Have you considered a Women’s and Gender Studies Internship?

Cindy Verdieu, WGS Major, 2013

My experience this summer was life-changing, dynamic, and an eye-opener for me. I entered a world not familiar to me. South Jamaica Center for Children and Parents is a social services organization that works with families on welfare and low income jobs. They serve all children from ages three to five. All the children that attend this school are minorities, who are mostly Hispanics and Blacks. Jamaica, Queens is one of the most dangerous areas in New York, I am a firm believer that a child can still get a great education and make it out of this area and be successful. With an organization such as this one, letting children know at an early age how important education is and finishing school will always stick with them as they grow.

Some may question what a daycare has to do with Women’s & Gender Studies but this organization relates to just that. For ten weeks in the summer of 2012, I was given the opportunity to meet all sorts of people with different backgrounds and a different story about their lives. In ten short weeks, I could not believe how touched I was by not only the children but with the parents I encountered with. In spite of the circumstance of what these mothers go through, still it is amazing that they overcome their issues and put their children first.

This internship is related to Women’s and Gender Studies because the majority of these children’s parents are teenage mothers. Along with teenage pregnancies, there is a high possibility that the father of the child will not be involved. If they are not teenage mothers, they are immigrant women who unfortunately cannot find a job or speak English. Therefore, they are put on welfare which allows them to have a voucher to have their children in daycare/preschool. This organization is open from 6am till 8pm and is located right across the street from York College. This organization allows these teenage mothers to continue their schooling and become successful in this world. The Center remains open late so that the parents can have someone to watch their children no matter the time they get out of class or if they have errands to get done after class. Every
A child is given a healthy meal daily depending on the time they arrive and leave school, breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack. This organization also provides transportation for the children if their parents cannot get them to and from school. To be honest the question of a child being separated from their mother for fourteen or more hours a day did arise in my head, but for the time being if the mother is trying to better her life it can be viewed as a good thing.

These teenage mothers are close in age with me, which made it easy to communicate with them. I too have friends who are teenage mothers and I have seen the struggle they have gone through. Being a teenage mother is not easy but having support and organizations such as South Jamaica Center can ease some of the struggle these women go through. I view them as strong individuals because the majority of teenage mothers do not end up going back to school. There is little attempt to go to college. It is truly an accomplishment for these women to continue schooling and be strong through it for themselves and child. Also, setting an example for their children to never give up no matter the situation is an admirable quality.

One particular child that had my heart truly touched was a little three year old boy named Karon. His mother was evicted out of her apartment and later we found out she was in an abusive relationship with his father, which had forced her to live in a shelter. The little boy was coming to school from 6am till 8pm close daily because of the situation the mother was in. This is what I find amazing with these Head Start programs is that no matter the situation they try and make things work for the families. We made sure this little boy had every meal and really enjoyed himself at school because we truly do not know what goes on in the shelter or when he's not at school. It's so hard for a woman to be in a shelter especially to be in a shelter with her child. You could see in her eyes that she was trying everything she could to make her situation better. There's really not a day that goes by that I do not think about this little boy and all the children at this daycare.

I like to think that this internship helped me “grow up”. All my life, I've never had to struggle and was always handed whatever it is that I wanted. This internship and the people I had the opportunity to encounter allowed me to realize how hard life is for some people to get by, and how grateful I truly am to have my parents and everything they have done for me thus far. I found myself putting myself in these parents' shoes and seeing that life does not always go as planned. These young parents are doing the best they can with their lives, and there are parents who cannot find a job and are forced to get on welfare to get by. How they truly wish their circumstances could be different but cannot. This really opened my eyes and views on certain issues that occur in life. I was never the type of person to judge people because everyone truly does have their own story, but after this internship, I really realized how important it is to never judge because you truly do not know or understand everyone's story.
New WGS Faculty

Kristen Abatsis McHenry, Full-time Lecturer in Women’s & Gender Studies

Kristen Abatsis McHenry is a full time faculty member of Women and Gender Studies. She teaches courses such as Intro to Women’s Studies, Intro to Feminist Theory, and Feminist Research Methods. Next semester, she has developed some new and exciting courses including WGS: 210 Gender, Migration, and Globalization. She is thrilled to be part of the growing Women’s and Gender Studies department. McHenry holds a M.A. in Women's Studies and her doctoral work is in Political Science. Her dissertation examines breast cancer advocacy in the U.S. Her research examines advocacy that sees environmental toxins as linked to cancer. Her research challenges mainstream breast cancer advocacy that is centered on purchasing pink products and consumer based activism. Her other research interests include: transnational feminism, women and international politics, motherhood studies, and environmental health.

Cristina Mehrtens, Associate Professor of History and Women’s & Gender Studies

What drives my recent project is the question of how women identify themselves differently according to the ideas of nation, race, and gender. My research interests extend to women’s place during the construction of a mostly male technical apparatus in 20th-century Brazil to the current history of mostly female Brazilian immigrants in my adopted country, the United States. Therefore, no other subject has captured my attention more persistently than identity and urban space. Such an agenda contemplates the ideas of inequality and diversity in understanding the construction of different social groups whose integration depends on those categories and their impact on women's lives.

Cristina Mehrtens had three articles - “Ouro Preto,” “São Paulo,” and “Architecture” published in Brazil Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the Republic (ABC-CLIO 2012) by John J. Crocitti, (Editor) and Monique M. Vallance (Contributing). A new chapter, “Mid-Twentieth Century Urban Professionals,” was accepted for publication (2012) in the edited volume, Profissionais, práticas e representações to be published by Alameda Editorial, Sao Paulo, Brazil. This book is also sponsored by the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP 2013). Cristina also had one of her publications peer reviewed in “Public Services in Early Modern European Towns: An Agenda for Further Research,” in the Journal of Urban History May 1, 2010 36 : 386 - 392.

During the summer of 2012, she was a guest speaker at the prestigious event AUH Encontros at Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo Universidade de São Paulo (FAU USP), 15 August 2012, As a member of the Executive Committee of the New Eng-land, Council of Latin American Studies, Cristina participated in the deliberations at the David Rockefeller Center at Harvard University (3/3/2012) and the organization/composition of panels and sessions for the Annuals NECLAS conferences, including the November 2012 at Yale University.

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During the 2011-2012 academic year, I had the opportunity to spend the year abroad with my family. In the fall semester, my husband, Prof. Douglas Roscoe, had a Fulbright grant to consult with Lingnan University in Hong Kong on their General Education program. That semester, I was on sabbatical and worked on a research project focusing on decision-making in state legislatures. Our two sons, Quinlan and Berkley, came with us for the year. In the fall, they attended school at Gigamind, a private school that provided English language instruction for local Cantonese children. While in Hong Kong, we lived at Lingnan University, which is located in the Western New Territories. Efficient public transportation allowed us to access the more Westernized parts of Hong Kong easily, but we enjoyed living in a more remote part of Hong Kong, which allowed us to experience a more typical lifestyle.

Much of our free time in Hong Kong was spent exploring the community. While many people think of Hong Kong as a very urban environment, close to 70% of the land there is protected in county parks. As a result, we spent a great deal of time hiking and exploring the mountainous terrain. In addition to exploring Hong Kong, we were able to also spend time in Thailand (managing to leave Bangkok approximately two hours before the flooding forced the closure of the airport from which we left) as well as Bali, Indonesia. Doug’s Fulbright grant ended in January, but my Fulbright did not start until February which left us with a three week period where we had no official home. We went to Maui, Hawaii to spend time with family and then enjoyed a week-long stay in Tokyo. After a brief, final visit to Hong Kong to retrieve our belongings, we then hopped on a plane for our first visit to mainland China. The Fulbright program provided us with a week-long orientation program in Xiamen. There we met other Fulbrighters and our university handlers, known as our waibans. Selena, my waiban, escorted us to our new home in Shanghai at the East China University of Political Science and Law (ECUPL) in mid-February.

During the spring, I also explored quite a bit of China with my family. During the spring, we managed to visit Xian, Beijing, Ningbo, Yangshou, Chengdu, and Jiuzhaigou. Each was fascinating in its own way. For instance, Ningbo, which you have probably have never heard of, is a city of 8 million people. In the U.S., only New York has more than 8 million people. Yangshou, on the Li River, is the scene on the back of the 20 yuan dollar bill and features beautiful karst peaks. Chengdu, in Sichuan province, is home
to spicy food, pandas and the Leshan Buddha. Jiuzhaigou is part of the Aba Tibetan Qing Autonomous Prefecture and is home to one of the most stunningly beautiful national parks I have ever seen.

To top off our year of adventure, we made one last trip before we left to Vietnam and Cambodia. In Vietnam, we explored Hanoi and then took a short cruise in Halong Bay, a stunning landscape of (once again) karst peaks that dot the bay. We then visited Siem Reap, in Cambodia. Of all the places we visited, this was perhaps our favorite. We had the amazing luck to find a driver who was a former political activist. As he filled us in on the history of the Angkor ruins, he also filled us in on the heart-breaking history of Cambodia and its people.

All in all then, it was the experience of a life time. Not only did we manage to see so many different parts of Asia, we also learned a lot. As a white woman, I can read all I want about “unpacking the backpack” of race, but it was only by living in a culture where I was so obviously different from everyone else that I began to get a little taste of what it means to be so aware of that difference. Both of my sons were the object of near-constant attention when we visited tourist sites, particularly my youngest son who is blond. Many of the Chinese had rarely or never seen Westerners before, so we were frequently asked for pictures. There must be hundreds if not thousands of pictures of Berkley all over China. To be sure, much of the attention focused on us was positive, so I can’t say that I will ever completely unpack the backpack, but it made for interesting conversations within our family.

I see in my sons now a broader sense of citizenship; having met people from all over the world, they are more aware of how we have just how much we have in common. We all have a better understanding how others live and how extraordinarily lucky we are. For example, my students in Shanghai, who live six to a room, had no showers in their dorms. Instead, it was a 10 minute walk to the communal shower building; not bad when it’s 70 degrees out, but not so much fun on those 40 degree days. My students all thought we were lucky in our two-bedroom, no living room apartment. Looking back, I can definitely say we are all happy to be home and are enjoying the creature comforts of things like dishwashers and dryers. But we also look back fondly on our time away and are already plotting our next adventure.
Catherine Villanueva Gardner, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Women’s & Gender Studies; Chairperson, Women’s & Gender Studies

Catherine Villanueva Gardner has a book forthcoming with Pennsylvania State University Press, *Empowerment and Interconnectivity: Toward a Feminist History of Utilitarian Philosophy*. The work is a recapturing of neglected feminist philosophers from the nineteenth century. It is also a consideration of whether mainstream methodologies in the history of philosophy are a good fit to recapture works of feminist philosophy. She recently traveled to Iceland to give a presentation based on this book to the Nordic Network of Women in Philosophy.

Shawna Sweeney, Assistant Professor of Policy Studies

Professor Shawna Sweeney recently co-published articles on intellectual property rights and the right to health (with Dr. Robert Ostergard, University of Nevada at Reno), and basic rights in developing countries (with Dr. Lanse Minkler, University of Connecticut at Storrs). These works appear in prestigious journals and publications including *Human Rights Quarterly*, *Journal of Human Rights*, and *International Human Rights Law: Six Decades after the UDHR* (Ashgate Publishing). Professor Sweeney was recently appointed to serve on the UMass Dartmouth Center for Policy Analysis Advisory Board and as a faculty affiliate for the UMass Dartmouth Center for Women, Gender, and Sexuality. She also recently presented a paper on women’s rights and the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Juli L. Parker, Director, Center for Women, Gender & Sexuality

Dr. Juli Parker, has been awarded the $100,000 Roy J. Zuckerberg Leadership Prize, which she will use to spark a movement across the state to break down gender stereotypes among middle- and high-school students. Dr. Parker will train students at all five UMass campuses over the next two years to go into local schools and lead discussions that question gender roles and stereotypes in the media. The mission of the Roy J. Zuckerberg Leadership Prize is to “reward people of courage, conviction and selflessness who have devoted their talents to helping the University of Massachusetts accomplish its goals.” Dr. Parker will use the funds to hire undergraduate and graduate staffers to assist her with the project, as well as organize a Feminist Media Literacy Conference to train student leaders. Juli Parker was also selected as a 2012 YWCA Woman of Distinction.

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Christopher Larkosh, Assistant Professor of Portuguese


Shannon Jenkins, Associate Professor of Political Science

Shannon Jenkins, Associate Professor of Political Science and WGS Affiliate, is back at UMass Dartmouth after spending the past academic year abroad. She spent the fall semester in Hong Kong while on sabbatical, then she taught at the East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai during the spring semester. This summer, her article, “How Gender Influences Roll Call Voting,” was published in *Social Science Quarterly* (June 2012, Vol. 93, pages 415-33)

Anna Klobucka, Professor of Portuguese and Women's & Gender Studies

Anna M. Klobucka is preparing for submission to Palgrave Macmillan a co-edited volume of essays entitled *Sexing the Lusotropics: Culture, Theory, and the Visual Arts*, a project that originated in the international conference on “Gender, Empire, and Postcolony: Intersections in Luso-Afro-Brazilian Studies,” held at UMass Dartmouth in 2009 and sponsored, among others, by what was then the Women's Studies Program. As Executive Editor of the online *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, published by UMD's Department of Women's and Gender Studies, she's also busy working on the journal’s third issue, to be released in late fall. Earlier this semester, she has presented papers at the meetings of the Brazilian Studies Association and the American Portuguese Studies Association, and she's looking forward to traveling to Paris during the week of Thanksgiving to participate in a conference commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *Novas Cartas Portuguesas (New Portuguese Letters)*, a classic of Portuguese and global feminist literature.

Stephanie O'Hara, Assistant Professor of French and Women's & Gender Studies

This summer, Stephanie O'Hara presented at a conference at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University. Her paper, “Capturing the Wandering Womb in the Early Modern Era: Louise Bourgeois and *The Compleat Midwives Practice*,” was written and presented in collaboration with Dr. Alison Klairmont Lingo, History, Univ. of California, Berkeley. The conference theme was “Retelling Familiar Tales of Pregnancy and Birth,” and featured papers not only from academics in a variety of disciplines, but also from practicing midwives.

Bridget Teboh, Associate Professor, Department of History


Dear Women's and Gender Studies supporter,

As you now know, we have finally reached many of our most important goals. We have a major, we are a department, we have a new FTL position, and we have attracted some wonderful faculty to join our department. What we need to focus on now is supporting our students.

Every year we offer scholarships to two majors, based on merit and/or need, and one scholarship to a minor. We need to be in a position to continue to offer these scholarships. The students who are attracted by a WGS major or minor are often the students who struggle the most to afford their education. In addition, consider that WGS students are often the people who are most likely to be “change agents” when they leave the university.

It would be wonderful if you could make a commitment to the Women's Studies Scholarship Endowment.

I thank you on behalf of our students,

Catherine Villanueva Gardner
Chair, WGS