

# WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWSLETTER

## THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

November 2008

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Inside this issue:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hermine Pinson Brown Bag</li> <li>• Tanya Mir, student worker</li> <li>• Director's Corner</li> <li>• Braithwaite information</li> <li>• Upcoming Brown Bag lunches</li> <li>• WMST welcomes Beth Currans</li> <li>• Election Panel</li> <li>• Planning Meeting</li> <li>• Guest Speakers of WMST</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hermine Pinson's Brown Bag</b></p> <p>Hermine Pinson's Work on Memoir.<br/>The subject of the nonfiction piece revolves around a 40-year-old photograph of Pinson's brother, the subject of the essay. Both a meditation on the cultural dynamics of the national family and the nuclear family at the height of the Civil Rights movement and the beginning of the seventies, the narrative explores issues of national and domestic violence, gender roles, and the idea of heroism. Those present responded positively to the piece and made suggestions for further exploration of memoirs that engage memory and history in non-linear modes.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>GIVE TO WMST through our website</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="http://WWW.WM.EDU/WO MENSSTUDIES">WWW.WM.EDU/WO MENSSTUDIES</a></p>  |
|  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tanya Mir</b></p> <p>WMST would like to welcome Tanya Mir as our student worker. She is a senior majoring in WMST and English. After graduation she plans to attend graduate school and plans to work with Women's Organizations that deal with domestic violence.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">She is a great asset to us!<br/>Thank you Tanya for working so hard and making our lives much</p>  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Questions? Comments? Suggestions?</b></p> <p>Please send them all to the editor! Ann Repeta<br/>E-mail: <a href="mailto:darepe@wm.edu">darepe@wm.edu</a><br/>Snail Mail:<br/>Women's Studies Program<br/>P.O. Box 8795<br/>Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795</p> <p><b>Program Contact Information</b></p> <p>Main Office: Morton Hall 322<br/>Phone: 757.221.2457<br/>Fax: 757.221.1946<br/><a href="http://www.wm.edu/womensstudies">www.wm.edu/womensstudies</a></p> |

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### Directors Corner

Greetings. It has now been several months since I began my three-year term as director of the Women's Studies program. I'll be continuing much of the work initiated by our previous directors: Debbie Green, Nancy Gray, Leisa Meyer, and Suzanne Raitt. I'm hoping that our Friends of Women's Studies group will continue, that our majors, minors, and all of our students find us offering an increasing volume of engaging courses, and that we can draw in and aid affiliate faculty across campus, encouraging Women's Studies cross-listed courses in new areas.

I came to William & Mary in 1992; I was hired to teach modern literature in the English Department.

My undergraduate studies were in English literature and philosophy, and my Ph.D. is in interdisciplinary studies and comparative literature from Johns Hopkins Humanities Center. I've expanded my fields to include Women's Studies, film, and postmodernism; I've also begun developing courses on Irish studies. A few favorite feminist authors, on whom I have written, are Virginia Woolf, Jeanette Winterson, and Eavan Boland. My first book addresses the nature of humor and stereotypes in James Joyce's fiction (*Gestural Politics: Parody and Stereotype in Joyce*; 2000). Beyond the College, I've been an activist for peace and social justice in Richmond, where I live, and for a time I served as President for Richmond's National Organization for Women and was on its political action committee for Virginia. Now, my work at William and Mary has taken over my organizing energies, and I hope to keep up with the Program's ever-growing engagement with our many communities. Don't hesitate to call or e-mail us, and please check our website regularly. Suzanne Raitt is now our web guru. Log in to [www.wm.edu/womensstudies](http://www.wm.edu/womensstudies) and you should expect to see fresh news about students and events, as well as course offerings.

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### The Annual Minnie Braithwaite Lecture in Women's Studies

Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup> 2009, 7:00  
pm, Small Hall 109

Our annual Braithwaite lecture will take place on Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The speaker this year will be **Annelise Orleck**, Professor of History from Dartmouth University. Professor Orleck's most recent book, *Storming Casar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*, traces the lives of nine African-American women born in the Mississippi Delta who became hotel maids, union activists and later welfare rights activists in Las Vegas, Nevada. Please mark your calendars. You might consider teaching a portion of her work and encouraging students to attend as well!

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### **Black Studies/ Women's Studies Brownbag series**

Fridays at noon, Morton  
314

#### **Spring semester:**

**February 20<sup>th</sup>:** Robert Vinson  
(History), ““Legal  
Minors and Social  
Children: The Gendered  
and Generational  
Struggles of Female  
Garveyites in  
Segregationist South  
Africa”

”

**March 20<sup>th</sup>:** Elisabeth Currans  
(Women's Studies ),

**April 17<sup>th</sup>:** Iyabo Osiapem  
(English), “Prosody and  
Intonation among Black  
Bermudian Women”

Light refreshments and beverages will  
be available.

#### **WELCOME: BETH CURRANS**

Visiting Assistant Professor Elizabeth (Beth) Currans joins us from UC Santa Barbara where she received her PhD in Religious Studies with an emphasis in Feminist Studies. During her time at UCSB she taught extensively for the Department of Feminist Studies and served as the Program Director for the Women's Center for a year. Her research interests include the gender and race dynamics of contemporary public demonstrations in the US, queer theory, feminist theory, critical race theory, performance studies, and global feminist and anti-imperialist activism. During the fall semester she is teaching “Introduction to LGBTIQ Studies,” “Global Feminism and Social Justice,” and “Gender, Politics, and Performance.” This latter course reflects her interest in looking beyond traditional social movement studies to better understand cultural interactions. Instead, she utilizes performance, critical race, and queer studies/theory to examine the interactions between individuals, communities, institutions, and systems of meanings. In the spring she will teach two sections of “Introduction to Women's Studies” and a senior seminar, “Race and Queer Theory.”



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### **Filmmaker, Linda Thornburg, Visit:**

On Thursday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in Washington 201, filmmaker Linda Thornburg came out from Charlottesville to screen and discuss the making of her film, *Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing*. Based on the poet May Sarton's semi-autobiographical novel by that title, the film addresses her rise to fame with a younger generation of readers, reaching back to the 1960s, when the poet Hilary Stevens is interviewed about her work as a poet and her gradual transformation into a model of inspiration for a generation of women. May Sarton attained notoriety in her youth for writing a novel about lesbian love, and the film treats the revelations of her lesbian relationships as well. The event was co-sponsored by Women's Studies and Film Studies. Women's Studies now owns a dvd of this film, if you think you might like to preview it for screening or use in your classrooms. Just let us know!

### **IRISH NOVELIST READING:**

Mary Morrissy

Irish novelist, Mary Morrissy, visited and read from her novel, *Mother of Pearl*, and other works on Friday Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>. She also taught a class that afternoon, for creative writing students and those in a freshman seminar who were reading her work. Professor Morrissy has taught creative writing at Trinity University in Dublin, University of Iowa and University of Arizona.

Mary Morrissy, cont.

She is in the states for a year, teaching creative writing at George Washington University. Her books have won her many awards, most recently the Lannan Literature Award. The reading was co-sponsored by Women's Studies and the Patrick Hayes Writers Festival.

### **PADMA VENKATRAMAN: Reading and Lecture**

On Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, Padma Venkantraman returned to William & Mary to promote the latest of her many books. *Climbing the Stairs* (Penguin, 2008) is set in India as Gandhi begins to transform the landscape and the colony rebels against colonial rule. The book has received many starred reviews, praising its powerful interweave of threads of Indian culture, diverse religious beliefs, and reflections on women's rights and the problems of violence. Dr. Venkantraman is a W&M alumna, receiving her Ph.D. from VIMS. She currently serves as Director of Graduate Diversity Affairs at the University of Rhode Island. We were delighted to have her back. She read from her work, discussed her turn from scientist into writer, and commented on the biography on women in mathematics she has also published. She spoke both on our home campus and at VIMS. This visit was co-sponsored by Women's Studies, the Math department, and VIMS.

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### **A Feminist Response to the 2008 Presidential Election**

On Wednesday, October 29<sup>th</sup>, Women's Studies co-sponsored a panel "A Feminist Response to the 2008 Presidential Election," along with three student organizations: VOX Voices for Planned Parenthood, Community Service Leaders, and the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA).

While gender and race are always central to elections, the 2008 presidential and vice-presidential candidates brought gender and racial dynamics to the forefront in important and unique ways. At this event, William and Mary faculty and students discussed feminist responses to this election, the candidates, and the issues on the table. Particular attention was paid to campaign advertising and the presidential and vice-presidential debates. The panel of speakers included Beth Anne DiGiorgis (undeclared), Carrie Adams (Government major), Elizabeth Currans (Visiting Assistant Professor of Women's Studies), Stacey Pelika (Assistant Professor of Government), Katherine Rubida (Women's Studies and Government major), with Jennifer Putzi (Assistant Professor of English and Women's Studies) moderating discussion.

Thank you to all of our panel members, as well as to all of you who came out to the event!

### Planning Meeting:

**Women's Studies Spring Planning Meeting will be held on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, the first Friday after classes begin this spring. We will be discussing the program's future, including such enticing topics as: Where are our curricular needs on campus? How might we support affiliates and joint appointments, as they work for more than one department/program? How do we signal to the campus our work on gender and sexuality studies as well as women's studies? What are the needs of our students, in terms of courses, internships, support in job placement and advice? And more! Let me know what you thing might be important ([clburn@wm.edu](mailto:clburn@wm.edu)) and plan to attend. We will also host a reception that afternoon for our affiliates, student, and friends. Stay tuned.**



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### 90 Years of Women

The freshmen who began their careers at the College this fall are by now quite familiar with its landmarks. They could easily point you towards the Crim Dell, Kate Waller Barrett Hall, or the iconic statue of Thomas Jefferson. They could rattle off that Playboy magazine named the Crim Dell Bridge one of the most romantic spots in academia, that Barrett Hall is one of the best freshman dormitories on campus, and that Thomas Jefferson, (yes, that Thomas Jefferson), went to William and Mary.

But what about Kate Waller Barrett?

What about our women alumnae, who are so underrepresented and underappreciated on this historic campus? Sure, William and Mary produced three male presidents, but it has also produced female community activists, women leaders in the business and academic communities, and even a Hollywood actress. Amazing women like Kate Waller Barrett, a medical doctor and social welfare advocate at the turn of the century and the second woman to serve on W&M's Board of Visitors, have been associated with William and Mary. Wren Building historians note that while King William and his wife, Queen Mary, signed our College's royal charter, but without further funding from Queen Anne, who reigned alone, The College of William & Mary would have been gone long before the nation was born. Yet all that those prospective students learn, and all that enrolled students know, are the stories of James Blair, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, and the Tyler men.

Well, not any more.

Three Women's Studies students, Cate Domino, Irene Davidson, and Laura Condyles (all Class of 2010), are working on an Independent Study that traces the history of women at the College, from the first class of women entering in 1918 to today's female students, contextualized within the greater American college culture through readings and films.

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### 90 Years of Women cont.

With the guidance of their faculty advisor, Hilary Marcus, they are completing a two-part project: one, completing a short documentary detailing a brief history of the acceptance of the first female class followed by personal accounts of female alumni; and two, creating a permanent memorial to the first class of women graduates from the College. This is a continuation of their Community Action Project (CAP), one of the components of the Introduction to Women's Studies course they completed in spring 2008 taught by Hilary Marcus.

The class of freshman women that entered this fall followed in the path of many incredible members of the William and Mary community. 90 years ago William and Mary became the first public school in Virginia to accept women as full-time students. The College pats itself on the back at every opportunity for the presidents, governors, and other notable male leaders it has produced, and 90 years later it is time to acknowledge the contributions of 90 classes of women.

More information on their projects can be found on their website, [90yearsofwomen.wikispaces.com](http://90yearsofwomen.wikispaces.com). They are also still interviewing female alumni for their documentary, so if you could speak to any issues concerning women in academia or at the College, please email them at [90yearsofwomen@gmail.com](mailto:90yearsofwomen@gmail.com).

