



VOLUME 2 ISSUE 2

WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES

SPRING SEMESTER 2005

WGS RESEARCH GRANT BRINGS IN NOTED SCHOLARS

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WGS was the recipient of a \$40,000 interdisciplinary research grant entitled, "Histories and Cultures of Baton Rouge" from the LSU Office of Research and Graduate Studies. Submitted by **Petra Munro Hendry, Nghana Lewis** and **Tiwanna Simpson**, this research examined the construction of racial and gendered identity in 18th and 19th century Baton Rouge. This multidisciplinary research proposal included faculty from English, History, Curriculum and Instruction, Geography and Anthropology, Religious Studies, and Architecture. Last summer project team members examined archival materials (letters, diaries, logs) and other historical and material documents, including newspapers, court records, oral narratives, maps, city directories and census reports. This research has brought LSU faculty into dialogue with community members as a means to gain a richer understanding of how the history of race and gender in Baton Rouge have shaped current race relations. A primary premise of this research is that racial healing can be facilitated by a deeper understanding of how race has been constructed and negotiated over time.

As part of the research project two distinguished scholars were invited to LSU to give lectures. Frances Foster Smith, Charles Howard Candler Professor of English and director of the Emory Institute for Women's Studies, presented "One or Two Things I think I Know for Sure About Researching Early African America" on September 22, 2004 at Hill Memorial Library. Her current research is on the lives and writings of African American women in the 18th and 19th century and the role of religion in the development of African-American culture as a means of surviving slavery. She noted that "the best thing about studying slavery is discovering what kind of miracles occurred and what kind of strong, vibrant people managed to grow and exist despite the ugliness."

Our second invited speaker was Laurie A.



WGS Faculty Members meet with Dr. Foster after her lecture. From left, Dr. Tiwanna Simpson, Dr. Frances Smith Foster, Dr. Nghana Lewis, and Dr. Petra Hendry

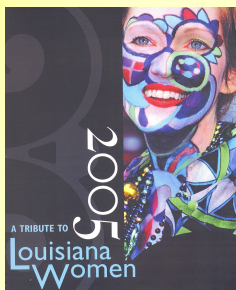


WGS Faculty and Community Members meet with Dr. Wilkie. From left: Patricia Smith, LSU CUP Coordinator; Dr. Laurie Wilkie; Dr. Joyce Jackson; Dr. Irene Di Maio; and Edna Jordan Smith, genealogist at Bluebonnet Regional Library

Wilkie, professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. Her talk, entitled "Excavating African-American Women: Expanding Our Perceptions of the 'Archive,'" focused on the difficulty of researching the lives of African slaves. She noted that by "constructing interpretive webs from diverse sources" like archeological evidence, oral history and documents, the lives of African American women can be reconstructed. Drawing on her excavations at Oakley House Plantation in St. Francisville and the LeDoux Plantation in Pointe Coupee, Dr. Wilkie provided rich examples of enslaved women who otherwise are voiceless. The assistance of both these scholars was invaluable in researching the lives of enslaved Africans and free people of color, a group that comprised 25% of the population in Baton Rouge in 1850 and was central to shaping the economy, cultures and religions of Baton Rouge.

REMINDER

WGS Calendars are still available! The price has been reduced to \$10. Buy yours today!



WGS FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Books

Carolyn Ware has a forthcoming book, *Cajun Women and Mardi Gras*, to be published by University of Illinois Press.

Laura Mullen's fourth book, a collection of poetry entitled *Subject*, is just out from the University of California Press.

Articles

Daniel Novak published "A Model Jew: 'Literary Photography' and the Jewish Body in *Daniel Deronda*" in *Representations* 85 (Winter 2004): 59-97.

Carolyn Ware published "Marketing Mardi Gras: Heritage Tourism in Acadiana" in the Spring/Summer 2004 issue of *Western Folklore*.

Claudia Eppert published two book chapters, "Altering Habits of Attention in Education: Simone Weil and Emmanuel Levinas," in *Spirituality and Ethics in Education: Philosophical, Theological and Radical Perspectives*, and "(Un)Learning Home: Paule Marshall's *Praising for the Widow*, Emmanuel Levinas, and an Ethics of Reading for Alterity" in *Bridges Across Chasms: Towards a Transcultural Future in Caribbean Literature*.

Daphne Cain has a forthcoming article, "Family Structure Effects on Parenting Stress and Practices in the African-American Family," in the *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*. The expected publication date is June 2005.

Conference Presentations

Nina Asher and Ugena Whitlock will present "(Dis)Locating Homes: Self, Place, and Difference" at the Southwestern Women's and Gender Studies Conference in New Orleans in March 2005.

Michelle Massé participated in the Oxford Round Table seminar of Lincoln College on Women's Leadership. The title of Dr. Massé's presentation was "Engendering Leadership: Women Administrators in Academe."

Daphne Cain presented "Circle of Security: A Relationship-Oriented Model of Parent Education" at the 46th International Federation Internationale des Communautaires Educatives (FICE) Congress in Glasgow, Scotland.

Grants

Carolyn Ware received a Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities grant to support a keynote lecture by Kay Turner on women's altars and devotional arts.

Awards

Ann Trousdale was awarded Highest Honors in the Masters of Divinity program at Perkins School of Theology in May 2004.

Bill Pinar was awarded the Mary Ann Raywid Award by the Professors of Education Society of the American Educational Research Association in May 2004.

Michelle Massé was awarded a Senior Fellowship at Rutgers University for the 2004-2005 school year.

Petra Munro Hendry will receive the LSU Distinguished Faculty Award in May 2005.

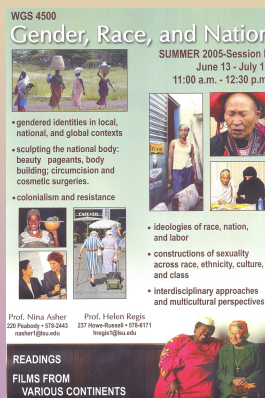
BROWN BAG SEMINAR



WGS Faculty members participate in the WGS Brown Bag Seminar on Feminist Theory

On December 8, 2004, the WGS office became the site of a lunchtime seminar on feminist theory. Participants discussed the topic as instructors, researchers, and activists. Approximately 15 faculty members participated.

WGS FACULTY MEMBERS DEVELOP NEW CLASS



Nina Asher and **Helen Regis** have developed a new class, "Gender, Race, and Nation," which will be offered for the first time in the summer of 2005. The class will be offered in the summer as WGS 4500, and will become a permanent part of the WGS curriculum as WGS 2900 beginning in the fall. Two sections of the course are being offered for the summer, though they will be co-taught.

Congratulations, Dr. Hendry!

This February, Dr. Petra Hendry was selected as a recipient of LSU's Distinguished Faculty Award. Petra joins WGS Faculty members Bill Pinar, Denise Egéa-Kuehne, Emily Toth, Robin Roberts, and former director Jill Suitor as winners of this prestigious award.



INTERVIEW WITH LAURA MULLEN

Professor **Laura Mullen**, who joined the faculty of the English Department in 2004, is one of the most recent faculty additions to WGS.

How did you become interested in WGS?

Well, I am a woman, and I was raised by and around beautiful, brave, strident, bra-burning, Pill-popping second wave feminists, so you could say I was born “interested.” But my interest is on-going and has gone through some changes. While I was lucky enough to hit college after the institution of Women’s Studies programs, and able to take courses devoted to women writers and women artists, I’ve come to understand that those efforts at equal representation were only the beginning: a necessary base camp. It was French Feminism, and then women’s experimental writing, which compelled my dedication to difference as the essential site of engagement. Women can only widen the possibilities of literature by—as Helene Cixous puts it—“the indispensable ruptures and transformations” of our “shattering entry into history.”

How do you see yourself contributing to the WGS program at LSU?

I’m an encourager. I’ll just touch on a few of the ways, not the least of which is what I’ll go on calling “the base camp” of the body. I know from my own experience how crucial it is to have female mentors as well as just—crossing the quad—the visible signs of female presence and power. Too, I know I’ll be encouraging my students to participate in the major, take the classes, and—in my classes—come to trust their own contributions and unique qualities while gaining the knowledge and perspective from which to question the confining aspects of constructed identities.

Any thoughts you’d like to share with our undergrads?

Learn everything you can and try to understand your situation, voice, way of thinking and being. For awhile you may have to imitate others in order to find your own footing. In that period you want as many models as possible. Press your professors for reading lists which reflect a diversity of aesthetics and ethnicities; ask them to teach the conflicts. Never be afraid to try to see the other side of an argument or idea: narrow-mindedness isn’t a strength. Loose the limitations you didn’t choose and celebrate your time in this body/moment/being: it’s so brief.

What’s your favorite part of Women’s and Gender Studies?

Gertrude Stein is at the head of a list of women writers who are my lights, my study, my area. There’s an anthology of experimental women’s writing called *Moving Borders* (it’s out on Talisman House press, a small press) which is a superb introduction to contemporary poetry, and for fiction and nonfiction I’ll just mention Carole Maso, Jane Unrue, Riki Ducornet, Renee Gladman, Kass Fleisher, Bhanu Kapil-Rider and Yoko Tawada.



MEET RITA CULROSS, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES

When the directorship of **Petra Hendry** came to an end in December 2004, **Rita Culross** became the director of WGS for the spring and summer semesters of 2005. Dr. Culross has been a faculty member of LSU and WGS since 1990. As interim director, she hopes to help continue the development of WGS: “My goal as interim director is to work with the faculty to establish procedures for our first promotion and tenure case, to reorganize the Coordinating Council more in line with our current activities, and to facilitate a smooth transition to a new director,” she says.

Dr. Culross hopes to continue the growth of the undergraduate major, as well as the development of a graduate program. She also hopes to see grant and scholarship activity, particularly for interdisciplinary research in women’s and gender studies.

As a member of WGS from nearly the beginning, Dr. Culross has a perspective on the history of the department, “When I came to LSU



Petra Munro Hendry and Rita Culross at the December 2004 Coordinating Council Meeting

in 1990, WGS was in its beginnings. I remember that faculty meetings were held in a small conference room in the Union, attended by perhaps a dozen faculty. Today WGS has more than 90 faculty from many, many disciplines throughout the campus; a flourishing major; and its first (albeit half) tenure line. We are a model of faculty governance and are respected for the diversity and quality of our scholarship.”

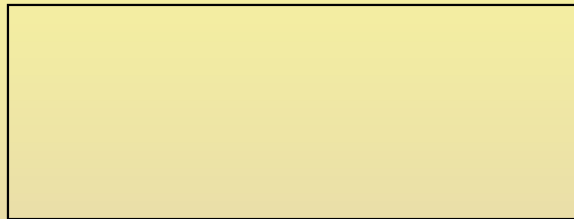
Dr. Culross enjoys the camaraderie and community of the Women’s and Gender Studies program. “My favorite part of being a WGS faculty member is having the opportunity to interact with diverse colleagues from across campus in a supportive environment for teaching and research,” she says.

Dr. Culross is also a member of the faculty in the department of Curriculum and Instruction, where she teaches and researches on gifted children. She has been published in several journals, and is a former Associate Dean for the College of Education.



Louisiana State University
238 Himes Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Phone: 225-578-4807
Fax: 225-578-4804
Email: wgs@lsu.edu



SPRING 2005 EVENTS

February 17 WGS Film Series presents *Girl-fight*, Women's Center, 6:00

February 23 Women's Center Brown Bag Lunch Series: "Women and the Civil War," with Leah Jewett and Katie Benton-Cohen, Women's Center, 12:30-1:30

February 26 *Race for the Cure* Sponsored by Susan G. Komen Foundation, Downtown Baton Rouge

February 28 Black History Month/Women's History Month Event: The Bridge: Connecting Our Histories, Creating Our Future," with Dr. Katrice Albert, Maxine Crump, Roberta Madden, & Dr. Becky Ropers-Huilman, African American Cultural Center, 7:00

March 1 Women's History Month Event: Women in the Arts Gallery Opening sponsored by the Women's Center and Women Organizing Women, Women's Center, 7:00

March 2 "The Bridge: Connecting Our Histories, Creating Our Future" Women's History Month Break-Out Session with Dr. Katrice Albert & Dr. Becky Ropers-Huilman, 12:00-1:00

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March 3 WGS Film Series presents *Iron Jawed Angels*, Women's Center, 6:00

March 9 Women's Center Brown Bag Lunch Series: "The Gender of Racial Politics and Violence," with Dr. William Pinar, Women's Center, 12:00-1:30

March 11-13 *The Color of Violence III*, Conference on Stopping Violence Against Women of Color at Historic Treme Community, New Orleans

March 15 Women's History Month Event: UPC Ideas & Issues presents the Perspectives Speaker Series, featuring *National Geographic Explorer's* Lisa Ling

March 16 Women's Center Brown Bag Lunch Series: "Integrating Natural Coping and Survival Strategies of African American Women into Social Work Practices" with Dr. Lolita Boykin, Women's Center, 12:00-1:30

March 16 Women's History Month Event: Women in the Arts Performance Night sponsored by the Women's Center and Women Organizing Women, Reilly Theater, 7:00

March 17 WGS Film Series presents *Where the Spirit Lives*, Women's Center, 6:00

March 21-25 Spring Break

March 24-26 *Southwest Women's and Gender Studies Conference*, New Orleans

March 31 WGS Film Series presents *Before Night Falls*, Women's Center, 6:00

April 1 Women's History Month Event: "Sharing the Oral History of LSU Alumnae" with Jennifer Abraham, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, Hill Memorial Library, 3:00

April 6 The Women's History Month Committee presents activist and author Rebecca Walker, Women's History Month Featured Speaker, Cox Communications Academic Center, 7:00

April 14 WGS Film Series presents *Nowhere in Africa*, African American Cultural Center, 6:00

April 21-24 *Interdisciplinary Nineteenth Century Studies Conference*, LSU Campus