring 2011). On Mother’s Day,
she appeared live from New York City with
Alex Witt on MSNBC. She has traveled
across the country giving talks on work/
life balance. You can read more about her

Leslie Towers (Associate Professor, Social Work)
published “Covert pay discrimination: How
authority predicts pay differences between
women and men” in Public
Administration Review (with M. G. Alkadry)
and “An Internet-based assignment to
teach students to engage in policy-practice:
A three-cohort study” in Journal of Policy
Practice (with H. Hartnett) in 2011.

Mark Wicclair (Professor, Philosophy)
published a book titled Conscientious
Objection in Health Care: An Ethical Analysis
by Cambridge University Press in 2011.
Going Global – Opportunities for Women’s and Gender Studies in Southern Africa

Women’s Studies Director Ann Oberhauser and colleagues from history, English, nursing, and geography met with representatives from several universities in Botswana, South Africa and Malawi during a two-week visit to the region in March. The trip was organized by the WVU Office of International Programs to develop partnerships with colleagues at these universities.

This visit will help pave the way to broaden the Women’s Studies curriculum at WVU and increase relationships with international colleagues and students in several fields of study. Oberhauser met with the head of the gender studies group at the University of Botswana where they plan to develop an Institute for Gender Research. Internationalization of women’s and gender studies is of growing importance to the WVU program as a way of raising awareness of gender roles and women’s contributions to cultural diversity, political action, and economic livelihoods around the world.

At the University of Limpopo, Oberhauser and a faculty member from the WVU School of Nursing met with South African colleagues to learn about health issues in the region such as HIV/AIDS, prenatal care, and malaria.

In Zomba, Malawi, the visit took an unexpected turn when the group learned that staff and faculty at the University of Malawi were on strike after a faculty member was fired for mentioning the Arab uprising in one of his classes. As a result, the WVU delegation experienced political activism on campus firsthand.

Initiatives such as this trip to southern Africa provide an exciting opportunity for WVU Women’s Studies to expand its global focus and engagement. The outcomes of this trip will hopefully lead to increased study abroad, research, and other international experiences for students and faculty in women’s and gender studies.