

Cheer, Cheer for Feminism!

Lauren Curatolo, president of Feminist Action at Middlebury, defies a prevalent stereotype that cheerleaders can't be feminists.

“You are a cheerleader and a feminist? Is that even possible?” I get this question too often for it to be funny anymore. There exists a very disturbing misconception about feminism. For many people, feminism is just an infectious and contagious “thing,” like the plague. If you have it, you CANNOT spread it, and cheerleading is perhaps the one thing that is so public that people cringe when they find out I do both (that is, if he/she does not understand feminism or cheerleading).



The Middlebury cheer team in action. Lauren Curatolo is the second one on the left.

Can a feminist be that “cool”?

Can a feminist put on a short skirt and show her legs? Can a feminist show spirit and be enthusiastic about anything other than fighting for women’s rights? The answer is an overwhelming “YES!” The beauty of cheerleading is that it is the ultimate gender performance. When I apply my make-up, (yes, I wear make-up, too!), put on my short cheer skirt, and do my hair, I am performing my gender in the most obvious of ways. Part of me is doing so mockingly; another part of me is embracing the fact that I am a woman, and can choose the ways in which I express my sexuality, and my athleticism. Beyond that, let me also say that the cheerleaders at Middlebury are perhaps some of the most talented and intelligent people I have met. They are passionate and creative, witty and daring, loving and strong. I will admit that I never cheered in high school because I thought it was completely superficial, and it was a culture with which I never wanted to be associated. The cheerleaders in high school

were thought to be “airheads” and “sluts.” I, too, thought so, cringing at the very thought of even talking to a cheerleader. At that time, I was also not a self-proclaimed feminist.

Looking back on that experience, I feel ashamed because while I chose to play soccer, others chose to cheer, and who am I to say what a person can and cannot do athletically?

The major problem underlying all of this stems from the fact that stereotypes have largely dictated how individuals view the world, and view certain groups of people. I am a feminist, and so I have to deal with the prejudices people have against feminists; and I am a cheerleader, which means I have to endure the stereotypes of being one as well. The fact that the cheer team has only one male member this year is a testament to how “off-limits” cheering has be-

come to men. Perhaps men at Middlebury are not as progressive as I would have hoped; or, maybe stereotypes are that strong, and that pervasive, that a man would be committing social suicide if he cheered. I therefore challenge everyone: escape stereotypes and embrace reality!

After facilitating Feminist Action at Middlebury meetings, I run to cheer practice. It is not about what you do, it is about who you are, and for what you stand. I am a cheerleader, and I am a feminist; if this is too overwhelming for you, call me a contradiction, but I will just call myself a WOMAN!

Karin Hanta, Editor khanta@middlebury.edu

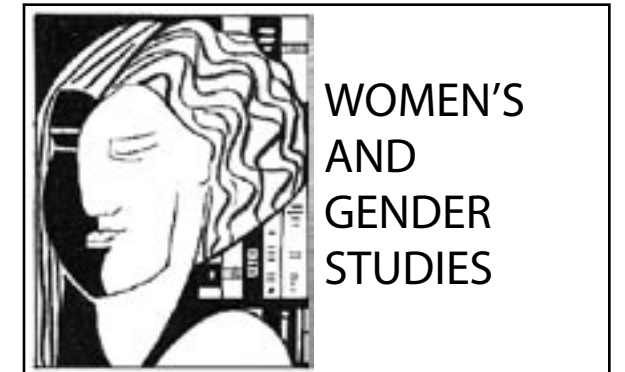
Editor’s Note

Dear faculty and staff members,
dear students,

I am always amazed at how much this job inspires me. Throughout the semester, I have witnessed some acts of outstanding commitment to social causes.

In early September, I forwarded a mail from WomenSafe to Feminist Action at Middlebury and Women of Color. WomenSafe, the local shelter for the prevention of domestic and sexual violence, was looking for students to perform in an educational video. Lauren Curatolo, Assia Elgouacem, Darcel Williams, Megan Scott, Trinity Gaddy, and Charzetta Nixon rose to the task. In spite of a heavy courseload at the college, they devoted their free time to bringing “Myths and Realities of Domestic Violence” to the stage. Kudos to all the performers! The video will be used to educate young Vermonters about what constitutes sexual and domestic abuse in an effort to prevent it in the future.

Artist Patricia Le Bon Herb has set a goal for herself as well: over the next few years, she wants to raise \$10,000 for WomenSafe. In early November, Patty opened an exhibit of her work at Katy and Steve Abbott’s home, the Ross Commons Deanery. Twenty percent of her sales went to the organization, which came to a total of \$500. Patty also produced a beautiful selection of greeting cards. If you are looking for a unique way to reach out to your friends and family and would like to support WomenSafe, contact Patty at plherb@hotmail.com or check out www.lebonherbart.com. Thanks to Katy and Steve for hosting a reception that lived up to SoHo standards! In the spring Patty will design and edit a cookbook with recipes from local women, the proceeds of which will go to the organization as well.



The Amnesty Symposium on Human Trafficking was a real eye-opener for me this semester. Coming from a country where prostitution is legal, I accepted it as a fact of life and gave little thought to the plight of women in prostitution in developing countries. What became clear to me and many other participants in the symposium is that prostitution is a modern form of slavery. According to United Nations reports, it has affected a total of 20 million women and children worldwide. Trafficking is a big business. It yields a higher return than drug trafficking, generating \$5 to 7 billion annually. In contrast to punishments for drug and arms trafficking, the penalties for human trafficking are not as harsh in many countries, however. A lot of work remains to be done. In this issue you will find more information on the subject.

This semester, I have also been impressed by the creative forces of poet Anne Babson and composer Su Lian Tan. Their collaboration, the opera “Upbringing,” an account of Su’s grandmother’s life in imperial China, bears testament to the fact of what great work two women can achieve when left with nothing to worry about at an artists’ retreat – Yaddo in their case.

I hope you will replenish all your energy over winter break. See you back in full force in January!

All the best,
Karin Hanta

WAGS SPRING COURSES

WAGS 0200 Foundations in WAGS

We will use the interdisciplinary nature of women's and gender studies to explore three or four topics from a variety of perspectives. Our study of each topic will be informed by readings in a wide range of fields. A section on women in the arts might include readings in art history, musicology, theatre and dance history, and literary theory. The course is an introduction to the entire field of women's and gender studies, as well as a detailed exploration of several important areas of our culture. 3 hrs. lect. SOC CMP (S. Moorti)

WAGS/SOAN 0262 Mobile Women: Transnational Work Patterns

The course examines women's work in the formal labor sectors to offer a critical perspective on contemporary local and global patterns. The materials will cover concerns central to women in the U.S. such as the glass ceiling and the wage gap. The course will also offer a transnational perspective through an analysis of the central role migrant female laborers have come to play in the global economy. This section will cover issues such as the traffic in domestic workers, nannies, and women in prostitution. We will interrogate how feminist theories are able to accommodate the uneven development of women's rights on the global and local levels. (S. Moorti)

WAGS/ENGL 0114 Reading Women's Writing

Why and how do women write? Does literary history reveal distinctive styles, patterns, and continuities in the works of female authors? We will begin to address these questions through our close reading of a wide variety of women's literature in English from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. Secondary readings will reflect on the concept of gender as a central organizing principle. Employing various methods of literary analysis, the course will address issues of interest to students in a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, and history, as well as literature. 3 hrs. lect./3 hrs. disc. LIT (S. Cassarino)

WAGS/WRPR 0201 Writing Across Differences

This course will explore the many choices we face as speakers and writers when communicating across human differences such as race, gender, sexuality and class. Organized by literary genres, and drawing on writers such as Julia Alvarez, Bell Hooks, Dorothy Allison, Martin Luther King, Barbara McIntosh, Junot Diaz, Jamaica Kincaid, Leslie Marmon Silko and others, the class will analyze and produce a range of works that employ diverse methods of argument and inquiry, including personal narrative, reasoning and analysis, empirical research, fieldwork, and poetic expression. As writers we will create personal and public domains for our work, using everything from scratchpads to weblogs. Students will respond to one another's work, creating a writing community that is both supportive and challenging. 3 hrs. lect./disc. ART LIT (C. Wright)

WAGS/ENGL 0233 Telling Stories: Narrative and Feminist Ethnography

This interdisciplinary course will hold as its unifying theme the concept of narrative and critical intertextuality. In the first half of the course we will read widely from theories of narrative in both the social sciences and the humanities in order to become thoroughly grounded in feminist methods through the lens of narrative study. In the second half of the course we will apply these theories to the close reading of several feminist interdisciplinary works in anthropology. Readings may include Spivak, Ifekunigwe, Smith, Boyce Davies, Anzaldúa, Benjamin, Marcuse, Althusser, Locke (I. Kerlee)

WAGS/RELI 0290 Women's Religious Life and Thought: The Female Pursuit of God in Late Antiquity and Byzantium

This course will explore the female religious experience in Greco-Roman antiquity and Early Christianity. We shall trace the transition from the mystery religions of Demeter and Isis in the Eastern Mediterranean to the cult of Mary the Mother of God (Theotokos) and the worship of female saints. Drawing on a wide range of sources, we shall study the varieties of female devotion and examine the roles available to women in the early Church: deaconesses and desert mothers, monastics and martyrs, poets and rulers. Different theoretical approaches will enable us

CALENDAR OF EVENTS WINTER/SPRING TERM

Wednesday, January 12, 4:30 p.m.

R. A. Jones '59 House Conference Room

"Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt": Fanny Mendelssohn's Wilhelm-Meister Songs as a Chiffre for Female Creativity in 19th Century German Culture."

Lecture by Bettina Matthias (German Dept.)

Tuesday, January 18, 12:15 p.m.

Chellis House

"The Real 'Sister Act': Spiritual, Social and Intellectual Dimensions of Being A Roman Catholic Sister Today."

Brownbag lunch talk by Diane Tomkinson (Religion Dept.) in the "Life of the Mind" lecture series. Coffee and deserts will be provided.

Thursday, January 20, 4:30 p.m.

Bicentennial Hall 104

"Painted Nuns: Live, Dead and Learned."

Lecture by Nina Scott, Professor of Spanish at Amherst University. This illustrated lecture features the art of portraiture of nuns, one of the most important social groups in colonial Spanish America.

Monday, February 14, 7:30 and 9:30 p.m.

McCullough

"The Vagina Monologues."

Student performance of Eve Ensler's play directed by Eliza Hulme and Rebecca Kanengiser. Silent auction of works by local and student artists to benefit WomenSafe.

Tuesday, February 22, 4:30 p.m.

Johnson 304

"How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?" Fashioning the Virgin in Renaissance Venice,"

Lecture by Katy Smith Abbott, Department of History of Art and Architecture.

Friday, March 4, 4:30 p.m.

110 Sunderland Building

"Amnesia Time: the Films of Marjorie Keller."

Lecture by Robin Blaetz, Associate Professor and Chair of the Film Studies Program at Mount Holyoke College.

Wednesday, March 9, 12:15 p.m.

Chellis House

"Feminist Methods Revisited: Understanding Identidad in the Global Age."

Brownbag lunch talk by Northeastern Consortium Fellow Ime Kerlee (WAGS/English Dept.) in the "Life of the Mind" lecture series. Coffee and deserts will be provided.

Monday, March 14, 4:30 p.m.

Warner Hemicycle

"Martin Luther King and Muhammad Ali, Bigger Thomas and Ernest Gaines: The Conundrum of the Prison in Black Men's Literature and Culture."

Lecture by Keith Clark, Professor of English, George Mason University.

April 7, 2005 - April 10, 2005

FAM Symposium:

"Art as Activism: Exploring the Intersection of Rape, Pornography and Violence."

Details TBA.

In Her Own Words: Trinh T. Minh-Ha

On November 11, Professor Trinh T. Minh-Ha from Berkeley University gave a lecture and showed her latest movie “Night Passage” at Middlebury College. Here are some excerpts from her talk “Boundary Event.”

“An adequate way to open a discussion of my work is to refer to it as ‘boundary events.’ For me, what is cinematic, poetic and political thrives at the boundary of cinema. Yet very few artworks deal with the boundary of art (...) My films are all in a way experiences of limits. And each is realized at the threshold of several cultures, genres and events such as visual and musical. Each constitutes in its own way an investigation of these thresholds and if none of them are made to respond once and for all to the question ‘What is the film about?’ they have all hopefully contributed to open a space for creating experiences and critical reflections on cinema, art, (...) and cultural politics.

In experimenting with words, and images, I find myself constantly struggling with the limits of both languages and images. Certain viewers have related to my films as to musical scores. Others have repeatedly used the terms ‘poetic,’ ‘sculptural,’ ‘spatial,’ and ‘architectural.’ The film ‘Naked Spaces: Living is Round’ has been compared to a Indian musical *raga*, while ‘Reassemblage’ was said in its use of silences to induce in the viewers a state where they see sounds and hear images. Form and content are inseparable in my work, for they are both equally historical and plastic. Here reality in its social and historical dimension is not material for artistic reflection or political commitment. It is what powerfully draws one to cinema and yet cannot be captured without dissolving itself in its fragile essence when one approaches it without subtlety (...).



Trinh T. Minh-Ha surrounded by a group of students and professors at Atwater Commons.

As stated in ‘Reassemblage,’ but realized in all aspects of my film practise, I don’t intend to ‘speak about, only to speak nearby.’

The making of each film transformed the way I see myself and the world around me. Once I start engaging with the process of making a film or in any artistic endeavor, I am also embarking on a journey whose point of arrival is unknown to me. The work here is a gift. Whether it is worth passing it on depends on whether it succeeds in taking me elsewhere than where I started out. It is only in the transformative potential of the work that I can hope to make a difference in other people’s way of seeing and experiencing film. Because my work has often proven to be disturbing in the way it unsettles old viewing and thinking habits and because of the ensuing hostility it has encountered, I have had to learn to speak lucidly with it. But for me, it touches (...) Preconceived ideas have a very limited role in the creative process. Most fascinating are the impasses, the blind procedures, the magical accidents, the unwanted discoveries, as well as the time wasted, the useless moves, the resonances generated despite one’s wishes and unknown to oneself in advance, hence unforeseeable to performers and the viewers during the unfolding of the film.”

WAGS COURSES CONT.

to ask questions: were women in the early Church considered capable of holiness? To what extent did the female ‘gifts of the spirit’ challenge church authority? What is distinct about the feminine experience of the divine? 3 hrs. lect. PHL HIS EUR (M. Hatjigeorgiou)

WAGS/RELI 0391 Seminar on Women and Religion: South Asian Goddesses

This course examines the multiple and proliferating portrayals of the divine in feminine form in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions of India, Nepal and Tibet. We first raise questions about the role and significance of goddesses from a comparative perspective. We will examine at length the large variety of South Asian divinities in feminine form within their historical, mythological, iconographic, and theological contexts. We also utilize a variety of sociological and psychological perspectives, providing opportunity for substantial dialogue between indigenous and modern theoretical frameworks. PHL AAL OTH (W. Waldron)

WAGS/HIST 0416 Readings in Middle Eastern History: Women and Islam

In this course we will examine women’s lives in Islamic societies from the seventh century to the contemporary period, focusing on the Middle East and North Africa. Readings will explore a variety of topics including the changing role of women from pre-Islamic to Islamic societies; women in Islamic law and practice; gender roles in relation to colonialism, nationalism, and radical Islam; non-Muslim women in Islamic societies; and Western images of Muslim women. 3 hrs. sem. (F. Armanios)



An LGTB History Expert: Winter Term Instructor Bernie Schlager

Tell me a little bit about yourself. Why and when did you move to Middlebury?

I moved to Middlebury with my family (my partner and three sons) from Berkeley, California, a couple of years ago because my partner accepted a position as president of a local community foundation. I continue to work as a consultant for The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley (PSR) and I serve as an adjunct faculty member at PSR. My educational background includes undergraduate degrees in music and philosophy; graduate work in philosophy and history; and graduate studies in medieval studies in Cologne, Germany.

How did you become an expert in LGBT history?

My PhD in History (Yale 1996) included work on homosexuality in the medieval and modern periods. In addition, I have written several articles on queer history and am currently writing a book on contemporary American Christianity and the LGBT movement.

What will you cover in particular in the class?

This course will be a survey of LGBT history with a focus on specific periods, individuals, and movements relating to same-sex desire in Western civilization. It is a fascinating topic to study and there has been much good scholarship in the past thirty years that has uncovered an amazing variety of ways in which same-sex desire has been understood and constructed by women and men in the past.

What can students expect to take home after the class?

A good understanding of the current debates (and there are many) surrounding LGBT history today. I would hope, as well, that students’ curiosity in the study of the history of sexuality in general is piqued by our discussions and readings.



Mary Smyth Duffy Website

David Bain has created a website for his late wife Mary Smyth Duffy, former director of Chellis House, who tragically passed away in 2002. When you go to <http://www.davidhbain.com/msdmainpage.html>, you will find many of her beautiful paintings and watercolors.

Now that the snow is falling heavily on nature, Mary's depictions of elms, peonies, rhubarb leaves, trumpet vines, and sunflowers make us look forward to the return of the bountiful Vermont summer. These works from 2001 reveal Mary's love for landscape and still life painting. They also show how much she was inspired by impressionist artists and Georgia O'Keeffe. They bear testament to how much Mary loved the Vermont landscape and cherished every living being in it.

**Looking Back at 2004:
We marched for Women's Lives
in Washington, D.C. on April 24.
The struggle against threats to
Roe vs. Wade continues.**



A group of Middlebury students with State representative Betty Nuovo on the Washington Mall.



Students Michelle Albert and Brigitte Frett make their voices heard.

Sex Trafficking: Yields Higher Returns Than Illegal Drug Trade

From November 16 to 20, renowned experts spoke about the misery and violence caused by the traffic with 20 million women and children worldwide.

The Situation:

Trafficking in human beings is now estimated to earn more money for criminal syndicates than the global narcotics trade. According to UNICEF, more than 30 million children have been traded over the last three decades in the Asia-Pacific region alone. Anti-trafficking groups report that desperately poor parents are selling their daughters into the sex trade in some countries. Taken away from their homes, across international borders, left with no other means of support, the victims of sex traffickers are kept as virtual prisoners and frequently physically abused.

Three Reasons Against the Legalization of Prostitution: (excerpted from a report by Janice Raymond, Coalition Ag. Trafficking in Women)

1. Legalization/decriminalization of prostitution is a gift to pimps, traffickers and the sex industry.

Some people believe that, in calling for legalization or decriminalization of prostitution, they dignify and professionalize the women in prostitution. But dignifying prostitution as work doesn't dignify the women, it simply dignifies the sex industry. People often don't realize that decriminalization means decriminalization of the whole sex industry, not just the women in it. And they haven't thought through the consequences of legalizing pimps as legitimate sex entrepreneurs or third party businessmen, or the fact that men who buy women for sexual activity are now accepted as legitimate consumers of sex.

In countries where women are criminalized for prostitution activities, it is crucial to advocate for the decriminalization of the women in prostitution. No woman should be punished for her own exploitation. But states should never decriminalize pimps, buyers, procurers, brothels or other sex establishments.

2. Legalization/decriminalization of prostitution and the sex industry promotes sex trafficking.

Faced with a dwindling number of Dutch women who engage in prostitution activities and the expanding demand for more female bodies and more exotic women to service the prostitution market, the Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking has stated that in the future, a solution may be to "offer [to the market] prostitutes from non EU/EEA [European Union/European Economic Area] countries, who voluntarily choose to work in prostitution..." These women would be given "legal and controlled access to the Dutch market." As prostitution has been transformed into "sex work," and pimps into entrepreneurs, so this recommendation transforms trafficking into "voluntary migration for sex work." Looking to the future, the Netherlands is targeting poor women for the international sex trade to remedy the inadequacies of the free market of "sexual services." Prostitution is thus normalized as an "option for the poor."

3. Legalization/decriminalization of prostitution increases clandestine, illegal and street prostitution.

One goal of legalized prostitution was to move prostituted women indoors into brothels and clubs where they would be allegedly less vulnerable than in street prostitution. However, many women are in street prostitution because they want to avoid being controlled and exploited by pimps. Other women do not want to register or submit to health checks, as required by law in some countries where prostitution is legalized. Thus, legalization may actually drive some women into street prostitution.

Organizations that need your support

Coalition Against Trafficking In Women International, www.catwinternational.org

Apne Aap Women Worldwide

www.apneaap.org: fights sex trafficking in South East Asia

Gabriela Network, www.gabnet.org: fights prostitution in the Philippines

