

Women's Studies News

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Check out our new website, WMS on the web:

www.umassd.edu/CAS/WMS

Steinem raises funds for WMS scholarship

by Megan Gauthier

On Thursday, February 7th, feminist activist and writer Gloria Steinem graced UMass Dartmouth with her presence in honor of the new Women's Studies Major, which was approved on October 19, 2007.

Steinem, along with three UMass Dartmouth Alumni, Washawn Jones, Diane Hitchcock and Nicole DiFabio, engaged in a panel discussion revolving around the day's theme "Three Decades of Educating and Empowering," which refers to the three decades of Women's Studies courses and programs at UMass Dartmouth.

Nearly 500 attendees listened eagerly as Gloria Steinem spoke about women's history, gender roles and our culture and women's education.

The alumni discussed their personal involvement in Women's Studies at UMass Dartmouth and in their adult lives. The event was capped off with an audience question and answer session.

Following the panel, Steinem was honored with a private reception before the 6 p.m. fundraiser dinner in the Woodlands Commons. Over 200 attendees bought or donated tickets for the dinner, which cost \$100 a seat.

Speakers for the evening included Women's Resource Center Director, Juli Parker; Women's Studies Program Director, Jen Riley; Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences William Hogan; Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Jean Kim; Chancellor Jean MacCormack, and, of course, Gloria Steinem.



Photo courtesy of The Photographics Department

Gloria Steinem visits UMD to help raise money for the newly approved Women's Studies major.

Steinem launched into the common theme of the day: women's exclusion from history and noted that although women's silence has angered her, it has also inspired her; "Studying the hidden part of history informs all of us and transforms all of us," she said. She urged audience members to examine their own histories and ended: "Without a sense of being part of history in the past, we cannot have a sense of making history now."

One thing is for certain — Steinem's visit will certainly go down in UMass Dartmouth history.

As the Director of the Women's Studies Program, Jen Riley, reports: "The event exceeded our expectations. The response to Gloria Steinem was amazing and she was wonderful."

The fundraiser, which aimed to create an endowment fund for future Women's Studies scholarships of \$1,500, was also successful, as the event raised over \$26,000 through donations, dinner ticket sales and a silent art auction held during the dinner reception.

For more information on the Women's Studies Major as well as upcoming Women's Studies events, visit www.umassd.edu/CAS/WMS.

Call me Gloria: An afternoon with living legend Gloria Steinem

by Brooke Boucher Brunetto
WMS Minor, Class of 2006

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A little more than a week ago I was lucky enough to see one of my personal heroes, Gloria Steinem, speak. She was invited to UMass Dartmouth to be part of a celebratory panel discussion addressing civic engagement. While the focus of the hour long talk should have been how activism and education improves lives, it quickly turned into a beautiful celebration of feminism past and present.

Ms. Steinem started her talk by reminding the audience that the very act of sitting in an auditorium with our backs towards one another while staring ahead at one focal point on stage was a form of a hierarchy. She

been on, and how Women's Studies helped them figure out who they really were, while allowing them to bring their ideas into the work place with them. Each had a story that was as uniquely different as they themselves were. It was empowering as well as enlightening because it allowed everyone

to see that you don't have to be a famous figure in history, like Gloria Steinem, for feminism to really have an effect. Feminism works for those who choose to adopt the ideology, and the other panel members were the living proof.

The short, yet powerful, engagement ended with a question and answer period. Most questions were aimed at Gloria, and she answered them with clear language and quick wit. One question that came up was the idea that many students on campus did not know who she was, and one individual in particular wanted to know what that meant for us as a society. The answer shocked the hell out of me. Gloria rapidly replied, "well my question would be: do they know who they are yet?" suddenly making us realize that it is more important for a young person to figure out whom and what they are before they start to worship or revere what someone else has done.

As more questions rolled in from the audience, it was clear that some knew what feminism was while some others came to learn how it could be applied to their own lives. People wanted to know if feminism had an answer for divorce, or if being a feminist meant being a humanist, and each question was answered



Gloria Steinem and panel of UMD alumni engage in a question and answer session about civic engagement.

"It is impossible to be an enlightened woman in the year 2008 and not call yourself a feminist."

then went on to say that in a perfect world we'd all be sitting in a circle talking to one another, rather than just trying to listen to one person's ideas. As the talk went on Gloria, which she insisted we call her if we were addressing her, spoke of the research she is doing now for her new book about Native American culture and its influence on early American government and culture. She also told us that her intent was not to make us feel grateful for what we have, but to help further piss us off by making us realizing all the things we still don't have, like equal pay, and complete sexual autonomy.

Shortly after Gloria was done doling out her feminist wisdom, we heard from UMD alumni who had been part of the Women's Studies program. Each spoke of the long road they have

in a way that made me see that it is impossible to be an enlightened woman in the year 2008 and not call yourself a feminist, because saying you're a feminist and trying to live a feminist lifestyle simply means that you are trying to make the world a better place one step at a time. Being a feminist means that you fight all inequality and all injustice in your day to day life, and, at the end of the road, you will have made a difference in the lives of people who needed someone to stand up for them and with them. There is nothing more beautiful than a life lived with purpose, and if nothing else, feminism gives lives purpose.

Gloria Steinem touched me with her words, but maybe even more importantly she touched those who did not know what feminism was. She gave hope with her humor. She opened minds with her ideas. At the end of the discussion I was reminded why I had been calling myself a feminist since I was old enough to know what feminism was. I feel lucky to have been a part of a unique event that will never happen in exactly the same way. My only hope is that the others who attended were equally as affected. My hope is that people will take the wisdom and courage spread by a person like Gloria Steinem and turn it into a brighter tomorrow for all.

Student Spotlights

Kara Carlson

Kara Carlson is the first student to declare the Women's Studies major at UMass Dartmouth. The major, which was approved in October 2007, came just in time for Carlson, who is scheduled to graduate in the spring of 2009 and who had been shuffling through various majors, including religion, philosophy and sociology, until the WMS major was finally available.

Carlson, who is drawn to human rights issues, is inspired by Women's Studies and how it exposes the fact that despite the diversity of our culture, we still tend to treat people differently because of their gender, race, class and sexual preference. She argues "Instead of spending our time punishing people for their differences, I think it's about time that people embrace those differences and begin to realize that's what makes us so great."



Kara Carlson is the first student to declare the newly approved Women's Studies Major at UMass Dartmouth.

Carlson has taken over 30 credits of Women's Studies classes since she came to UMass Dartmouth in 2004 and is awed by the fact that every new class she takes offers a new outlook on the world around her.

One of her favorite things about the Women's Studies program is watching the effect of new information on her classmates: "Something that I notice in almost every Women's Studies class I take is noticing

when someone's realization of what a feminist is begins to change. There has been a lot of negativity surrounding the word and I love when I watch a student realize that they agree with all the beliefs of a feminist, but had never considered themselves one before that moment. I think it's a change every one of us goes through."

After graduation, Carlson plans to become involved in social and political activism. She notes that she had always been interested in public speaking, and would like to "travel and speak to youth about the importance of embracing diversity in their lives" and offer them a chance to feel part of rather than outside of something. Eventually, Carlson hopes to get her PhD and become a college professor.

Samantha Coffin

Freshman Samantha Coffin is the first freshman to declare the newly approved Women's Studies Major at UMass Dartmouth. Coffin, originally an English communications major, has known that she wanted to be involved in Women's Studies since she first heard of the Women's Resource Center during her Freshman Orientation.

According to Coffin, the WRC put on a violence-awareness skit and she felt a personal connection to the topic and decided to contact WRC assistant Kim Sylvia about working there. She has since become one of their most devoted and enthusiastic staff members, taking on many challenging and tedious projects.

What makes Coffin special in her pursuit is that she is considered a "Pathways student," which means that the University has given her a "second chance" because she applied late after having been accepted to four other colleges and deciding that UMass Dartmouth best suited her academic needs. In order to become a student, she was told that she would have to be involved in the program, which dictates her class schedule for her entire freshman year and allows her to work in a supportive learning community.

Women's Studies classes were not part of the Pathways curriculum and in order to jump-start her WMS courses, Coffin had to write up a contract with Professor Elizabeth Lehr, Women's Studies Program Director Jen Riley and Director of Pathways, Ben Bauman in order to ensure that she was a good experimental candidate and dedicated to the program.

Her interest and involvement has continued to grow since she was



Samantha Coffin, first freshman to declare a WMS major with feminist activist Gloria Steinem.

first exposed to Women's Studies last semester. Her most notable moment was meeting activist-writer Gloria Steinem, who visited in honor of the newly approved WMS major. However, Coffin notes that her "favorite thing about Women's Studies are the women! The people you meet are incredible, as are the conferences."

Coffin has attended the Global Leadership Summit and has coordinated the WRC staff trip to the Women's Leadership Conference in Washington, DC which ran from March 8 to March 10. She is also currently coordinating the staff trip to the Civil Liberties and Public Policy (CLPP) conference which will take place from April 4 to 6.

Faculty Spotlight

Gerard Koot: First professor to teach women's history at UMD

Gerard M. Koot, Chairperson of the History Department, Chancellor Professor of History and Director of the Masters in Arts and Teaching program, taught the first women's history course at UMass Dartmouth in 1978.

Koot, who has been a professor at UMass since 1972, still has his syllabus from his "Intro to History" topics course, in which he decided to focus on the history of ideas of European women. In this 100 level course, the class discussed the works of important female philosophers and theorists, who he deemed "feminist pioneers," such as Betty Friedan's "Feminine Mystique" and Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex," while also exploring British history.

Professor Koot has taught dozens of women's history classes in his 36 year stretch at UMass Dartmouth, including two joint classes with History professor Betty Mitchell and English professor Margaret Miller. He remembers these classes as being his favorites, and says of Miller "She was very influential in my thinking about women's history."

He taught a course on "Women in Victorian England" multiple times with Miller before she retired in the 1980's. Shortly afterward, he began to co-teach an upper level seminar with Mitchell entitled "Biographies of American and European Women," which explored the biographies of 19th and 20th century female writers.

During his time as a women's history professor, Koot also created a new course in 1978, "History of European Women," which he notes is still being taught today.

He believes his work is more than amply supplemented by the Women's Studies program, which he deems "the most successful interdisciplinary program on campus." The program has "attracted a lot of good people" who

he believes will help educate the young women of today. He muses: "Young women are deceiving themselves into believing they can do anything they want, but it's not that easy....there is certainly more feminism needed." He adds, "There are more women in powerful positions in this world, but society is still basically male run. But it will take a few more generations to alter patriarchal attitude."

Of course, there have been many changes in Women's Studies over the years. Koot acknowledges that when he first began teaching women's history, not a lot was known *about* their history. There were a few "pioneers" whose ideas and theories were examined, but society had no sense of who women really were as a collective group. It wasn't until the early 1980's that demographic research was conducted and the lives of the everyday woman were explored.

The biggest shift in women's history courses is that more women's history is known, rather than just the ideas of a few "feminist pioneers." Koot comments, "In traditional history, all leaders are male. In social history, family is fundamental and women are fundamental to family." He explained that once social history was examined, sexuality, marriage and family structure became the primary focus of Women's Studies.

The Women's Studies program has certainly undergone many changes, itself, especially with the October, 2007 approval of the Women's Studies major. The success of the Women's Studies program would be not be possible without the efforts of educators such as Professor Koot, and he, also, is thankful to have been a part of the movement: "I learned a lot of new scholarship and began to feel strongly that history should not only be about dead men," he says.

Feminists have a similar agenda



Chairperson of the History Department, Gerard Koot, taught the first women's history course at UMass Dartmouth in 1978.

and as the years unfold, we continue to examine the past and present presence of women and incorporate them into all studies to make sure that history *isn't* all about dead men.

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Louise Gluck to honor *Siren* literary journal release party

Acclaimed poet and former Poet Laureate, Louise Glück, will be visiting UMass Dartmouth on Thursday, April 24 from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. in the Library Browsing Area. During her visit, Ms. Glück will read from her works, respond to questions from the audience, and provide a book signing.

Louise Glück is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *The Seven Ages*; *Vita Nova*, winner of The New Yorker Magazine's Book Award in Poetry; *Meadowlands*; *The Wild Iris*, which received the Pulitzer Prize and the Poetry Society of America's William Carlos Williams Award; *Ararat*, for which she received the Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry; and

The Triumph of Achilles, which received the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Boston Globe Literary Press Award, and the Poetry Society of America's Melville Kane Award. She has also published a collection of essays, *Proofs and Theories: Essays on Poetry*, which won the PEN/Martha Albrand Award for Nonfiction. Glück's tenth and most recent book of poetry is *Averno*, which was nominated for the National Book Award in 2006 and was listed by The New York Times Book Review as one of the 100 Notable Books of the Year.

Glück, who was born in 1943 and raised in Long Island, is known for her contemporary style of poetry, stunning imagery and

well-crafted "emotional language." She has many accomplishments and awards under her belt. She received the Pulitzer Prize in 1992 and took over the title Poet Laureate in 2003, directly after the well-known poet Billy Collins. She is currently a Writer-in-Residence at Yale University and was re-appointed as the judge for the Yale Series of Younger Poets in 2007. She is also a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and has been a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets.

We are extremely honored to host Ms. Glück's visit in conjunction with the release of UMass Dartmouth's women's literary magazine, *Siren*.

***Siren* literary journal release party!**

In Celebration of Women

April 24 from 4 to 5:30 p.m. in the Library Browsing Area

Featuring former Poet Laureate Louise Glück

WMS Events

2008 Vagina Monologues cast use their lips to educate on VDay

This year marks the 10th anniversary of writer Eve Ensler's national anti-violence campaign, VDay. The campaign aims to educate people across the nation about violence against women in conjunction with the performance of Ensler's Obie Award winning episodic play, "The Vagina Monologues."

This year's performance of "The Vagina Monologues" was directed by Senior English major Megan Gauthier and Junior English major Laura McHugh. The play, while including audience favorites such as "My Angry Vagina," "Because He Liked to Look at It" and "The Woman Who Loved to Make Vaginas Happy," had an additional edge to it this year. Ensler herself added a few new monologues, including the Spotlight monologue "Welcome to the Wetlands," in honor of the plight of New Orleans. She is hosting a celebration/benefit from April 11-12 in New Orleans to aid in

repairing the damaged area.

The directors chose to put a spin on the Monologues, as well, with the inclusion of cast personal monologues. All cast members wrote personal monologues about their own vagina experiences during a rehearsal, and the directors were so moved by the quality and range of topics that the monologues covered that they felt it would be silly NOT to share them with the UMD community.

Unfortunately, the cast had to cancel one of their shows due to bad weather conditions, but they bounced back the following night with a solid and unplanned performance, drawing in quite a large crowd, despite the short notice. Overall, the 2008 Monologues were strong and emotional, drawing on the talent of this year's 14 member cast. They were enjoyable and emotional for cast members and audience alike.



Photo courtesy of The Photographics Department

The 2008 "Vagina Monologues" cast.

Top row from left: Laura McHugh, Megan Gauthier, Katrina Semich, Hope Middleton, Anne Shaugnessy, Deanna Mustacio, Caitlin Barnett.

Middle row from left: Aubrey Ramsdell, Kendra Pereira, Katie Scanlon, Sephora Borges, Retha Charette.

Bottom row from left: Courtney Bradley, Amanda Cabral, Amy Desrosiers.

Seven UMD students attend National Women's Leadership Conference

From Saturday March 8 to Sunday March 9, UMass Dartmouth students Sherrie Andre, Samantha Coffin, Sean Connell, Megan Gauthier, Laura McHugh, Kendra Pereira and Swetha Polavarapu traveled to Washington D.C. for the National Young Women's Leadership Conference, sponsored by the Feminist Majority Foundation.

The event kicked off with a welcome and opening plenary session on the topic "Vote as if Your Life Depends on it," during which time the President of the FMF, Eleanor Smeal, as well as seven other prominent American women spoke about the importance of civic engagement and being involved in politics. The opening was followed by two sessions of optional workshops,

covering topics such as "Exposing Fake Clinics," "Media Tools to Frame the Debate" and "Skills Building: From Global Policy to Campus Action." The closing event of the day was a second plenary session about "Growing the Movement Online and through Creative Actions."

The second day began with an optional workshop, where attendees could choose between three different themed workshops. This was followed by a third plenary session entitled "Standing with Our Sisters," featuring guest speaker Dr. George Tiller, who is the Medical Director for Women's Health Care Services, and who has survived five attempts at murder for his dedication to women's health.

Attendees were then honored

to share their lunch with Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs-Jones, who spoke of perseverance and how to break into the world of politics. The closing session for the conference was a division of all attendees by region, during which time they were able to discuss their personal issues and ask questions of their FMF regional directors.

Overall, the event was incredibly informative and allowed all participants to learn about new issues and ideas that they could take back to their campuses and coordinate to help make the country a safer, better educated, fairer place, one step at a time.

Celebrating International Women's Day and Outstanding Women at UMD

On Friday, March 7th, about 50 faculty, staff and students gathered at the UMass Dartmouth Library in honor of the International Women's Day celebration and the 8th Outstanding Women Awards, sponsored by the Women's Resource Center, International Student & Scholar Center, Office of International & Study Exchange Programs and the Office of Civic Engagement & Service Learning.

The program began with a Panel Presentation entitled "Women Internationalizing Themselves," which was moderated by Susan Atkins, the Director of the

International & Study Exchange Programs. During this panel, women who had either come from another country to UMass Dartmouth, or who had traveled out of the country to study abroad talked about their international experiences.

The panel consisted of Megan Brenn-White, the Executive Director of the Hessen University Consortia; UMD student Lama Hassoun, who was born and raised in Lebanon; UMD student Caitlin Ellis, who studied abroad in France and UMD student Ngo Sze "Kennis" Chan, who was born and raised in Hong Kong.

Following the panel, Dr. Juli

Parker, Director of the Women's Resource Center, presented the 2008 Outstanding Women Awards to recipients Dr. Nancy O'Connor, a professor for the Biology Department; Megan Gauthier, a Senior Women's Studies minor; Osob Issa, who won a "Special International Perseverance Award" and a surprise "Outstanding Woman Staff Member" award was presented to Dr. Juli Parker.

All recipients were honored for their dedication to feminist activism, education and outreach, as well as their influence on the UMass Dartmouth community.

Fall '08 Course Highlights

Intro to Feminist Theory WMS 201

Prof. Juli Parker

This course will provide an overview of the different frameworks and movements within feminist theory, including radical, third wave and liberal. The goal of the course is to provide you with an introduction to the foundations of feminist theory, which we will accomplish through building critical reading and writing skills, developing online learning skills, demonstrating strong communication skills through class discussion and building research skills while writing a theoretical paper. We will examine works of theorists such as Adrienne Rich, bell hooks, Gloria Steinem and Simone deBeauvoir and figure out how their theories connect to larger feminist frameworks of theory and practice.

Politics of Welfare Reform WMS 216/ PSC 216

Prof. Heidi Berggren

The 1990's saw the beginning of a radical shift in welfare policy and "welfare" has come to mean so much more than the welfare issue itself. In this class, we will examine the relevant, historical, ideological, public-opinion, mass-media, partisan, interest-group and other factors which together comprise the politics of welfare and welfare reforms. We will examine data regarding the success of welfare policies; evaluate, reflect on and debate standards used for determining the level of success of welfare policies; analyze, reflect on and debate the roles played by ideas, values and prejudices in welfare reform debates and develop our own informed perspectives.

Seminar on Adrienne Rich ENL 403/ WMS 490

Prof. Jeannette Riley

Adrienne Rich is one of the most renowned and published poets in the United States. During our time together, we will read a great deal of both her poetry and prose as we seek to understand her place in American letters and the influence of her work upon readers, as well as the women's movement in the United States. Our readings will range from her earliest work to her latest, and we will supplement the readings with both videos and audio files, as well as various internet sites. In addition, we will rely upon scholarly research to help us develop a thorough understanding of Rich's poetics and the progression of her poetics over the last 50 years.

Gender and Society in Brazilian Cinema POR/WMS 371

Prof. Dario Borim

This course will explore cinematographic representations of gender identities and practices within social contexts. The goal of the course is to question assumptions regarding the way women are portrayed in media, to question the use of women's images as tools of political manipulation and national mythmaking, to offer alternative views on romance, parenthood, marriage and other domestic dynamics, to expand the understanding of homosexuality, homoeroticism, same-sex friendship and transgender identities and to help students familiarize themselves with critical and theoretical scholarship in the fields of cinema, popular culture, cultural history and gender studies.

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WMS Director's Report

Dear all,

As our newsletter recounts, we had an exciting February 2008 with our first ever fundraising event featuring Gloria Steinem. The day was a wonderful experience for the campus and local community as Gloria participated in a panel on Women's Studies and civic engagement with WMS Alumni; then, Gloria provided a talk at the fundraising dinner that drew in 200 people. I'm very pleased to report that the fundraising drive raised the needed \$25,000 to initiate an endowment for student scholarships in Women's Studies. An additional \$2,000 raised went to the Women's Resource Center Foundation Fund to support their work. The Women's Resource Center continues to be one of the strongest advocates of WMS on campus, and on behalf of the WMS Program, I extend my sincere appreciation for our collaborative relationship, and I look forward to our future collaborations.

I'd also like to share with you that Gloria Steinem explained to me that she committed to our event because she believes an endowment

for Women's Studies contributes to our mission and to our future. An endowment also helps to further institutionalize us within the academy. You can be a part of building that mission and future by contributing to the endowment as we continue to build toward our goal of \$100,000, which will enable us to offer 4 student scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$1,500, each on a yearly basis. So, please support us each year when you consider who you want to support with your charitable giving. Information on where to send your support is included in the newsletter (page 4).

Also, our next major event features Pulitzer prize winning, former American Poet Laureate Louise Glück on Thursday, April 24th, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. in the Claire T. Carney Library. Please join us for a reading and book signing from a wonderful poet, as well as the release of this year's *Siren*, the women's journal on campus.

Best wishes,
Jen Riley
Director, Women's Studies



Former Poet Laureate Louise Glück to visit UMD on April 24 in the Library Browsing Area from 4 to 5:30 p.m. in honor of the release of the women's literary journal, *Siren*.

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