

Women's Studies News

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on the web:

www.umassd.edu/CAS/WMS

TTW paints the campus "Red"

by Hope Middleton

On Thursday, October 24, renowned author and activist Terry Tempest Williams visited UMass Dartmouth. Often called a citizen writer, Williams has garnered many accolades. While on campus, she hosted two events during which she could interact with students and get to know them better. The theme of the day seemed to be just this: interaction and sharing.

Williams visited campus as a conclusion to the new Summer Reading Project in which the Class of 2012 read her book *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*. The book was given to each student during his or her orientation session. Students were asked to participate in an online discussion, hosted in the form of a blog, after reading the book. Moderated by a panel of students and faculty, blog participants were asked to post their thoughts on the book and interact with their peers to promote greater understanding of the work. In addition to the discussion threads, students could participate in *Red* related contests with opportunities to win gift cards to businesses on and around campus.

The first event in which Ms. Williams participated was a question and answer panel held from 3 to 4 p.m. in the Library Browsing Area. She began the event by asking the whole audience, comprised of about thirty students, faculty and community members, to move to the front of the seating area. She cited nerves for this seating change, but this gesture also created a more intimate feeling; this was not to be a lecture but a discussion. She stated that she had read the blog and that it was everything that she, as an author,



Photo Courtesy - Jennifer White

could hope for. "You never dream that your work gets read," attested Williams, "especially on this level. The most I could ever hope for is creating conversation."

Indeed, this panel was a conversation. There was no prepared script, no index cards with notes on them; there was only the author, the audience, and the text. She answered the audience's questions with poise and grace, but when there were no questions she asked her own.

When asked if *Red* is a feminist work, Williams talked about how we all label each other, especially in this election season. She then conceded, however, that she is a woman and certainly has strong opinions the theme of which is that one doesn't need to have children to love children, is notoriously unpopular. It all comes back to the idea that she wants nothing more than to create conversation.

See WILLIAMS, pg. 5

UMassDartmouth's FMLA kicks off its revival by taking back the night

UMass Dartmouth's Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance is back in action for the 2008-2009 academic year. Having fallen to the wayside last school year, Co-Presidents Samantha Coffin and Sherrie Ann Andre, with the help of a dedicated E-board, have managed to revive the group. FMLA, which is a branch of the national Feminist Majority Foundation, revolves around issues of identity and equality. A normal group meeting consists of discussion about politics, personal issues, rights and moral dilemmas.



With a core group of 15 members, FMLA is off to a running start for the year, already having successfully launched "Take Back the Night," in October, drawing in over 70 attendees for the march throughout campus. The goal of the event was to educate attendees about domestic violence and also to teach them simple self defense methods they could use when walking alone at night. The organizers stopped at various unsafe locations across campus to present facts and figures and even had the honor of checking one of the newly implemented Emergency Callboxes, with the assistance of Public Safety.

Following the walk, the frozen marchers headed to the Library for refreshments and a discussion panel with Captain Sheehan of Public Safety, Dr. Juli Parker, Director of the Women's Resource Center and Mentors in Violence Prevention head, Brian Harkin.

FMLA also supported the Women's Studies Program and Women's Resource Center one act play "Trifles," which dealt with issues of domestic violence. They tabled throughout the day of the show, selling "Trifle, Truffles and Trinkets," and raised over \$120 - nearly doubling their allotted budget for the year. The group has the admirable goal of sending its members to a Feminist Majority Foundation conference in the Spring, and the members are determined to raise the money through scholarships and fundraising.

Co-President Samantha Coffin notes that the group was rekindled

following the FMF conference last spring. "We saw that everyone else had a functional FMLA and we wondered... why not us?" She is very pleased with the current level of enthusiasm and commitment from all of the group's members, and is looking forward to a productive and invigorating year. Upcoming events for FMLA include "Walk A Mile in Her Shoes," where men are made to wear high heels and walk a mile to see what it's like and "Breastival," a festival which literally celebrates breasts through education, games and giveaways. Along with the revitalization of FMLA, the group is looking to mix things up a little bit, and are in the process of changing their name "to make it more accessible to everyone," says Coffin. "When people hear the word 'Feminist,' they make assumptions...and they aren't always good. We want this group to be open to everyone, male and female alike."

FMLA meets every Wednesday at 5 p.m. in the Student Conference Room next to the SAIL office. For more information, please contact fmla@umassd.edu.



Photos Courtesy - Kate Thornhill

Dr. Susan Krauss Whitbourne to speak at UMass Dartmouth on Thursday, December 9

On Thursday, December 9, UMass Dartmouth will welcome Susan Krauss Whitbourne, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. From 12 to 1 p.m. in the Library Browsing Area, Krauss will be presenting "'Pathways Through Midlife: Results of a 40-Year Study on Adult Development.'" Krauss, who is the author of thirteen books and four college textbooks, is considered the go-to expert on adult development both in and outside academia.

During her presentation, she will be summarizing the results of her study of psychosocial development based on a sample of nearly 200 male and female college alumni, first tested in the 1960s and followed through 2002. Patterns of changes in personality, relationships, family, and career will be examined and the implications for healthy aging will be explored. For more information, please contact Andrew Revell, Assistant Professor of Psychology at UMass Dartmouth, arevell@umassd.edu



The WRC “Thinks Pink” during Breast Cancer Awareness Month

by Megan Gauthier

From Monday, October 20 through Friday, October 24, the Women's Resource Center in conjunction with the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, sponsored “Think Pink Week” in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness month, which aims to educate both women and men on breast health.

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women today. According to the American Cancer Society, about 1.3 million women will be diagnosed with breast cancer annually worldwide about 465,000 will die from the disease. Breast cancer death rates have been dropping steadily since 1990, according to the Society, because of earlier detection and better treatments. About 40,910 breast cancer deaths are expected in 2007.

Risk factors for breast cancer include being female, getting older, genetic inheritance, family history of cancer, exposure to radiation, high levels of estrogen in the blood, obesity or drastic weight gain and not having children or having your first child after the age of 35.

However, breast cancer does not only affect women. According to a study by the University of Virginia, an estimated 2,030 men were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2007. More importantly, everyone who knows someone with breast cancer is affected emotionally. Breast cancer is traumatizing for all patients as well as their family and friends during times of uncertainty, invasive treatments and understanding of the mortality rates associated with breast cancer.

The Women's Resource Center took on the challenge of educating college students about these issues, beginning with a free bra fitting by the local business “Fabulous Foundations by Nancy.” There is a known correlation between too-tight bras and breast cancer, as a bra that is too tight may constrict the breast tissue, which could lead to degeneration. Junior staff member and event coordinator, Kayleigh Moore, noted that “Everyone who attended the bra fitting was very

happy with the results...and some were shocked to find out how different their actual size is from what they were wearing.”

Throughout the week, the WRC also hosted a bake sale in the Campus Center. All proceeds were donated to the Susan G. Komen foundation and the local YWCA's program, which offers free mammograms. In total, the bake sale raised \$500, a number that the WRC was very pleased with. In addition to baked goods, the table offered a plethora of information about breast health. Moore added “ I think we got a lot of people interested in breast cancer awareness. We also got a lot of people to go down to the women's resource center to get free t-shirts. Even though we are tucked away, a lot of people now know where we are.”

As a guide for students, the WRC laid out pink ribbons from the Campus Center to their office, offering free pink M&M's to people wearing pink and also offering a free T-shirt on Wednesday, October 22, for making the trek to Pine Dale.

Other events included a screening of the documentary “Beyond Words,” a story about a woman who was diagnosed with breast cancer before she was 30 years old, and a presentation by the New Bedford YWCA on Thursday. Moore said the speaker “Gave us a lot of valuable information about how to detect breast cancer, and even had a fake breast with lumps in it that we had to find... many of us could not even find the biggest one!”

The WRC also hosted a campus wide “Dress Down Day” on Thursday, October 23. Participants were asked to donate \$5 and wear casual clothing.

Overall, Moore believes the week-long event was “A success.” She admits that “There were a few snags with communication and running out of products, but I think we accomplished our goal... which was to raise money and awareness on campus about breast cancer.”

For more information on breast cancer, please visit the Susan G. Komen for the cure website, ww5.

komen.org

For more information on the Women's Resource Center, which is located on the first floor of Pine Dale, please visit www.umassd.edu/wrc or call (508) 910-4584.

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WMS Alumni News

Wendy Andre graduated from Roger Williams University School of Law in May 2008. She took the bar exam in July 2008 and is currently waiting for the result. If she passes, she plans to open up a solo practice in downtown New Bedford. Her practice will be a general practice to include immigration law and assisting victims of domestic violence in obtaining legal immigration status (VAWA).

While in law school, she focused her energies on pro-bono work, which included helping undocumented victims of domestic violence obtain legal status in the U.S. Women's Studies has and continues to be an influential force in her life. She went on to work as a rape crisis/domestic violence advocate after graduating from UMD and will continue to assist women in need through legal avenues.

Katey Lincoln-Besse graduated from UMass Dartmouth in 2006 with a BA in English. Today, she works for Nestle Waters in sunny south Florida as a branch administrator. In her location, she is one of three women and 80 men.

She credits the WMS program with helping her to be more aggressive in the workforce. She claims that it has also opened her eyes to how men look down on women, noting "We are not treated equally all the time, even though it is stated that they [Nestle Waters] are an 'equal opportunity' employer."

She is determined to move up in her job despite being at a "disadvantage" because of her gender.

Brooke Brunetto (formerly Boucher) graduated in 2006 with an English Communications Major and a Women's Studies minor.

After graduating Brooke continued to write her always sassy and often outrageous column for southcoast247.com entitled "Ms. Informed." Recently, she married her life partner Mike Brunetto and is currently interviewing with several different nonprofit organizations.

Presently she works as a designer for a local newspaper, but hopes to find a full time job that is as fulfilling as it is worthwhile.

Moira Duffy graduated from UMass Dartmouth in May 2008. She currently works as a House Manager for residential services at a social service agency in Newport, Rhode Island.

She is a mother to four girls between the ages of 16 and 18 and is teaching them independent daily living skills while she lives there 3 1/2 days out of the week.

Women's Studies became an important part of her life during her time at UMassD and continues to inspire her all the time.

Katy Howe graduated in 2004 with a major in English Literature and a minor in WMS. She finished her MA in English Literature at RIC in 2006. Currently, she is an adjunct professor in the English Department at both the University of Maryland, College Park, and at Prince George's Community College in Largo, MD. Of her experience, she notes "Women's Studies has always

been a huge part of my life, and will continue in that vein."

Osob Issa graduated from UMass Dartmouth in 2008 with a Psychology degree and a Women's Studies minor. She is currently enrolled in a social work program at Boston University, and hopes to use the skills and information she learned at UMass Dartmouth in conjunction with her education at BU to aid women.

Emily Mears has been pursuing jobs since graduation in 2008, working at non-profit organizations, mostly dealing with families that have had the unfortunate presence of domestic violence and/or drug abuse in their lives.

Although she has been on many interviews and has been given the opportunity, she has not been able to land a job that is perfect for her and she is not willing to settle. As some people may know, these issues are near and dear to her heart and she wants to make a difference. She continues to volunteer her time to shelters and non-profit organizations.

Currently, she is the lead supervisor of the UMass Pass Office in the campus center. The staff there have recognized her diligence and organization skills so much that they decided to keep her on to tackle the new parking system along with the restructuring and supervision of the 8 student employees that work for the office. While working there, she continues to search for new job opportunities and applying to graduate programs for public policy or WMS programs.



Stressed out? Need a break?

Join the Women's Resource Center* for tea every Wednesday at 2 p.m.

Indulge in The Republic of Tea's "Be Well" collection and sit back, relax and engage in conversation with staff members.

*Located in Pine Dale Hall.

WILLIAMS: Visiting author strikes conversation with UMD students

Continued from page 1

If that makes it a feminist work, so be it. Williams went on to state that the book is meant to make people uncomfortable. She read the story of "The Bowl" from *Red* at Brigham Young University and was never invited back. The story "Labor," During this session, Terry Tempest Williams asked many questions, both rhetorical and to which she wanted answers. The primary question, she said, that she asks in *Red* is "how do we have conversations that open hearts instead of close them?" Other questions she asked included "what does it mean to live in a place?" and "What does it mean to be a citizen?"

When there was a lull in the conversation, Williams asked each and every audience member to tell her about the place that they considered "home." Answers ranged from New Bedford to the southwest desert, western South Dakota, Berlin, Germany to Nigeria, cities and towns in Massachusetts both near and far, from finding home wherever you go and wherever your body carries you to wherever your friends and family are. If there is one thing that quickly became apparent about Terry Tempest Williams it was that she loved to listen to people, to get to know people, far more than she loved

"How do we have conversations that open hearts instead of close them?"

to speak to people. She enjoys conversations, not lectures.

Terry Tempest Williams finished her afternoon session with a challenge to the audience. If any of those in attendance wanted to write a paragraph about their idea of home, she would let them read it at that evening's talk. It



Photo Courtesy - Jennifer White

was a wonderful way to keep the conversation going and to encourage learning and growth outside of the lecture. It also provided a great segue to that evening's talk, making the afternoon seem not like a separate event but more of a prelude.

The evening event was better attended but less engaging and more low-key. The large number of attendees was largely due to the freshmen class's attendance. Terry Tempest Williams took the stage at 7 p.m. and spoke eloquently to the large crowd despite the fact that the event was being held in the Tripp Athletic Center.

Ms. Williams primarily read from *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert* and her new book *Finding Beauty in a Broken World*. She read poignant excerpts from each work and, to keep up the theme of conversation, asked questions of the audience. She also gave advice that was based in the examples from her stories. Memorably, Terry Tempest Williams told the audience "it is important to build community. We do not live in isolation." "How do we talk about the things that matter to us?" she asked. "How can we be inclusive, not exclusive? How do we give birth to social change?"

At the end of her hour-long lecture, an announcement was made that there would be a question

and answer section after those who wished to leave did so. For the small group that chose to attend the second panel of the day, a deep and meaningful dialogue emerged between students and members of the community, between youth and age, between men and women. It was an educational experience for

"When we tell a story, there is something deeper that occurs."

all involved, and a conversation that promoted greater understanding in the campus community. A book signing followed the open forum discussion.

Terry Tempest Williams had two words that she told audience members to take away from the afternoon panel and they truly were the theme of the entire day: "passion" and "patience." She encouraged people to find that which they are passionate about and have the patience to make conscious decisions and stimulate change. The day was full of sharing and storytelling, and as Ms. Williams put it "When we tell a story, there is something deeper that occurs."

Early feminist play examines women's concern with "Trifles"

On Wednesday, November 12 at 6 p.m., over 90 people graced UMass Dartmouth's Main Auditorium to view a staged reading of Susan Glaspell's 1916 feminist play *Trifles*, which was sponsored by the Women's Resource Center and the Women's Studies Program.

Dr. Juli Parker, the Director of the Women's Resource Center, who has her PhD. in Theater, directed the staged reading and Senior WMS major Meghan Thompson acted as the Stage Manager.

Following the performance was a Domestic Violence panel, which included Pumukien Collins (Director of the Domestic Violence Program at Independent House), Gail Fortes (Director of the YWCA of Southeastern Mass) and Sean Connell (a member of Mentors in Violence Prevention and a staff member at the WRC). The panel discussed the key elements of the play and compared it to present day. Dr. Parker asserts, "It [*Trifles*] still speaks very clearly about what's happening today in terms of male-female relationships."

Parker chose the play to raise awareness of domestic violence,

noting "DV rates continue to rise in our country. At a time when it seems that gender roles are being interrogated and deconstructed, it is hard to realize that women are still being beaten and killed by their male partners. Many women who murder are victims of domestic violence."

Glaspell's one-act play, *Trifles*, is based on actual events that occurred in Iowa at the turn of the century. From 1899-1901 Glaspell worked as a reporter for the Des Moines News, where she covered the murder trial of a farmer's wife who was accused of killing her husband, by striking him twice in the head with an ax while he slept.

Initially it was assumed that burglars had murdered the farmer, but a subsequent sheriff's investigation turned up evidence suggesting the wife was unhappy in her marriage. Ultimately, she was charged with and found guilty of the crime and sentenced to life in prison.

Glaspell, inspired by the events of the trial and torn between her sense of sympathy for the wife and her civic duty to believe in the justice of the law created *Trifles*. This murder mystery explores gender

relationships, power between the sexes, and the nature of truth. In the play, the farmer and his wife never actually appear; instead, the story focuses on the prosecutor, George Henderson, who has been called in to investigate the murder; Henry Peters, the local sheriff; Lewis Hale, a neighboring farmer who discovered Wright's body; and Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale, wives to the two local men.

While the men bluster around the farmhouse searching for clues, the women discover bits of evidence in the "trifles" of a farmer's wife—her baking, cleaning and sewing. Because the men virtually ignore the women's world, they remain blind to the truth before their eyes.

The cast consisted of Senior Laura McHugh as Mrs. Hale, Senior Megan Gauthier as Mrs. Peters, Senior Bill Levasseur as the County Attorney, Sophomore Tyler Hagan as Mr. Hale, and CCRI student Dillon Medina as the Sheriff.

Parker deemed the show a success and added that she hopes to do more staged readings and awareness events in the future. Stay tuned!

Newly established Women's Studies Major offers scholarship opportunities

The Women's Studies major program has blossomed since it was accepted at UMass Dartmouth in the Spring of 2008. There are currently fourteen students enrolled in the program, and Director of the Women's Studies Department, Dr. Jeannette Riley, hopes to have twenty students enrolled by the end of this year.

In celebration of the newly ratified major, women's activist and icon Gloria Steinem attended a scholarship foundation dinner in the spring. The fundraiser brought in \$28,000, \$25,000 of which went to the WMS Foundation fund to initiate an endowment. Once the endowment reaches \$100,000, the WMS program plans to offer an annual Women's Studies Major Merit Scholarship, which will put \$1,000 toward tuition costs and is based on merit, scholastic achievement and

involvement in co-curricular activities. The endowment will also fund an annual Women's Studies Major/Minor Need Scholarship, which will offer \$1,000 for students enrolled in the major and \$500 for students enrolled in the minor. The student must be from the SouthCoast region and demonstrate financial need.

Currently, the Women's Studies Program offers the annual Janet Freedman Book Scholarship for minors, which awards one recipient \$250 for purchase of books for one semester. This scholarship is based on application and response to an essay question. In addition, this spring, the WMS Program plans to offer \$500 for a major and \$500 for a minor for Fall 2009 tuition costs.

Dr. Riley encourages those interested in Women's Studies to take on the major because "It's a discipline that provides you with a strong

liberal arts background [...]" which "enables students to learn to problem solve using multiple perspectives, as well as learn to communicate effectively in response to a variety of issues." She adds "Women's Studies provides you with an understanding of women's positions in the United States and globally, which can inform your decisions and your future work. Last but not least, the WMS major offers you many opportunities for involvement in the community."

A WMS major prepares you for a range of job opportunities, including, but not limited to, fields in business, social services, and public service. Riley notes "There are many opportunities out there for a WMS minor or major!"

For more information on the Women's Studies program please visit <http://www.umassd.edu/cas/wms/>

WMS Spring '09 Course Highlights

WMS 260: Gender and Sexuality in Lusophone Literatures *Prof. Anna Klobucka*

In this class, we will study representations of gender and sexuality in the literatures of Portugal, Brazil and Lusophone Africa from the Middle Ages to the present. Attention will be given to discursive and narrative construction of gendered and sexual identities; historically and culturally variable perspectives on gender and sexuality; and the roles played by gendered agents and sexual engagements in the historical processes occurring in the Portuguese-speaking world, with particular emphasis on colonial and postcolonial contexts and relations.

WMS 490: Global Politics and Women's Human Rights *Prof. Shawna Sweeney*

This course offers an in-depth, comparative examination of human rights issues that affect women's lives and the ways women's experiences of human rights violations are gendered. The primary objective of this course is to explore how the attainment of women's rights in the economic, social, and political realms vary significantly by cultural, geographic, and national boundaries, and the strategies that women use to challenge and overcome obstacles. In particular, the student will gain a greater awareness of both the similarities that women share in different socio-cultural backgrounds, and experiences of women in less developed nations that separate them from their Western counterparts.

WMS 305: Contemporary Theory and Feminist Practices *Prof. Catherine Gardner*

Beginning with an examination of the activism of the first and second "waves" of the feminist movement, we will interweave discussions of theory and practice throughout the course. We shall examine a range of contemporary feminist theories - including postmodernist feminism and multicultural feminism - and assess their relative strengths and weaknesses. Our goal is not just to understand the content of individual theories, but to be able to ask questions about the construction of theories themselves. A central question that will be asked throughout is how well a theory can deal with differences among women. In addition, we will analyze key concepts such as gender and oppression.

WMS 300: Topics in World History/Topics in Women's Studies *Prof. Christina Mehrrens*

Both the topic of Women in Latin American history and Brazilian history will be offered this spring. In these classes, we will acquire knowledge of the social construction of gender as a basic historical concepts and the ways it intersects with other forms of identity such as class, race, and ethnicity. We will also identify how specific ideas of gender, sex, and sexuality intersect in our understanding of a particular historical moment. Through the analysis of texts and images, students will critically inquire into the literature and selected female biographies and accounts to examine historical processes embedded in the representations of identity, gender, race, class, and urban space.

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Women's Studies Program
UMass Dartmouth
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Non-profit Org.
US Postage Paid
New Bedford, MA
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Phone: 508-910-4586
Fax: 508-999-9235

Questions? Comments?
Suggestions?

Design/Editor
Megan Gauthier

U_M1Gauthier@umassd.edu

WMS Director's Report

Dear all,

The Women's Studies Program has been busy as usual with events this semester. We co-sponsored a film series with the Women's Resource Center (WRC) and the Women's Fund of Southeastern Massachusetts. We co-sponsored, again with the WRC, a reading of Susan Glaspell's one act play *Trifles* in conjunction with an educational panel on issues relating to violence against women. This event received a great crowd of over 90 students and community members. It's wonderful to see the response to such events from the community.

The WMS Program continues to grow as we now have 14 new majors pursuing a B.A. in Women's Studies and more than 25 minors. Our students are active on campus

in the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, at the Women's Resource Center developing events and serving as Mentors in Violence Prevention, and in the community doing internships at organizations like the New Bedford Women's Center.

Last but not least, I want to point forward to the 2nd annual Women's Studies and Women's Resource Center fundraiser, which will be held on April 30, 2009. Our speaker is American poet and feminist Adrienne Rich as we celebrate the arts this year with a poetry reading and commentary. Adrienne Rich is not only one of the United States' foremost poets, she is also a major figure in the women's movement and is known for her work *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* and her many essays. I invite you to join us

and help us continue to build our WMS endowment for student scholarships and to support the important work of the Women's Resource Center. I look forward to seeing you at this great event!

Best wishes,

Jen Riley



Acclaimed American poet and feminist, Adrienne Rich, will be speaking at a WMS and WRC fundraiser on April 30, 2009.

