



Women's Studies Program

January 1980

Report for the Periodic Review Report to the Commission on Higher Education,
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools of the Women's Studies Program,
Brooklyn College

ACTIVITIES AND STRUCTURE, Fall 1975-1985.

1. Table of Organization

The Women's Studies Program at Brooklyn College was approved in June 1974 to offer a collateral major in Women's Studies within the Schools of Social Science and Humanities. The co-major requires 18 credits, including two introductory interdisciplinary courses, at least three electives from Women's Studies special topics courses and/or co-listed courses in various academic departments, and a capstone seminar in which a senior paper is written.

The Women's Studies Program is governed by an elected Steering Committee of 16 persons (originally 12, expanded in September 1976) which includes staff, students and faculty. The Steering Committee, which meets approximately every three weeks, is advised by a "Committee of the Whole" comprised of all interested women on campus which meets once a semester. Members of the Steering Committee rotate as coordinators of the Program, with the approval of the Deans. The Coordinator (or, in the past two co-coordinators) handles the day to day administration of the program, subject to Steering Committee review. Committees draw from members of the Steering Committee and include committees on grants, curriculum, interdepartmental relations, affirmative action, publicity and ad-hoc committees (on staffing, core-curriculum, etc).

Teaching faculty for the introductory courses (10.7 and 10.8), special topics (58 and 59) and senior seminar (83) are drawn from a number of departments in the Schools of Social Science and Humanities, most commonly: Anthropology, History, Psychology, Sociology and Africana Studies (School of Social Science); English, Art, Modern Languages and Philosophy (School of Humanities). Full-time faculty (tenured and untenured, instructors to full Professors), and part-time adjuncts have comprised the teaching staff. (See Chart I below for an analysis of staffing).

During the first four years of the program (1974-75 to 1977-78) the introductory courses were each team-taught by two instructors from different departments of the same school. This allowed for a valuable dialogue between two different academic (and often political) perspectives which was most beneficial to both the students and faculty involved. The practice was discontinued because of budgetary restraints, but it is hoped that it will be re-instated in the near future.

2. Program Development

While the major emphasis of the Women's Studies Program is the coordination of courses for co-majors and other interested students, from 1975-79 we have sponsored or participated in several conferences, developed and administered two grants, and are currently developing two further grants.

Conferences: 1) "Strategies for Survival: Women's Studies Conference", December 1975: was a week-end conference of the New York State Women's Studies Association, co-sponsored by and held at Brooklyn College.

2) "The University: Frontier or Backwater for Women": a symposium and open discussion was also sponsored by the New York State Women's Studies Association and held at Brooklyn College, November 21, 1977. (see program attached)

3) "Career Day, April 10, 1978: a day-long event with numerous panels attended by several hundred high-school students as well as Brooklyn College students (see program attached)

4) "Keeping Women's Studies Honest": Regional meetings of the SE region of the New York State Women's Studies Association, held at Brooklyn College, November 3, 1979 AND continued (by popular demand): January 19, 1980.

Members of the Steering Committee have also regularly attended regional and national meetings of the Women's Studies Association. Most recently the national meetings in Lawrence, Kansas in June 1979 were attended by: Gertrude Berger, Pamella Farley and Sylvia Vitale. Pamella Farley attended as a member of the Coordinating Council and was also a member of the Delegate Assembly. She chaired the important panel on "Women's Studies and the Community" and delivered a paper, "Lesbian Writings" in the session, "Reading Our Voices: Lesbian Literature." Gertrude Berger was a speaker on the topic "Combating Sexism in the High Schools."

It should be mentioned here that the faculty of the Brooklyn College Women's Studies Program have, over the past six years, played a most dynamic part in the development of the National Women's Studies Association, participating in the initial debates about the structure of the organization (a focus of the December 1975 conference at Brooklyn College), developing the regional organization and counselling other faculty interested in developing women's studies programs on many other campuses. The faculty have presented dozens of workshops and papers at numerous feminist meetings over the years. Documentation is available and would take up several pages. Just one example: Renate Bridenthal, Pamella Farley and Catherine Silver, faculty in Women's Studies are all charter members of the Columbia University seminar on "Women and Society" which discusses current theoretical developments in feminist studies.

As we were one of the first Women's Studies Program in the nation many other branches of both CUNY and beyond have contacted us for extensive advice on curriculum development, administrative structure, etc. Our leadership

in this area is expanding with our current development of a grant proposal to Women's Educational Equity for faculty symposium to jointly study the woman's movement and the relationship between sexism, homophobia, racism and ageism.

Grants: 1) PROJECT CHANCE: Alternatives for Women 7/75-6/78. This grant, co-sponsored with the Women's Center, was funded by HEW/Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education and created a new program at Brooklyn College to encourage and assist older returning women students in the difficult adjustment to being a student. The Program included re-entry courses offered without credit at community sites, combining counseling with basic skills (this aspect was funded by the New York Community Trust); and credit courses at the community sites which provided a transition for women from their communities to the campus. In its second year the project enrolled over 100 women in full-time programs at Brooklyn College providing additional counselling on campus. At the end of the grant (June 1978) the School of Continuing Higher Education incorporated Project Chance into its special programs, recognizing its ability to funnel returning women students into the programs of the college.

2) Brooklyn College Institute in Women's Studies for Secondary School Faculty. (August 1979 --). HEW/FIPSE has funded the Women's Studies Program and the School of Education to create this Institute to train high school teachers to teach women's studies in their respective schools. A summer institute, directed by Professor Gertrude Berger, is planned for July 1980 with plenary sessions, seminars, and workshop sessions, with the following objectives: To integrate the curriculum in English, history and modern languages with the contributions and experiences of women, to study recent scholarship in women's studies, to explore innovative methodologies, to develop audio visual materials, lesson plans and independent study kits in participant's subject discipline, to devise ways to change sexist practices in the schools.

It is anticipated that the grant may be renewed to sponsor a second institute in the summer of 1981. A supplementary grant is being developed to evaluate the effect of Women's Studies on the high school curriculum on career aspirations of adolescent females.

Program Development, 1980-85: As stated above a grant application is being developed for the establishment of both faculty symposia and two summer institutes for Brooklyn College and secondly New York and New Jersey college teachers who have taught or would like to teach interdisciplinary women's studies courses. Contacts are being made with the New York Women's Studies Association for possible endorsement and cooperation with this grant. These sessions would explore common concerns of feminist educators and develop curriculum and video materials for use at Brooklyn College and throughout the region.

We are also beginning to consider the possibilities of developing graduate courses but at present have put our energies into expanding the necessary interdisciplinary core courses needed for undergraduate co-majors (see more on curriculum below).

3. Curricula Changes, Innovations

During the fall semester 1979 the Curriculum Committee of the Women's

Studies Program did an in-depth study of course offerings within the college which focus on women and recognize the clear absence of courses in a number of areas, most specifically women's folk arts, lesbianism and lesbian literature, an integrated perspective on the political economy of women in the United States, and the complex issue of women and violence. Other areas such as women and religion, women and media, women and the law also need to be developed in the future but the first four were chosen as the most pressing issues. In all cases there has been much recent new research in the areas and much student interest. Four courses were developed and approved by the Curriculum Planning Council of the School of Social Science. One of the courses (Women's Studies 32) will be voted on by the School of Humanities, CPC in February 1980, and we anticipate consideration by the college Curriculum Committee and Faculty Council during the spring semester 1980. The approval of these courses will significantly strengthen the offerings to Brooklyn College students in women's studies.

The course descriptions are as below:

Women's Studies 32: WomenFolk Culture: Creative records of American Women's Experience in music and the arts.

3 credits; 3 hours

Aspects of American women's experience reclaimed from their own records in arts, crafts, public and private writing and folk songs. How criteria have been established for defining "art"; the social influence which encouraged women to limit themselves to certain "acceptable" media. Contemporary validation of women's creativity. Readings, slide presentation and audio and video presentations.

Women's Studies 34: Reclaiming Herstory: Realities of Lesbian Experience.
3 credits; 3 hours

Emergence of the historically invisible woman from closets and codes to creativity and community; strategies for survival under patriarchy; the struggle for self-experience; the feminist movement and implications for feminist theory; from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Women's Studies 36: Sex, Power, and Money: a Political Economy of Women in U.S. Society

3 credits; 3 hours

Economic and political analysis of women's power in U.S. society: women as paid workers in the formal economic structure and as unpaid workers in the parallel home economy: women as subjects and objects of decision-making where the economic and political structures intersect; social class, gender, and race in the allocation of economic and political power; recent challenges to the legal and political system by women organized against inequality. Specific issues will provide a focus for research: ERA, Affirmative Action, equal pay, displaced homemakers, battered women, welfare rights, productive rights, etc.

Women's Studies 37: Women and Violence: A Feminist Perspective
3 credits; 3 hours

A discussion of what violence is; theories of violence; theories specifically related to domestic violence; cultural attitudes toward violence as seen in literature and art; differences in patterns of violence to women and by women and inter-societal violence; specific case studies of violence including rape, kidnapping, wife-battery, child-abuse, femicide and pornography; sex differences and sexual politics as a theory of violence; women's actions against violence.

The Curriculum Committee is also considering the possibility of offering, on an experimental basis, a six credit combined introductory course, arranged by topics, including materials from social science, humanities, and performing arts. If successful this course might replace the current two, three-credit introductory courses, or be offered as a second option.

Decisions concerning other new courses and graduate courses will be made after Faculty Council has acted on the current considerations.

4. Enrollment

From the fall of 1974 to spring 1978 the Women's Studies Program offered two to four sections of the introductory courses drawing 44 to 103 students (exact figures below), averaging 27 per course. Day sessions have tended to fill faster and fuller than evening sessions, fall faster than spring and social science faster than humanities, but the interest has always been steady. One indication of the continued interest in women's studies is also shown in the enrollment in co-listed courses which from fall '74 to spring '78 averaged around 700 in 7 to 17 electives (16-28 sections).

It is most encouraging to note that for the past three semesters the interest in women's studies courses has significantly increased with enrollment of 124 in 4 courses (Fall 1978), 122 in 3 courses (Spring 1979) to a high of 160 students in SIX introductory courses in the fall semester 1979, just ending. The average per course is 30 students for the past 3 semesters, but we increased the introductory course offerings up to 6 this semester for a total of 160 students). This increase in the number of students taking Women's Studies introductory courses is at a time when many other departments are experiencing a significant decrease; in fact the co-listed electives are slightly off. We feel that this increase will maintain itself because of the growing concern for quality in feminist studies not always available in co-listed courses, or other offerings in the college.

Comparative Enrollment Figures: 1974 - 1979

Fall 1974	3 Introductory Courses	85
	7 Electives (22 sections)	<u>776</u>
		861
Spring 1975	3 Introductory Courses	88
	8 Electives (19 sections)	<u>769</u>
		857
Fall 1975	4 Introductory Courses	120
	5 Electives (16 sections)	<u>526</u>
		646
Spring 1976	2 Introductory Courses	44
	(elective enrollment figures not available)	
Fall 1976	4 Introductory Courses	109
	10 Electives (20 sections)	<u>742</u>
		851
Spring 1977	4 Introductory Courses	95
	11 Electives (19 sections)	<u>569</u>
		664
Fall 1977	3 Introductory Courses	86
	17 Electives (28 sections)	<u>792</u>
		878
Spring 1978	4 Introductory Courses	103
	14 Electives (29 sections)	703
	1 Senior Seminar	<u>8</u>
		814
Fall 1978	4 Introductory Courses	124
	1 Special Topics Course	24
	10 Electives (21 sections)	<u>631</u>
		779
Spring 1979	3 Introductory Courses	122
	1 Small College Program	18
	14 Electives (27 sections)	<u>680</u>
		820
Fall 1979	6 Introductory Courses	160
	12 Electives (21 sections)	<u>653</u>
		813

5. Faculty

As stated in the "Table of Organization" section, the teaching faculty for the introductory, special topics and senior seminar courses offered by the Women's Studies Program are drawn from a number of departments, most commonly: Anthropology, History, Psychology, Sociology (School of Social Science); English, Art, Modern Languages and Philosophy (School of Humanities). *

In the early years of the program there were more adjuncts and untenured faculty involved in the program than today, for as the program has matured and some of the faculty initially active have been tenured (several of the younger original faculty were non-reappointed) the status distribution has changed. During the fall semester 1979 the teaching staff consisted of one full professor (promoted this semester); 1 tenured Associate Professor, 1 tenured Assistant Professor, 1 untenured Assistant Professor and 1 adjunct lecturer, who has taught in the program for four years. We have been pleased with a growing interest among the maturer faculty to establish ties with the Women's Studies Program and anticipate a healthy growth during the next few years with a stress on internal education and re-education of faculty initially trained in other disciplines.

In the past years the process of selecting faculty to teach women's studies has reflected both faculty interest and the cooperativeness (or lack of cooperation) of department chairpersons in the Schools of Humanities and Social Science, and the Deans, to release faculty (often in return for lump sums for adjunct replacements, but sometimes without). As Brooklyn College approaches a period with a new structure and Women's Studies enters into new relations -- possibly placed directly under the Office of the Vice President, possibly in some other arrangement -- one important concern of the program is the need to regularize and formalize the process of obtaining release of faculty from departments to teach courses in and to administer the program. Indeed this is one of the first orders of business.

Another problem for discussion in considering our place in a new structure is our concern for a validated input into promotion and tenure decisions of faculty who (while they have lines in other departments) have been active in the Women's Studies Program. If a vote is not appropriate given Board of Higher Education guidelines at least a formal procedure whereby we would be allowed to present a statement to the relevant subcommittees would be appropriate and indeed seems to us only proper.

Similarly given the strength of traditional departments in Faculty Council (with a chairperson and representative) as well as members at large, it seems only democratic to consider enfranchisement for Women's Studies. We certainly have valid input on curriculum, concerns of students and school structure (and all matters considered by Faculty Council) and indeed are a mini-department in all ways except for the formal structure.

6. Research Activity

Involvement in the Women's Studies Program has often had an invigorating effect on the research interests of faculty from many departments, either encouraging new lines of research or re-validating research begun along more traditional lines. Since 1975, 32 different faculty members have taught with the Program; it would be too lengthy to elaborate on the research of each of them and a number are no longer with the program. Instead we list the faculty who are currently (Fall 1979) teaching the introductory sections of the Women's Studies Program. Such a choice does not include the impressive work of Renate Bridenthal who has edited Becoming Visible: Women in European History and given numerous papers on issues concerning German women, and the nature of the family, nor Gertrude Berger's work in the field of education, nor others, but it does reflect a sample of the important work being done in Women's Studies. (More complete data is of course available on request).

Faculty teaching 10.7 Fall 1979:

Patricia Lander
Sydelle Levy

Faculty teaching 10.8 Fall 1979:

Claudette Charbonneau
Pamella Farley
Doris Meyer

Patricia Lander - Her original research in Finland stressed political and social organization in a farming/factory community. Contact with Women's Studies provoked her to re-analyze some of the material in terms of the role of women in the industrialization of Finland, and the effect on women of changing economic and social policies from 1940-80. Similarly her research in Park Slope, Brooklyn was greatly modified, (in an invigorating way) by discussions with faculty at Women's Studies and noted the impact of self-concepts of women on their concepts of neighborhood. More recently Lander has begun preliminary research on the issue of "turning points" in women's lives: do they exist?; how are they conceptualized by individuals and by social scientists?; do they differ between ^{alone} and women in partnerships, mothers or non-mothers, etc.

Sydelle Levy - Her original anthropological community study of the Lubavitcher Hassidim was re-focused by the discipline of women's studies to issues of women's self-concepts, role in religion and community life. Levy has also been concerned with concepts of ethnicity in general and how women may both reinforce them and create changes. Her research on the politics of local Brooklyn school Board also noted the importance of mothers as political parents.

Claudette Charbonneau - Her original study of European literature has been expanded by the Women's Movement to include American and contemporary subjects such as feminist theatre and film criticism. In the past year she has written three pieces fit for inclusion in any women's studies course: review of "Violette" (Jump Cut, winter 1979); "The N.Y. Feminist Theatre Troupe: a Look Back," (with L. Winer), chapter in Women in American Theatre, in press; and "Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre: A Challenge to Conventional American Assumptions," a paper for the Conference, "American Women in the Arts, 1880-1980" (University of Pittsburgh, March, 1980). She is also working with Patricia Lander on research on "turning points" showing the interdisciplinary exchange available in the Women's Studies Program.

Pamella Farley's work in American literature reflects an integration of feminist studies and literary analysis. Since her early research on the image of women in selected works of Hemingway and Fitzgerald she has focused on the important unwritten history of Lesbian Literature. She developed significant materials for teaching a course on the subject at Barnard College during the spring of 1979 which could be published as a needed text in this area.

Doris Meyer - Her important work on the life of Victoria O'Campo has appeared as Victoria O'Campo: Against the Wind and the Tide (New York: George Braziller, Inc.,) 1979 and is an excellent example of the cross-fertilization between the fields of Women's Studies and Modern Languages and Literature.

All of the faculty mentioned above (and others on the Steering Committee) somehow manage to continue to do research while serving on committees of both the Women's Studies Program and their departments, a situation which can be both overly demanding but rewarding and not acknowledged often enough.

7. Student Involvement

The document which created the Women's Studies Program in 1974 calls for an elected Student/Faculty Committee, and indeed since the first meeting of the Steering Committee there has been an attempt made to have equal student representation. A number of students in Women's Studies courses have indeed been active on the Steering Committee, subcommittees and as delegates to regional conferences. In recent semesters the enthusiasm of the students has certainly been maintained but there has been some difficulty maintaining an equal balance of students to faculty. We are concerned with this situation and feel that it is a reflection of the nature of the student body: often working, often with family obligations and sometimes intimidated by the complexities of our meetings. During the fall semester 1979 we had an orientation meeting for students to explain the working of our committees and will continue to attempt to integrate students into the governance of the Women's Studies Program.

This fall 1979 semester has been most exciting however in the enthusiasm with which a group of students has begun to explore the possibilities of producing a woman's newspaper for the Brooklyn College community: HERIZONS. They have worked toward a production date for the first issue: March 1980, and will, surely succeed, at some level to produce a significant challenge to the male-biased KINGSMAN (whose name is much too appropriate).

8. Self-study

The Women's Studies Program is in a continual state of self-study, through team-teaching, observations of each other, student evaluations of faculty and courses, faculty meetings and "criticism/self-criticism" endings to formal Steering Committee meetings, and periodic "retreats" (day-long meetings off campus). Steering Committee meetings are continually discussing priorities and attendance at meetings of the New York State and National Women's Studies Association also raises issues which are re-introduced into the program.

Our main obstacle to a more consistent self-study has always been the pressure of time, with faculty assignments in both the program and in a department. In response to this pressure we are drafting a grant application to HEW/FIPSE to allow for released time for 15 Brooklyn College faculty members (who have taught women's studies or have expressed a sincere interest in doing so in the near future) to meet on a regular basis to study the women's movement and the issues it raises and how they relate to courses in women's studies.

STAFFING PATTERNS, Women's Studies Program
10.7 and 10.8, 83

	F'74	S'75	F'75	S'76	F'76	S'77	F'77	S'78	F'78	S'79	F'79	S'80	TOTAL
Tenured Full Professor											1	1	2
Tenured Associate Professor				1							1	2	4
Untenured Assoc. Professor									1				1
Tenured Assistant Professor										1		1	2
Untenured Assist. Professor	5	4	4	1	3	2		2		1	1	1	24
Untenured Instructor/full-time	1	1	1				1						4
Lecturer, full-time			1			1				1			3
Adjunct Asst. Professor													0
Adjunct Instructor	1	4	1	5	3	2	3	3	2	1	1		26

Summer staffing is not included - often adjunct instructors.