

## DESCRIPTION OF CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN AND SOCIETY

### I. *History of the Center for the Study of Women and Society*

Early history: The Center for the Study of Women and Society (CSWS)<sup>1</sup> was started in 1977 by a group of Graduate Center faculty, including Professors Joan Kelly and Gerda Lerner (History), Cynthia Fuchs-Epstein, Judith Lorber and Gaye Tuchman (all Sociology). Its mission was the promotion of interdisciplinary feminist scholarship through sponsoring conferences, speakers, and individual research projects.<sup>2</sup> The early directors were Professors Susan Saegert (Psychology) 1977-8, Mary Parlee, (Psychology) 1979-83 followed by Professor Sue Zalk (Psychology) from 1984-93.

The Women's Studies Certificate Program: From the beginning, the organizers and members of the CSWS felt that there was a need for a Women's Studies Certificate Program (WSCP) to assure the intellectual integrity of the education opportunities provided doctoral students at the Graduate Center. The Certificate Program was approved in 1990, and from that point until October 1993, CSWS and WSCP had two separate heads: Professor Zalk was head of the Center and Professor Judith Lorber, Sociology, and then Professor Jane Marcus, English, served as Coordinators of the WSCP.

Combination of CSWS and WSCP and Coordinator/Directors: In October 1993, it was decided that there would be only one position for the Coordinator of WSCP and the Director of the CSWS. In 1993 it was also determined that there would be a Deputy Director of the Center, a recommendation that has never been implemented, though there was one Deputy Director (Professor David Kazanjian) who served with one course release for two years, and two faculty who were essentially Deputies (Norah Chase and Karen Miller) who donated their time. However for at least the past five years, there has been only one person doing the administration as both Coordinator of WSCP and Director of the CSWS with the support of an APO, Elizabeth Small, who has been with the WSCP/CSWS since 1993, and a college assistant providing 11 hours a week, currently Kery Chez, a graduate student in the English Program.

In 1994, Provost Geoffrey Marshall stated in writing that the combined position of Coordinator of the WSCP and Director of the CSWS "is a full-time appointment"; however, this has not been consistently implemented either, and is not the case at this time. The first year Professor Humpherys served as combined Coordinator/Director she

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<sup>1</sup> At the start the Center was called the Center for the Study of Women and Sex Roles, but by the time the By-laws were established, the name had been changed to the Center for the Study of Women and Society.

<sup>2</sup> The goals of the Center as delineated at its inception, were 1) To develop, encourage, and/or sponsor research projects in the study of women and society; 2) To provide assistance to undergraduate and graduate programs at the senior and the community colleges in the CUNY family for the development of course work and major and minor course of study related to women and society; 3) To develop and sponsor programs in community education on topics related to women and society; 4) To encourage and coordinate the development of doctoral courses related to women and society in appropriate disciplines as well as interdisciplinary courses of study related to women and society in the CUNY branches.

received one course release each semester, which meant she had to teach 15 hours or the equivalent of five courses. Currently, in her second year, she is receiving a two course release each semester. (This means that she must teach nine hours—three courses—over the course of the year, including at least one at her home college Lehman.)

The Graduate Center does support the WSCP/CSWS monetarily by providing an APO and a yearly \$15,000 grant which supports the Certificate/Center's activities and pays for a college assistant who gives 11 hours a week to the work of the WSCP/~~WSES~~. CSWS

Coordinators/Directors of the WSCP/CSWS: The term of office for the Coordinator/Director is three years and the position is to alternate between the Social Sciences and the Humanities.

Coordinators/Directors have been: Professor Joyce Gelb, Political Science (1993-1996); Professor Roslyn Bologh, Sociology, who served for one semester while Professor Gelb was on sabbatical. The next Coordinator/Director was Professor Electa Arenal, Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Studies (1996-2000) followed by Professor Patricia Clough, Sociology (2000-2006); Professor Catherine Silver, Sociology, served one year while Professor Clough was on leave. Professor Anne Humpherys, English, began as Coordinator/Director in July 2006. Her term will end June 2009.

## II. *Mission of the Center for the Study of Women and Society*

The mission of the Center's research agenda is the study of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class and nation in relationship to the experiences of women in societies around the world. Sixty-two faculty associates of the Graduate Center's Women's Studies Certificate Program provide the Center with a wide net of expertise in many disciplines and fields, and together the Center and the Certificate Program sponsor intellectual exchange, symposia and lectures among scholars within CUNY as well as with visiting scholars from around the world.

## III. *Advisory Committee and Advisory Mechanisms*

For a period of three years (1996-1999), there was a separate Advisory Board for the CSWS<sup>3</sup>, but other than that, the Advisory Board, made up of Graduate Center Women's Studies faculty and students, has served as the Advisory Board for both the WSCP and the CSWS. The by-laws of the WSCP call for equal numbers from the social sciences and the humanities on the Board. The six faculty members and two alternates (who serve for three years) of this Board are elected by all the faculty appointed to Women's Studies,

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<sup>3</sup> Members included Shifra Bronznick, Executive Vice-President Swig, Weiler & Arnow Management; Fortuna Calvo-Roth, President Coral Communications Group; Alice Cardona, Board of Trustees National Latinas' Caucus; Marian Chamberlain, The National Council for Research on Women; Elizabeth Crow, Editor-In-Chief *Mademoiselle Magazine*; Toni Fay, Vice-President Community Relations Time Warner; Sally Goodgold; Marcella Maxwell, Director of Public Relations Miracle Makers; Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Author; Shirley Lord Rosenthal, senior editor *Vogue Magazine*, and Wendy Wasserstein, playwright.

and the two students and two alternates (who serve for one year) by the students enrolled in the WSCP.

Current members are:

Faculty: Mimi Abramovitz (Social Welfare); Meena Alexander (English); Rachel Brownstein (English); Michelle Fine (Psychology); Cindi Katz (Sociology); Barbara Katz Rothman (Sociology), Nancy K. Miller (English); Francesca Sautman, (French). Joyce Gelb (Political Science) and Talia Schaffer (English) are alternate members who attend all meetings.

Students: Keridiana Chez (English); Jennifer Gaboury (Sociology); Antonia Levy (Sociology), Karen Weingarten (English). Leah Souffrant (English) is an alternate who attends all meeting.

The Advisory Board meets a minimum of once a semester but in practice two to three times as year. At these meetings, new faculty are approved, future events planned, and general issues about both the WSCP and CSWS discussed and responses developed.

## II. *Center Programs*<sup>4</sup>

- *College and Community Fellowship*: The Center houses the College and Community Fellowship (CCF), which supports ex-incarcerated women get college degrees as well as CCF's research component, the Community Leadership and Education After Reentry (CLEAR).
- *The Community Leadership and Education After Reentry*: :CLEAR is a program at CSWS begun in 2004. It seeks to develop informed leadership among formerly incarcerated women in New York to affect policy change by broadening the scope of paths to reentry and increasing opportunities for civic participation and leadership for formerly incarcerated women. CLEAR draws on the research activity of its members, formerly incarcerated women leaders and members of the Center for the Study of Women and Society, who conducted a six-month analysis of reentry policy and programming. CLEAR's academic researchers and formerly incarcerated women leaders have written an article based on this research which summarizes current reentry research and policies and proposes a critical shift in thinking about progressive policy reform.
- *The Activist Women's Voices Oral History Archive and Urban Fieldwork Internships*: This project documented the voices of unheralded activist women in community-based organizations. The archive and internships were established under the direction

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<sup>4</sup> This detailed description of CSWS Programs is for the two years, 2006-2008 that Professor Anne Humpherys has been Coordinator/Director. The year before she became Coordinator/Director (2005-2006) was the last year of one of WSCP/CSWS's projects—the Conviction Seminar, a faculty and student seminar—which aimed at linking the social activism of the College and Community Fellowship (sponsored by the CSWS) with academic studies and research goals. This was funded by a grant from Barbara Martinsons, the Racolin Foundation., which ended in June 2006.

of Professors Joyce Gelb and Patricia Laurence to create linkages between activist women and student and faculty researchers in the university. Students laid the groundwork for multimedia Oral History Workshops for both the community and the university, and over 40 archival interviews and oral histories were conducted. The Archive of these interviews is housed in the Mina Rees Library of the Graduate Center and was featured in the conference sponsored by the CSWS and the WSCP November 16, 2007 on "Activism and Academics." (See Appendix 1 for Brochure on the National Consortium for Women's Oral History.)

- *The Feminist Studies Group*, a student-run discussion and research group. The Feminist Studies Group sponsored seven speakers in the 2006-2007 year plus a major conference in 2006 on "Resentment In/Of Women's Studies" in 2006. The group also a major conference on Feminist Pedagogy every two years, the most recent being in Fall 2007. The WSCP/CSWS supports all these activities with both secretarial and monetary resources. ? ←
- *Women's Writing Women's Lives*: WWWL works to empower women biographers struggling to understand the lives of their women subjects. There are currently 60 members, including academics, journalists, and independent scholars, who meet eight times a year to discuss works in progress. Sessions are typically organized around particular themes or methodological problems.
- *Center for the Study of Women and Society's Library*. This is a small but unique collection of books about women and gender, many of them autographed copies, which is housed in the WSCP/CSWS office (room 5116). This library, partly due to the office move earlier in the year, was disorganized and not really usable since no one could know what was in it. Over the summer of 2007 the student assistant catalogued the library; and we now have a list of the books posted on the website of the Center's website. We are in the process of devising a method for students and faculty to search for and check out the books. The authors celebrated at the May 2007 luncheon donated their books to the library, and with the help of WSCP/CSWS, Professor Jane Marcus is investigating the donation of her major collection of feminist works, including one of the most complete Virginia Woolf archives in the world, to WSCP/CSWS and the Graduate Center. The WSCP/CSWS office does not have room for this unique collection, so we are investigating the possibilities of a special collection in the Graduate Center Mina Rees Library.
- *The WSCP/CSWS Speakers Series for the two years Fall 2006-Spring 2008*

There have been over the years many programs, scholars, seminars and projects sponsored by the CSWS. In the last three years, there have been 25 conferences and symposia 30 speakers, six films and other related activities. Highlights of the speakers Series over the last two years follow below.

- **Fall 2006 Speaker's Series** included a conference on 'The Future of Women's Studies at CUNY' which brought together women's studies faculty, students, and alumna, directors of women's centers, and other interested parties from all across the CUNY.
- **Spring 2007 Speakers Series** included the interdisciplinary student conference organized by the Feminist Studies Group and sponsored by the CSWS "Resentment In/Of Women's Studies with keynote speaker Rebecca Stringer (Gender Studies, University of Tago in Aotearoa, New Zealand, as well as a full day of papers by graduate students from all over the area.

On March 23, CSWS and the Feminist Press sponsored a well-attended conversation with Ellen Bravo on her book *Taking on the Big Boys, or Why Feminism is Good for Families, Business, and the Nation*. Chair of the session was Carole Jenkins, a former anchor of NBC News, and participants included Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Nickel and Dimed*.

We also sponsored the showing of an award winning film by Julia Newman "Archives of Activism and Into the Fire: American Women in the Spanish Civil War" and the Ninth Annual Beatrice Kachuck Lecture on Women in India, in which Dr. Angelie Ghandi, Honorary Director for Women's Studies, Jamia Millah Islamia, India, speaking on "Curbing Gender-Based Violence Through Experiments in Engaging Young Men."

At the end of the spring semester of 2007 the CSWS and the WSCP sponsored a "Celebration of CUNY Women Scholars and Scholarship" in which 19 faculty from across CUNY came to a luncheon with the books they had published over the past year and spoke briefly about them.

- **Fall 2007 Speakers Series**

We began the fall series with a Celebration of the Life of Tillie Olsen, co-sponsored with the Feminist Press, which included a film of the author's life and a presentation by her daughter Laurie.

The WSCP/CSWS sponsored the Feminist Study Group's second major conference on "What's Feminist about Feminist Pedagogy? October 12, a day of interdisciplinary presentations and panels from international, national, and local faculty and graduate students.

The WSCP/CSWS developed a program, "Films Lost and Round: The Women's Film Preservation Fund Tour which was followed by a panel discussion with speakers from WFPF, Heather Hendershot of the Graduate Center Certificate Program in Film Studies, and Patricia White, English and Film Studies, Swarthmore College.

With CCF the Center sponsored a major conference on November 28 on “Higher Education In and After Prison” and with many Centers and other organizations a two day conference on “The Politics of Religion and Sexuality.”

The biggest event was a conference on “**Activism and Academics**” on **November 16** which will brought together grass roots activists and academics who have published on related topics. Nine grass roots organizations, including Domestic Workers United, Girls Write Now, Sakhi for South Asian women, Sanctuary for Families and United for Peace and Justice, joined academics including Carol Giardina (History, Queens College), Dorothy Hodgson (Anthropology, Rutgers), Premilla Nadasen (History, Queens College) and Nancy K. Miller (English The Graduate Center) in in a day long discussion of the interchange between academic work and activist organizing

The semester ended with the annual Student Awards luncheon followed by a symposium of “Two Visions of U.S. Feminism,” with Professor Blanche Wiessen Cook speaking about Eleanor Roosevelt and Professor Linda Grasso, York College CUNY, on Georgia O’Keeffe.

- **Spring 2008 Speaker’s Series.**

With the Ph.D. Program in French and the Center for the Humanities, WSCP/CSWS organized a celebration of Marilyn Hacker, poet and translator, with some a number of poets and critics speaking about Hacker and reading from her work.

“Writing Across Borders: Asian Women Writers” with Meena Alexander, Jessica Hagedorn, and Kimiko Hahn, and moderated by Harold Augenbaum, co-sponsored with the Ph.D. Program in English, the Feminist Studies Group, the Post-colonial Studies Group, and the Center for the Humanities, brought together these writers in an informal and informative conversation.

“Arguing the Storm: Rediscovering the Voices of Yiddish Women Writers” celebrated the publication of the book by the same title published by the Feminist Press and included a conversation with Rhea Tregebov, poet and editor of the book and Kathryn Hellerstein (Yiddish and Jewish Studies, University of Pennsylvania), who wrote the introduction. The event was co-sponsored with the Feminist Press and the Center for Jewish Studies and Hadassah-Brandeis Institute.

The semester closed with the second Celebration of Women Scholars and Scholarship luncheon.

#### **IV. Institutional Publications:**

- *Women’s Studies Quarterly*

The Center houses the academic journal *Women's Studies Quarterly* (published by the Feminist Press) which publishes high level refereed articles and is published by the Feminist Press. Graduate Center faculty Cindy Katz and Nancy K. Miller are editors until June 2008 at which point Graduate Center Faculty Talia Schaffer and Virginia Pitts will take over. The Fall 2007 number was on "Activism" and the guest editors of this issue (Dorothy Hodgson and Ethel Brooks of Rutgers) were among the participants at the November 16, 2007 CSWS conference "Activism and Academics" co-sponsored with the WSCP. Other issues in the last two years include: 2006 vol. 34 (numbers 1&2) on Envy and numbers 3&4 on The Global and the Intimate; 2007 vol. 35 (numbers 1&2) on the Sexual Body and numbers 3&4 on Activisms. Volume 36 (numbers 1&2) on Witness is due in June 2008.

- An expanded 12-page *CSWS Newsletter* was produced in the spring 2008. (See Appendix 3 for a copy of the *Newsletter*).

#### IV. Outreach Efforts

- In spring 2007 we developed an event with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office "From Prison to Power, Lu Hisin-Lien, Vice President of Taiwan.
- The WSCP/CSWS is co-sponsoring with the Feminist Press a major celebration on the retirement from the Press of its founding publisher Florence Howe. This event will be at The New York Historical Society on May 12, 2008.
- In the last year we have updated the information on all the Women's Studies Programs and Centers at CUNY on the CSWS **website**. We continue to revise and add to the website; the most recent addition being a unique archive of visual and textual material related to Sor Juana, an early Mexican feminist. We plan to do a through review of the website in collaboration with our webmaster Heather Wiley in the 2008-2009 academic year.
- The director of the WSCP/CSWS is the convenor of the Women's Studies Discipline Council, which includes all directors and coordinators of Women's Studies Programs and Women's Centers across CUNY. The Council is in the process of planning a symposium on mentoring of women students for the Fall 2008 that will bring together the whole of the CUNY women's studies community in an effort to enhance services to women students. Nancy Berke, History LaGuardia Community College, is spearheading this event with the Director of WSCP/CSWS at the Graduate Center.
- The CSWS collaborates with the National Research Council on Women, and is a sponsor of their annual conference June 5-7, 2008 at NYU on "Hitting the Ground Running: Research, Activism, and Leadership for a New Era."

NCRW

- The CSWS is a participating member (Anne Humpherys represented WSCP/CSWS on the planning committee) for the annual Leadership Tools for Women Conference (June 8, 2008) organized by the Cornell University Institute for Community College Development.
- • Wthin the Graduate Center, WSCP/CSWS co-sponsors many events with the Feminist Press, the Center for the Humanities and a good number of Ph.D. Programs at the Graduate Center (i.e. Art History, English, History, History, Political Science, and Psychology, Sociology).

#### ***V. Computer resources; space and facility utilization; specialized equipment***

The Coordinator/Director, the Assistant Program Officer, Ms. Elizabeth Small, and the College Assistant all have computers in the office, and all have access to the central printers with xerox, faxing, and scanning capabilities. The Coordinator/Director and the APO also have desk printers. There is adequate room for the work spaces for the APO and the Coordinator/Director, but nonetheless, the new office space is cramped and does not have space for receptions or even small meetings. Thus for all receptions for the speakers series and for all meetings of any size, the CSWS and the WSCP have to scramble to find other rooms.

#### **PLANS FOR FUTURE**

- In the Spring 2008 semester the WSCP/CSWS began a new project to highlight the work of Graduate Center faculty and students in different programs and Centers who are working on women and gender-centered issues. In March 2008 to celebrate Women's History Month, the first of these presentations honored poet and translator Marilyn Hacker in the Ph.D. Program in French. We are the planning stage for a similar program to be co-sponsored with the Center for Jewish Studies in Fall 2008 which will highlight work being done at the Graduate Center on Judaism and women. The first event will be October 30, 2008, when Marcia Dubrow will talk about women cantors, and the second, still in development will be a talk by Professor Jack Jacobs, Political Science, on Jewish Polish women union activists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- The WSCP/CSWS is involved in the long-range planning, with the Center for the Humanities and other entitites, of two major conferences: 1. the Celebration of the tenth anniversary of the publisher Belladonna (Belladonna Series/Belladonna Books) with a two day conference September 24-5, 2009 on "Advancing Feminist Poetics and Activism", and 2. the bicentennial anniversary of Margaret Fuller May 6 and 7.
- The WSCP/CSWS is also in the very early stages of working with the Paul Russo of Central Administration of CUNY and the *New York Times* for a for a learning website on women's studies as part of the project at NYTimes.com/knowledge.

- As ever, we are planning for the WSCP/CSWS Speakers Series for 2008-2009 So far we have for Fall 2008 four or five speakers and a symposium, and for Spring 2009 a major conference co-sponsored with the new Fashion Studies Concentration.

## ISSUES

Administrative Support: As stated earlier, one person serves as coordinator of the Women's Studies Certificate Program AND Director of the Center for the Study of Women and Society. When the collapse of administrative responsibilities for the two entities occurred in the early 1990s several assurances were given to insure adequate administrative support for the combined position: first there would be a Deputy Director attached to the CSWS whose job would include fund-raising. This never happened. The next assurance was that the combined Coordinator/Director position would be a full-time position. That never happened either. As a result one person, who, if she has an appointment at one of the colleges, must teach a minimum of nine hours (a 2/1 teaching load), at least one of which has to be at the home college, must fulfill all the responsibilities of running the largest Certificate Program at the Graduate Center and all the demands of a Center to support research, to do outreach through programs and speakers, and to fund raise.

This doubling of demands has, among other things, given the additional teaching responsibilities, made it very difficult to recruit a new Coordinator/Director. Anne Humpherys took on the responsibility in June 2006 for one year at the request of Acting Provost Linda Edwards; that one year has stretched to three. As much as I have enjoyed the work of being Coordinator of the WSCP and Director of the CSWS, I have found the combination of being a teaching faculty member at two campuses, coordinator of a large Certificate Program, and Director of the CSWS (not to mention my own research commitments) a difficult and draining balancing act. With support from the APO Elizabeth Small and the college assistant, the WSCP/CSWS has continued to generate programs and support research, reach out to the larger of community of CUNY and the city in addition to preparing for two External Reviews plus a major revision of the curriculum of the WSCP and the initiation of new projects like the celebration of women scholars at CUNY. We have sponsored scholars and run a dissertation workshop for students working on gender issues. But one thing I have never managed to add into the mix has been fund raising. Based on my experience, the combined WSCP/CSWS position, to meet all the needs of the Certificate Program and the Center, should be a full-time position, though I myself would not have wanted to not teach at all, which suggests there ought to be an Assistant Director.

The issues of the expectations the Graduate Center has for the Coordinator/Director and the compensation for her work will need to be addressed before a new coordinator can be named in 2008-09.

Audience Development for Speaker's Series :

When the Center for the Study of Women and Society began its work in the early 1980s, the Graduate School and University Center were in the old 42<sup>nd</sup> street building and the CSWS was one of the major entities of the University Center to bring in speakers and sponsor conferences and other events, including research projects and seminars and projects funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and other sources. With the move of the Graduate Center to 365 Fifth Avenue and the addition of a number of new Centers, most importantly the Center for the Humanities, the number of public programs has grown dramatically as is evidenced by the difficulties of finding space at the Graduate Center for programs and events. The WSCP/CSWS has continued to bring in speakers and sponsor conferences, symposia, and other events at the same rate it has always done, but there is now much competition not only for space but also for audience. In the last few years the WSCP/CSWS has tried to address this squeeze of space (particularly since the recent move of our office has left us with no meeting space of any size of our own) and competing events by inviting various Programs, Centers, study groups, and others to co-sponsor events developed by the WSCP/CSWS and in turn by responding positively to requests from Programs, Centers, study groups, and the Feminist Press to co-sponsor and support events initiated by them. These collaborations have involved shared expenses and shared publicity, and have resulted in good-sized audiences. Our events with a single speaker and no co-sponsorship, however, have had smaller audiences, sometimes very small audiences indeed. While the successful co-sponsorships will continue and expand, I would also like to find ways to insure a reasonable audience for events that are more narrowly attractive. One obvious way is to develop distribution lists for groups and individuals outside the Graduate Center and CUNY itself, and advertising our programs to the larger New York audience through the press. This will be one of the projects that I hope to initiate in the next year. I also plan to revise the CSWS brochure and continue to update the WSCP/CSWS website

There will be a new director as of June 2009. It is my plan to have in place for the new person a revised and improved curriculum for the Women's Studies Certificate Program, plans for expanded publicity of our events, and the final arrangements for at least two major events—the Belladonna event on September 24-25, 2009 and the Margaret Fuller event May 6 and 7, 2010..I also hope to have a new CSWS brochure and an updated website

**APPENDICES**

1. Oral History Project Brochure
2. Posters for WSCP/CSWS Speakers Series for 2006-07; 2007-08
3. *Newsletter*