

Department of Women's and Gender Studies



Amherst College

Fall 2011

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President Biddy Martin

WAGS is delighted to welcome its newest member, Amherst's incoming president, and its first woman, President Biddy Martin, a scholar of Gender and Women's Studies and German Studies. President Martin will be a member of both WAGS and the German Department.



President Martin comes to Amherst from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she was Chancellor most recently, and from Cornell, where she had been Provost until 2008, having begun there in 1983 as an instructor. She has two books: *Woman and Modernity: The (Life)Styles of Lou Andreas-Salomé* (Cornell UP, 1991) and *Femininity Played Straight: The Significance of Being Lesbian* (Routledge, 1996), as well as many articles and translations.

Saturday, October 1, 2011, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Cole Assembly Room, Converse Hall

Half a Century of Women Teaching at Amherst: Gender Matters

"2012 will mark 50 years since Rose Olver became the first tenure-track woman to join the faculty at Amherst College. For those women faculty who taught at the college in the early years, Amherst was a challenging place to work out their professional and personal lives.

The Saturday symposium brings together former and current women faculty from 1962 to 1984 to examine this critical period in the history of the college and address the lessons the institution can learn from their experiences."

For more information and to register please visit:

https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/colloquia/women_teaching

Terras irradiant

"Let them give light to
the world"

1821

Amherst College
educates women and
men of exceptional
potential from all
backgrounds so that
they may seek, value,
and advance
knowledge, engage the
world around them, and
lead principled lives of
consequence.



WOMEN'S LIVES IN CONTEXT



Department of Women's and Gender Studies

Student News

This past May the Women's and Gender Studies Department awarded Amanda Barrow and Molly Doyle the WAGS Prize for their theses. This prize – awarded for the first time – recognizes outstanding work in any field on the topic of gender.



Amanda Barrow '11

Department of Political Science Honors Thesis—Amanda Barrow

Women, Peace, and Security

Abstract: “Approximately ten years ago, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325; an international document that responded to what the drafters believed was the changing nature of modern warfare. As the 20th century closed, it became undeniable that conflict was increasingly reaping gender-specific consequences upon the world's women. While troublesome in itself, the Resolution called to attention something deeply problematic about the growing ways in which women have been devastated by state-orchestrated wars: women's absence from the decision-making bodies prompting these conflicts. The Resolution suggested that altering the gender dynamic of the state has the potential to mitigate, or even eradicate, the effects of contemporary conflict. This paper explores the interrelated notions upon which Resolution 1325 was founded through an examination of the conflicts and post-conflict states of Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina. First establishing that these conflicts fit 1325's assessment of modern war, this paper then analyzes the gender composition of the states that emerged after the conflict and the effects these states had upon the lives of children, the rights provided to women, and the maintenance of peace. Ultimately, in comparing Rwanda, a state in which women rose to positions of power in parliament, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, a state in which women were virtually excluded from formal political participation, this paper's findings support the Resolution's theoretical underpinnings.”



Molly Doyle '11

Department of Sociology Honors Thesis—Molly Doyle

Women of the Baltimore Upper Class

Abstract: “*Women of the Baltimore Upper Class* is a sociological examination of the lives of contemporary upper-class women living in the city of Baltimore, Maryland. This study was inspired by Susan Ostrander's 1984 book *Women of the Upper Class*, and it seeks to both update and expand Ostrander's study by investigating how the lives of upper-class women have changed, and how they have remained the same, in the thirty years since the original study. Through thirteen in-depth interviews with upper-class women aged 50 to 73, the author examines how these women talk about their lives as wives, mothers, paid workers, volunteers, and club members. The author discusses how the interacting influences of gender, class status, and generation have impacted their lives, and particularly focuses on how the contemporary “egalitarian ethos” affects these women's choices and how they talk about their choices. Contemporary upper-class women lead lives that are what the author calls “neo-traditional”—lives that have adjusted to fit with the more egalitarian time period, yet are rooted in both gender and class traditions.”

Congratulations to the WAGS Class of 2011—Rachel Q. Hamalainen & Carolina S. Alegria

The WAGS major requires all senior majors not writing a thesis to satisfy the comprehensive exam by reading a common text and writing an essay to be read by the department and discussed in a colloquium of WAGS seniors and faculty. For the Class of 2011 the text was Professor Margaret R. Hunt's *Women in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Longman, 2009).

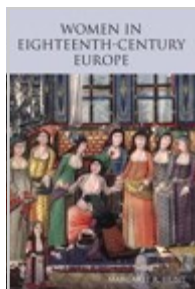
To read more about Professor Hunt's book see page three. To read more about Rachel and Carolina see page five.

Faculty News

We are delighted to announce that **Aneeka Henderson** (Ph. D. candidate in English Literature, University of Illinois) will be joining us this fall as a Keiter-Mellon Fellow. Professor Henderson's dissertation, *Love and Marriage: The Politics of Family in Black Popular Fiction* examines the new genre of contemporary black popular romance novels by authors like Terry McMillan and Bebe Moore Campbell, who revise the representation of the "black middle-class family" by featuring single, black middle-class women who seek companions, but rarely close the novel with Jane Eyre's famous ending of "Reader, I married him." These novels enjoyed an enormous boost in sales during the 1980s and 90s as black middle-class growth renewed interest in the future of the black family. Black popular romance stops short of marriage in order to underscore a set of unresolved gender politics between black women and men. Protagonists constrained by courtship conflict, but uninhibited by a predetermined marriage finale, reveal a courtship politics overburdened by class and race that recasts marriage as the new luxury of a growing black middle-class. Her research interests include contemporary American and African American literature and culture. She has worked as a tutor at the African American Academic Network (AAAN) and the TRIO/Educational Opportunity Outreach Program. She has also served as a research assistant for the Negotiating African American Adolescent Fatherhood (NAAF) research project and participated in Cornell University's School of Criticism and Theory. She was also Assistant Director at the UIC Writing Center for two years where she taught English 222: Tutoring in the Writing Center and AAST 212: Techniques in African American Creative Writing. Recent undergraduate courses include English 101: Understanding Literature and English 113: Introduction to Multiethnic Literature.



Make sure you check out Professor Henderson's very cool leaf sandals that she bought in Turkey!



Margaret R. Hunt, Professor of History & Women's and Gender Studies

Margaret Hunt has given us a fascinating picture of the lives of women and men in eighteenth-century Europe, all the richer because she draws examples from Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and the Caribbean colonies. Women emerge from her pages in all their variety: slaves, merchants and queens; Protestant reformers, Jewish storytellers, and Sufi mystics. A wonderful read!

Natalie Zemon Davis,
Princeton University

"Was the century of Voltaire also the century of women? In the eighteenth century changes in the nature of work, family life, sexuality, education, law, religion, politics and warfare radically altered the lives of women. Some of these developments caused immense confusion and suffering; others greatly expanded women's opportunities and worldview – long before the various women's suffrage movements were more than a glimmer on the horizon. This study pays attention to queens as well as commoners; respectable working women as well as prostitutes; women physicists and mathematicians as well as musicians and actresses; feminists as well as their critics. The result is a rich and morally complex tale of conflict and tragedy, but also of achievement. The book deals with many regions and topics often under-represented in general surveys of European women, including coverage of the Balkans and both European Turkey and Anatolia, of Eastern Europe, of European colonial expansion (particularly the slave trade) and of Muslim, Eastern Orthodox, and Jewish women's history. Bringing all of Europe into the narrative of early modern women's history challenges many received assumptions about Europe and women in past times, and provides essential background for dealing with issues of diversity in the Europe of today."



Department of Women's and Gender Studies

New WAGS Courses

Fall 2011:

Feminist Theory-WAGS 200 (required for the major) Professor Shandilya

In this course we will investigate contemporary feminist thought from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. We will focus on key issues in feminist theory, such as the sex/gender debate, sexual desire and the body, the political economy of gender, the creation of the "queer" as subject, and the construction of masculinity, among others. This course aims also to think through the ways in which these concerns intersect with issues of race, class, the environment and the nation. Texts include feminist philosopher Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, anthropologist Kamala Visweswaran's *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, and feminist economist Bina Agarwal's *The Structure of Patriarchy*. MW 8:30- 9:50 am

Black Women's Narratives and Counternarratives: Love and the Family-WAGS 202
Keiter-Mellon Fellow Henderson

Why does love and courtship continue to be a central concern in black women's literature and contemporary black popular fiction? Are these thematic issues representative of apolitical yearnings or an allegory for political subjectivity? Drawing on a wide range of texts, we will examine the chasm between the "popular" and the literary, as we uncover how representations of love and courtship vary in both genres. Surveying the growing discourse in media outlets such as CNN and *The Washington Post* regarding the "crisis" of the single black woman, students will analyze the contentious public debates regarding black women and love, and connect them to black women's literature and black feminist literary theory. Authors covered will range from Nella Larsen to Terry McMillan and topics will include gender, race, class, and sexuality. T/TH 11:30-12:50

The Home and the World: Women and Gender in South Asia- WAGS 207 (POSC 207)
Professors Basu & Shandilya

This course will study South Asian women and gender through key texts in film, literature, history and politics. How did colonialism and nationalism challenge the distinctions between the "home" and the "world" and bring about partitions which splintered once shared cultural practices? What consequences did this have for postcolonial politics? How do ethnic conflicts, religious nationalisms and state repression challenge conceptions of "home"? How have migrations, globalization and diasporas complicated relations between the home and the world? Texts will include Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown*, Ram Gopal Varma's epic film *Sarkar* and Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its Fragments*. MW 12:30- 1:50 pm

Other WAGS News

"A central part of the intellectual history of our time involves increased awareness of the significance of gender and all that follows from an insight into sexual inequality. Throughout the social sciences and the humanities, new attention to ideologies of sexual subordination have refocused long-standing debates and led to entirely new questions."

1984 Report on the Conditions of Work for Faculty Women at Amherst



Umrao Jaan

On April 30, 2011 Professor Shandilya convened the South Asian Feminist Cinema Conference to present and discuss her students' work from her Feminist Cinema class. The keynote speaker was Dr. Jigna Desai who received her Ph.D. in English with a minor in Feminist Studies from the University of Minnesota. Three panels comprised of three students each presented their work addressing globalization and femininity, the sacred and the taboo: women's lives in context, and the body as commodity. Examples of films they analyzed include *Water*, *Umrao Jaan*, *The Journey*, and *Mississippi Masala*. The students: Emily Shinay '11, Andrea Park '12, Katherine Zhu '14, Hanna Bouberhan '12, Clara Sugnomal Daswani, Ariana Robey-Lawrence '12, Jennifer Moore UM'13, Carlissa King '11 and Sonia Brand-Fisher SC'13. The conference was sponsored by the Georges Lurcy Lecture Series Fund, The Eastman Fund, The Women's and Gender Studies Department, and the Film and Media Studies Program.

Department of Women's and Gender Studies

News— WAGS Class of 2011



Rachel Hamalainen, recipient of the 2011 Edward Jones Prize, is from a tiny suburb of Detroit, Michigan named Melvindale. A Black Studies and Women's and Gender Studies double major, she chose to major in both of these departments because of her desire to better understand the intersections of race, gender, class, and other identifiers, and in identity politics. She is a member and former treasurer of La Causa, a member of Global Rights—Women's Rights and Gender Equality, and was a performer in the 2011 production of *Women of Amherst*. Her comprehensive essay examined the hierarchies between slaves and masters and between European Christians and Ottoman Muslims. "Hunt's *Women in Eighteenth Century Europe* emphasizes that, much like today, eighteenth century European women faced a series of disadvantages because of their gender, but they also managed to struggle and thrive, forging a path for future women to intervene and create their own movements and changes. Due to its highly gendered dynamic, slavery disadvantaged women, as they became the sexual objects of their masters, yet it also allowed them some opportunities for negotiation and, in the case of the Ottoman Empire, social mobility. The hierarchy between Christians and Muslims in eighteenth century Europe depended largely on gender dynamics, as Muslim women became the oppressed "Other" against which European women were deemed liberated. Still, women traveled through the challenges and hierarchical gender relations that they faced, creating paths of action that women and men still benefit from today. Muslim women now wear the hijab or headscarf, once (and, according to many people, still) a symbol of their oppression, as an important religious practice, creating their own meaning for it outside of its association with subordination. The ongoing struggles for women's access to birth control and abortion relate back to the important efforts by eighteenth century women in Europe to control their own reproduction. Eighteenth century Europe was therefore a place of both restriction and possibility, and women's struggles and triumphs then continue to influence those of women and men throughout the world today."



Carolina Alegria is from San Juan, Puerto Rico and was a Political Science and Women's and Gender Studies double major. She did her study abroad year in Florence, Italy and is currently working for Teach for America as a bilingual elementary school teacher in Philadelphia. Her comprehensive essay examined the social hierarchy of masters and slaves. "Hunt's *Women In the Eighteenth Century* presents an incredible and vast amount of historical information that paints a picture of what it was like to be a woman throughout this century. Chapter One, "Hierarchy and Difference" illustrates the complexity of relationships between the dominant and the submissive. Although women were generally submissive to men throughout all realms of society, there were also hierarchal rules between different groups such as masters and their female and male slaves, or free women and free men. One may identify several differences between the options or resources available to the distinct groups due to their gender, and establish that there existed social orders within each social structure. Even though women were continually in a position of marginalization and institutionalized submission, they were able to ignite the spark of the feminist movement, which put in motion developments seen today. Their political and civic activism influenced changes witnessed today such as the possibility of property rights, and the independent ability to attain status through means other than an elite marriage or ownership of slaves. Ultimately, women in the eighteenth century are important actors in the progress of women's rights. "

"Never shoulda had him. Never shoulda had none of em...Men come near me oh yeah but then love never sticks longer than a quick minute...I never shoulda haddem! No: I shoulda had a hundred a hundred I shoulda had a hundred-thousand a hundred-thousand a whole army full I shoulda!"

Hester, La Negrita

IN THE BLOOD



Professor Michele Aina Barale, Chair

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Women's and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural exploration of the creation, meaning, function, and perpetuation of gender in human societies, both past and present. It is also an inquiry specifically into women's material, cultural, and economic productions, their self-descriptions and collective undertakings. We invite you to join us.

For more information contact:

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Visit us at www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/womens_gender_studies

WAGS Then and Now



In 1997 Auben Haydel '97 and Kit Lasher '98 published, *The Fairest College? : Twenty Years of Women at Amherst*. Inspired by the then upcoming twentieth anniversary of coeducation at Amherst, Auben and Kit sought to create a record of women's voices at Amherst. In addition, and perhaps more noteworthy, Auben and Kit were motivated to undertake this project due to the stories Professor Rose Oliver, Amherst's first tenured female professor, shared with them about women at Amherst.

"On November 2, 1974, the Board of Trustees approved a proposal calling for the coeducation of Amherst College. Nine women then on 12-College exchange at Amherst applied for transfer status and graduated with the class of 1976. Fifty-nine more women joined their ranks the following fall as transfers into the sophomore and junior classes. Whether or not the women who co-educated Amherst anticipated it, they were the pioneers who paved the way for generations of women to come. Amherst's transition from single-sex to a co-ed college was neither a simple nor an instantaneous one..." *The Fairest College*, page 3



On January 20, 2011 WAGS presented a staged reading of Suzan-Lori Parks' *IN THE BLOOD* as its interterm offering. In Parks' reimagining of *The Scarlett Letter* she tells the story of Hester, La Negrita, "a homeless mother of five who lives with her kids on the tough streets of the inner city. Her eldest child is teaching her how to read and write, but the letter "A" is, so far, the only letter she knows. While Hester's kids fill her with joy...the adults with whom she comes into contact only hold her back. Nothing can stop the play's tragic end." The cast: Crystal Williams AC'13, HouPu Wen AC'14, Natasha Smith AC'11, Robyn Spateholts MHC'13, and Susan Goode MHC'12 with Germaine Habell AC'13 as stage manager. It was directed by Amy A. Ford. Join us in January 2012. It's fun!

Cast of *In the Blood*