"Are Smart Men Smarter Than Smart Women?"

When Harvard President Larry Summers questioned women’s innate abilities to conduct scientific research, he had one thing coming: On October 13, Prof. Carla Fehr of Iowa State University debunked his observations in a talk with a provocative title, wherein she explored the epistemology of ignorance. Here’s an excerpt:

(…) [If] research could prove that there were significant innate differences that could not be mitigated by social factors, (…) it takes the heat off of universities and individuals when it comes to employing and respecting women scientists. Keeping these hypotheses in play not only coheres with powerful cultural stereotypes of women, it functions to maintain gender inequities inside universities and out. And, it further reduces the intellectual authority that women can claim when they try to fight against these stereotypes. Here we see a distressing relationship between ignorance of science, assessing women’s abilities and the employment inequities suffered by women scientists.

This ignorance has serious ethical and political implications for the equitable treatment of women in science, but it is crucial to realize that this ignorance also hurts the practice of science itself. This ignorance has an impact on the benefits of diversity for scientific communities. We need to distinguish between two senses of diversity. The first is situational diversity. In this sense a diverse scientific community is one that includes members that approach their work from different points of view, or standpoints, and have a variety of research interests and theoretical perspectives. There is a broad range of benefits of epistemic diversity for science in general, including opening up new areas of investigation, and the development of alternative theories and hypotheses to account for current areas of investigation. Also, when communities include members with different points of view, it is possible to test hypotheses more stringently, from a wider variety of perspectives. All of these possibilities help us do better science. One can embrace epistemic diversity for very selfish reasons. We cannot assume that situational diversity will result in epistemic diversity, because we cannot assume that there is a single women’s point of view or way that women approach their research. This would also be disrespectful of women scientists who work within the frameworks of existing scientific communities.

Notice that opposite ways we cannot assume that situational diversity will result in epistemic diversity, IF scientific communities don’t give members from some situational perspectives (in this case, don’t give women) intellectual respect and treat them as good knowers, as good members of a community, the community will be less likely to benefit from the epistemic diversity that those women may be able to offer. If there are differences in the ways that some particular women approach their work it would be a shame not to glean the epistemic benefits of those differences.

But, there is a different sense of diversity, epistemic diversity, which many feminist philosophers of science argue is in the best interests of all scientists to embrace (Harding 1986, 1991, Longino 1990, 2001, Rolin 2002, Solomon 2001). An epistemically diverse scientific community is one that includes members that approach their work from different points of view, or standpoints, and have a variety of research interests and theoretical perspectives. There is a broad range of benefits of epistemic diversity for science in general, including opening up new areas of investigation, and the development of alternative theories and hypotheses to account for current areas of investigation. Also, when communities include members with different points of view, it is possible to test hypotheses more stringently, from a wider variety of perspectives. All of these possibilities help us do better science. One can embrace epistemic diversity for very selfish reasons. We cannot assume that situational diversity will result in epistemic diversity, because we cannot assume that there is a single women’s point of view or way that women approach their research. This would also be disrespectful of women scientists who work within the frameworks of existing scientific communities.

The year was ushered in by the performance “Sex Signals” during first-year orientation. In a jocular manner that suddenly turned serious, two performers showed how quickly a romantic situation can turn to violence due to excessive alcohol consumption. On this campus, sexual assault is not taken lightly: Together with the Dean of Student Affairs Office, we will continue to raise awareness about the issue among incoming students in February.

During the fall, the campus community learned about a wide variety of topical issues related to women’s and gender studies. During the first week of classes, we invited Dr. Cheryl Hanna from the Vermont Law School, who together with Prof. Bert Russell of the Political Science Department examined the effects the new Supreme Court composition will have on women’s rights. Dr. Mihira Karra from USAID highlighted gender issues in family planning programs around the world. Dr. Carla Fehr demonstrated how harmful false knowledge and ignorance about women’s intellectual abilities can be for diversity within scientific communities (see article excerpt on page 12). During our two-day “Katrina Teach-In,” students and professors from a wide variety of disciplines discussed how gender and race shaped the effects of the worst “natural” disaster in the U.S.

Trustee Pam Boll came to visit us in November. She is the co-executive producer of the Academy-award winning documentary “Born into Brothels” and shed light on how love between mothers and children can take on different forms in different cultures in a post-film discussion at Chellis House.

German professor and pianist Bettina Matthias and soprani Amy Cheifetz gave a lecture and performance on Fanny Mendelssohn, a much neglected woman composer of the 19th century.

Editor’s Note

Dear faculty and staff members, dear students,

The fall semester has been a very active one in the Women’s and Gender Studies Department and at Chellis House. We organized many talks and discussions and would like to thank you all for showing up in such strong numbers!

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Elizabeth Martin, founder and executive director of the website Womenslaw.org, came to explain how this website gives free and easy access to legal information to victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

On November 19, Chellis House organized the second “Sister-to-Sister Summit” for middle school girls from Addison County. 40 girls came to participate in interesting dance and craft workshops and discussed their feelings about growing up. I would like to thank Liane Barrera, Halie Fox, Brigitte Fret, Lisa Dobkowski, Madelaine Glassberg, Jessica Levin, Anne Nelson, Lacey Patterson, Dot Rand, Kate Silbert, Gail D. Smith, Emily Theriault, and Kristen Ward for their tireless work since September to make the day a reality and all our volunteers who helped during the day.

On December 1, Julia Alvarez gave a lecture and slide show presentation on her research for the novel “In the Time of the Butterflies.” This event initiated the worldwide “16 Day Campaign to End Gendered Violence,” which we are promoting at Middlebury for the first time this year. During December, you will see men wearing white ribbons on campus as a sign that they actively oppose violence against women. We will also set up informational tables about microbicides, a range of different products that have the ability to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV and other STDs when applied topically. The development of these products needs to be accelerated urgently.

If you would like any more information on past programs, please contact me!

Karin Hanta
Kimberly Krans, 1974-2005

On September 28, Chellis House lost one of its earliest supporters: Kimberly A. Krans, 31, of Bridport (formerly of Keuka Park, N.Y.) died from brain injuries sustained in a bicycling accident. She was born July 8, 1974, in Oxford, Ohio, daughter of Diane Garver and Jeffrey P. Krans.

As a Certified Professional Midwife and a Vermont Licensed Midwife, she had a private, homebirth midwifery practice, Bella Vista Midwifery. She co-founded Northern Lights Midwifery Cooperative and was a partner in Sweetgrass Midwifery prior to that.

Kim was one of those people who could light up a room with her smile. Two years ago, she gave an impassioned presentation about natural childbirth and midwifery at Chellis House and greatly inspired the audience. Valerie Blevins (‘04) met Kim when she wrote a paper about the subject. The two of them became fast friends and Valerie helped organize Kim’s talk. She remembers Kim today in the following way, “My image of Kimberly was as a lioness, beautiful and brave. She was decorated with a clear mind and much compassion. Her work was her pleasure and service to humanity, an ideal intention for action in society. She sat with women through the darkest darkness and the lightest light, sharing the pain and challenges, as well as the joy and bliss. While her body is no longer enlivened, she certainly continues on into eternity through the love that flows in all. Though I did not know her well, I have a feeling that she would rather us rejoice than mourn, gaining a deeper appreciation for life and celebrating the ever-shifting beauty instead of clinging to what has already passed.” Valerie was so inspired by Kim’s example that she became a doula herself.

WAGS Events, Fall 2005

Middlebury Welcomes Its First Female Student from Afghanistan

Zohra Safi (ʼ08) won a scholarship from the “Initiative to Educate Afghan Women.” When she met other female international students, she drew up plans to start the group “Women and Global Peace.”

Interview by Gorrett Namuli.

Zohra, where have you lived?
I am originally from Afghanistan. During the civil war, I went to live in Pakistan for 13 years. After the withdrawal of the Taliban and the U.S. invasion, I went back to Afghanistan and started working for the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. Then I received a scholarship from the “Initiative to Educate Afghan Women” to study at Middlebury College.

Are you interested in feminism?
I am a feminist and am keen on becoming more involved in feminist issues. I am committed to women’s rights in my own country. In the beginning, I was only thinking about Afghani women, but after meeting people from other countries, I recognized that gender equality is not only a problem in Afghanistan, but in most parts of the world.

What is the situation of women in your country?
Women are moving towards improving their situation and are struggling not only for their own rights but also for rebuilding Afghanistan. Although they are facing an extremely hard situation in terms of security, they still strive to get back what they lost in 25 war-ridden years. Women have been victimized by different regimes. Those women need help from young people like me and so many other sisters and brothers from the national and international community.

You are planning to start a campus organization related to women. Can you tell us a little bit about it?
The organization is called “Women and Global Peace” and I hope that it will soon be recognized as a new student group. I recently don’t want to make it exclusive for Middlebury College students. I want everyone interested to take part and work for peace on the globe. Our main purpose will be to work for women and children in conflict-torn regions and post-conflict countries.

Is there any person that you find inspiring?
My life and my soul is my mother. When I have her I have everything in life. She is a very strong and unique woman. She has taught me not only to be her daughter, but also the daughter and sister of Afghanistan. I have learned from her how to overcome challenges. When we moved to Pakistan to seek refuge during the civil war, my father was hospitalized for more than six months. She was the one who gave us strength and looked out for opportunities for us. For her efforts, she was named “the strongest mother of the year” in Pakistan and she was interviewed by BBC. She proved that women can be as actively involved in struggle as men. I wish every woman were like my mother. The world will sparkle because of their achievements.

What do you think about Middlebury College?
When I first came to Middlebury College, I thought I wouldn’t be able to tolerate this new environment, but I was wrong. It took me two weeks to settle and feel happy. I am learning so many things that I have never learned before. The Middlebury College community is very small, but lively, which makes me more energetic. There are so many things I like about this college. I will only talk about my host families from whom I have learned a lot. This is very important for international students like me who come to this country for the first time and want to experience American culture.
relations, and the body. Students will develop their own fieldwork projects while tackling formidable theoretical problems. While this course emphasizes active, embodied research, this is not a "recreational" course. SOAN 0105 or SOAN 0103 or SOAN 0191 3 hrs. lect./disc. SOC USA NOR (D. Fee)

SOAN/WAGS 0337 Resisting Women: Ethnographies of Women's Activism in Global Context

In this course we will examine global feminisms and women's resistance using ethnographies of transnational and national sites. From factory workers to activist sex workers we will look at the changing positions of women in global sites of work, family, and political activism. As a class we will attempt to answer the following questions: How can we understand feminisms across cultural and national borders? Which feminist issues translate across borders and which do not? What are the differences between resistance and political activism? How has increased globalization changed local political struggles? How are increasingly universal gender standards influencing political movements in local settings? Lect./disc. 3 hrs. lect./disc. SOC OTH AAL (L. White)

FMMC/WAGS 0347 Remote Control: Global TV Culture

In this course we will critically analyze the role television plays in the formation of national and global cultures. Our examination of television industries in the U.K., Brazil, India, and Nigeria will underscore variations in broadcasting practices and the multiple ways in which television is deployed to enact social change. In this course we will introduce students to women's participation in the four countries as audience members, program producers and subjects of television programming. Case studies will help illustrate the transformations that are entailed as television programs cross national and cultural borders. 3 hrs. lect./ 3 hrs. screen (S. Moorti)

REL10380 Seminar: Women of the Bible

Women play startling and complex roles in the Hebrew Bible. This course will examine female characters from modern, critical perspectives. These will include historical, literary, archaeological, and anthropological approaches. We will consider the status and social role of women (and the "goddess" idea) in the ancient Near East, Mediterranean, and Egypt and explore the changes in the status and role of women resulting from the encounter with Hellenism. Questions of "women's religion" and the transformation of female deities will also be explored. CLAS 0306 students will prepare selected texts in Hebrew; 1 hr. additional text-discussion section. (RELI 0180, RELI 0280, CLAS 0106, or waiver) 3hr. sem. PHL AAL (L. Lieber)

HIST/WAGS 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)

ENGL/WAGS 0428 Seminar: Women and 17th Century Theater

In this course we will address every aspect of women in relation to the theatre and the major dramatic literature of the 17th century— as objects of poetry, as objects of impersonation, as characters, as spectators, as professional and amateur actors, and (most importantly of all) as poets and professional playwrights. Spanning the second half of Shakespeare’s career and on through the Restoration, this course will include a vast range of works, from the "closet dramas" by Elizabeth Cary and Mary Wroth to the hugely popular plays by Aphra Behn, who was (as Virginia Woolf famously eulogized) the first woman to become a professional writer and also the most prolific playwright of the Restoration after John Dryden. We will also read some of the major plays of the period written by men and discuss how the switch from female impersonators to women actors transformed the theatre in the 1660s. A portion of the course will be devoted to the so-called "quierele des femmes" ("debate on women") that had been taking place throughout Europe about the nature of women and their place in society. (Approval required. Please apply at department office.) 3 hrs. lect. (T. Billings)

Faculty News

Peggy Nelson (Soc/Anthro) published a book entitled The Social Economy of Single Motherhood: Raising Children in Rural America (Routledge 2005). In this book, Prof. Nelson investigates the lives of single, working-class mothers and uncovers the different challenges that mothers and their children face in small town America—a place greatly changed over the past fifty years as factory work has dried up and chains like Walmart have moved in.

Julia Alvarez just published a children’s book A Gift of Gracias: the Legend of Altargracia. Julia describes the genesis of the book in the following way: “Many countries are devoted to little virgenicas who have appeared there: Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, Our Lady of Fátima in Portugal, Our Lady of Lourdes in France. In the Dominican Republic, my native country, our special virgenica is Our Lady of Altargracia. I was named Julia Altgracia, and so ever since I was a little girl, my family would tell me the legend of Altargracia. What I have written is based on their stories.” “My family also told me how the Virgenica’s picture disappeared from a little girl’s house and was found hanged from an orange bough. Her family understood that the Virgenica preferred the orchard, so a chapel was built for her among the orange trees. Pilgrims nowadays visit her there. In fact, before I started writing this story, I traveled to the chapel to ask for her special help.” “Just like me, many little girls in the Dominican Republic are named after Nuestra Señora de la Virgen who appears at Altargracia and so ever since I was a little girl, my family would tell me the legend of Altargracia. What I have written is based on their stories.”

Beyond diversity or multiculturalism, the concept of social justice has emerged to address the ways in which differences interact with systems of domination, subordination and injustice, examining the social structures and practices by which one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits other social groups.”

Kathy Skubikowski, Director of the CTLR and Assistant Dean for Instruction, Roman Graf, former Dean for Institutional Diversity, and Catharine Wright, Lecturer in Writing, have received a cluster grant from the Mellon Foundation that brings together six schools—Middlebury, Vassar, Furman, Denison, Scripps and DePauw—on the topic of Social Justice in Higher Education. The purpose of the grant is threefold: to foster discussion between Centers for Teaching and Learning and Offices of Institutional Diversity (or their equivalent); to bring together faculty across disciplines who are committed to teaching social justice for the purpose of sharing and developing pedagogical practices and curriculum; and to reach out to the college community via cross-disciplinary conversations and guest speakers.

Grant activities at Middlebury include a cluster of nine Winter Term courses that will share, over a weekly lunch, guest speakers on the theme of social justice, as well as a series of discussions and workshops for interested faculty.

This project proposes social justice as a topic around which faculty who are engaged in developing pedagogical innovation (“teaching developers”) and those engaged in diversity or multicultural initiatives can work together to enrich themselves and help colleagues from a range of disciplines expand their knowledge bases and pedagogical practices. We propose collaborative, year-long Institutes for Faculty on Social Justice Education to be held simultaneously on the Denison, Furman, Middlebury, Scripps, and Vassar campuses. Faculty teaching developers, faculty diversity officers, and participating junior and senior colleagues will collaboratively reexamine their own personal and professional perspectives, disciplinary content, professional perspectives, disciplinary content, and also the most prolific playwright of the Restoration after John Dryden. We will also read some of the major plays of the period written by men and discuss how the switch from female impersonators to women actors transformed the theatre in the 1660s. A portion of the course will be devoted to the so-called “quierele des femmes” (“debate on women”) that had been taking place throughout Europe about the nature of women and their place in society. (Approval required. Please apply at department office.) 3 hrs. lect. (T. Billings)

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Professor Ann Mari May integrates issues of gender into her classes. According to her, control over one’s life is very closely tied to issues of material reproduction. Interview by Gorrett Namuli.

Professor May, what is your background?
I have been teaching economics at a research university for seventeen years. It has been so interesting to come to a liberal arts college from that experience. I have to say I enjoy greatly working with Middlebury College students and find the research interests of the faculty here at Middlebury to be interesting and stimulating.

In what kinds of feminist issues are you interested?
I am interested in the history of women in higher education. I would categorize this topic as “risky business” because if you critically examine academia, you have to look at the institutions that are operating around you and the people who work in them. Typically, discussions about women and higher learning focus on access. I have written about transformations in access from the late 19th century to the present. What I found is that in order to understand women in higher learning, you cannot just look at the superficial measurements of access but look at their participation in a qualitative sense. We have to look at the impediments that women face when they want to establish an authoritative voice. Women have been accepted as consumers in higher learning, but it has been difficult for women to become producers. Furthermore, I am interested in questions about how we come to know what we know and whose knowledge counts. We have tended to look at knowledge as a sacred cow that is not to be criticized, deconstructed and analyzed in any other manner than a few people searching for the truth. But in reality, higher learning has its symbols, language, and rituals that are mediated by our cultural understanding of gender.

How do issues of gender fit into an economics curriculum or in a liberal arts setting?
I think it is very important to integrate gender into economics. Control over one’s life is very closely tied to issues of material reproduction. Much of the exciting work in economics in the past two decades has been developing this area of inquiry. In a liberal arts setting, this would seem to be an important area to include.

Although I have not been able to teach feminist economics yet, there are also ways in which issues of gender can be integrated into the curriculum from the beginning. For example, in economics there is a mainstream model that should be critically examined from a variety of perspectives. These critiques come from environmental critiques and should also come from social critiques. Both are equally important. So when we look at such basic things as how we count what is produced in economics through national income accounting – GDP – we need to examine not only what isn’t counted in terms of costs (environmental degradation) and what isn’t counted in terms of production (women’s work).

You have written an article entitled “The challenge of feminist economics?” Can you briefly explain what feminist economics is?
“The challenge of feminist economics” was published by Challenge magazine, which is devoted to cutting edge issues in the economics. Feminist economics has been with us for 15 years. It is one of the fastest growing areas in economics in terms of membership and organization, and I think the reason why it has become more popular is because it has brought a global perspective to the discipline. It also has provided a substantial critique of mainstream economics. Feminist economics has produced a substantial body of work, but you typically do not yet see a university or college advertising a position for a feminist economist.

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 readings in a wide range of fields. For example, 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.

You have written an article entitled “The Feminist Challenge to Economics.” Can you briefly explain what feminist economics is?
Feminist economics has produced a substantial body of work, but you typically do not see the works of feminist economists being advertised for positions in academia. The challenge of feminist economics was published by Challenge magazine, which is devoted to cutting edge issues in the economics. Feminist economics has been with us for 15 years. It is one of the fastest growing areas in economics in terms of membership and organization, and I think the reason why it has become more popular is because it has brought a global perspective to the discipline. It also has provided a substantial critique of mainstream economics. Feminist economics has produced a substantial body of work, but you typically do not see a university or college advertising a position for a feminist economist.

ENGL/WAGS 0105 Victoria’s Secrets
Known as the great age of the realist novel and the epitome of staid decorum, the nineteenth century also had its guilty pleasures: mysteries, ghost stories, science fiction, imperialist adventure tales, and radical fantasies of gender confusion. In this course we will read both canonical realist novels and their non-traditional counterparts in an attempt to understand the productive interplay between these two seemingly disparate literary traditions. In our comparisons we will focus on numerous issues, including domesticity, gender politics, class and racial identity, and international politics. Authors may include: Austen, Dickens, Eliot, Hardy, the Brontës, Wilkie Collins, R.L. Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, H.G. Wells, Bram Stoker, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and others.

THEA/WAGS 0206 Contemporary Women Playwrights
The course will include readings and discussion of the work of a number of the most influential and interesting American, Canadian, and European playwrights of the 1970s to the present. Authors to be explored include: Maria Irene Fornes, Caryl Churchill, Suzan-Lori Parks, Adrienne Kennedy, Ntozake Shange, Judith Thompson, Naomi Wallace, Shelagh Stephenson, and others. The playwrights’ concerns range from the domestic to the apocalyptic, and their stylistic choices are equally wide ranging. In addition to the study of individual works, the course will also include an overview of the authors’ relationships to the culture and to the art form.

RELI/WAGS 0291 Modern Neo-Paganism - A Critical Inquiry
Modern Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft have drawn a great deal of interest and notoriety in recent years. In this course we will explore the theology, practice, and development of modern Neo-Paganism, with critical focus given to its claims of historical continuity with and roots within a ‘matriarchal prehistory.’ We will explore a variety of neo-pagan movements and their connections with earth-based spirituality, such as eco-feminism, polytheism, and their theologies of immanence. We will also consider theoretical approaches to the rise of ‘new religions’ as well as explore how earth-based spiritualities have come to influence other, more established religious traditions.

SOAN/WAGS 0312 The Sociology of Sport: Ethnographic Approaches
In this course we will explore the rapidly expanding field of the sociology of sport. Our approach will be to understand the growing importance of sports in American culture primarily through an ethnographic or fieldwork approach. We will rely mostly on ethnographic studies of sports that emphasize the cultural and political aspects of athletics in the US, especially in terms of issues of cultural representation, “race”, gender
WAGS Winter Term Courses

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, religion and class. Organized by literary genres, and drawing on writers such as Silko and others, the class will analyze and produce a range of works that employ diverse methods of argument and inquiry, including personal narrative, literary analysis, research presentations, and media projects. We will create personal and public domains for our work, using everything from scratchpads to weblogs, and will respond to one another’s work in progress. We have an opportunity this semester to collaborate with a NYC classroom taught by a Middlebury Alumna through the Teach for America program, and are likely to travel. Limit on Enrollment: 12. 3 hrs. lect. /disc. ART LIT (C. Wright)

WAGS 1003 20th Century Lesbian/Gay History
In this course we will explore lesbian and gay history in the United States from 1900 to 2000. Beginning with considerations of theoretical issues involved in the study of the history of sexuality, we will focus on several specific case studies of homosexual individuals and communities in American society. Particular emphasis will be placed on issues of gender, class, race, and ethnicity. In addition, sources used will include historical studies, film, and literature. (B. Schlager)

WAGS/RELI 1010 Gendering The Divine
Conceiving God as Man/Woman/Other Whether we give praise to Bharat Mata (Mother India or Mother Earth), the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or Sri Krsna Caitanya in whose bodies Krshna and Radha are fused, we tend to conceive of divinity in gendered terms. Why do we feel compelled to ascribe genders to our divinities? In this course, we will study three religious traditions: Roman Catholicism and the portrayal of Jesus as Mother; goddess devotion in the Hindu traditions; and, the divine androgyny of Krsna Caitanya of the Gaudiya Vaisnava tradition of Bengal, India. We will examine religious texts in translation, gender theory, and visual representations of the divine in its gendered forms. Informal and formal writing assignments, daily readings, multimedia analysis, and an in-class presentation will constitute the requirements for this course (K. Ruffle)

INTD 1043 Contemporary Issues in Reproductive Medicine
This course will examine the fundamentals of human reproduction and its modern intervention strategies. As rapid discoveries in medical reproductive technologies have allowed us to push the limits of the human body, questions remain as to whether we should pursue, permit, or regulate such advances. The course will explore scientific and ethical issues surrounding the control of fertility and infertility, fetal life, birth, and the neonatal period. Through informed dialogs, students will acquire a greater understanding and appreciation of these issues. The class will culminate in a community-outreach opportunity during which students will inform the public about their topic. (C. Combelles)

Ann Mari May continued
What kind of research are you conducting right now? I am in the process of writing an article on Harvard University and the controversy of women in co-education. I start out by looking at Charles Eliot, the president of Harvard in the late 19th century and the arguments against women’s inclusion at Harvard during that period. I compare his comments to those of current president Larry Summers to examine the role of political economy in shaping these arguments against women’s participation.

You have also taken students to Stockholm in the summer. What do they learn during your course? I teach economic history. When we talk about gender bias historically, we can see it. When we talk about gender bias cross-culturally, we can also see it. However, the closer we get to the present and the more we look at our own society, it is difficult to recognize it. I was frustrated by the fact that not only do we have difficulty seeing it in the present, but it is also hard for people to envision an alternative. When I went to Sweden to give a paper on higher education, I was amazed by the alternative paradigm not just with respect to women, but with respect to valuing human beings. The Swedish society does not view human beings as commodities in the same way that we do in the US. In the summer course, students learn about why this is significant and they get a true understanding of an alternative.

And of course the people working on these issues that we meet are just great. The last time we went, we met a woman who is organizing a feminist party. She and other’s interested in issues of equality were tired of waiting for their political parties to address the issues of equality for women. The current push to give advocates for women’s equality a party grew out of a poll which asked Swedes if they would support a feminist party. The majority of Swedes said yes! When the poll results were published, politicians where stumbling over themselves to say that they are feminists! Can you imagine? In Sweden you don’t have to imagine, you can see for yourself.

Symbol of Sweden’s feminist party

News from Stephanie Morales

The 2005 WAGS graduate won a Watson Fellowship to enter communities in Spain, Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela and find women leaders engaged in social change, and help them connect with young women in their communities.

Buenos Aires. I set up an interview with an Abuela de la Plaza de Mayo....this is the older version of Madres de Plaza de Mayo who are famous for wearing their white headkerchiefs and protesting for the past thirty years demanding restitution for their disappeared children. An estimated 30,000 people disappeared during the dictatorship. If you disappeared, you died. Abuelas look for their grandchildren, the children of those who disappeared. They have found 81 folks who were adopted into other families and are now reunited with their original families. They set up a Theater of Identity where the question “Do you think you are in the wrong family?”, is asked. Julio tells me to interview one of them, Nelida...one of the orginal Abuelas, who also happens to be his mother-in-law. I go to her home...we sit, set up the camera and she begins to tell me her story. Julio’s wife (her daughter) and his sister were kidnapped one day. Julio was already in exile for about two months...the children are left in the house alone and the neighbors call Nelida because they hear the children screaming and yelling hysterically. The neighbors came and took the women...it was all over in a few days...they were going to the police station and would be right back. The two women are never seen again. Julio’s brother was the leader of the underground opposition party. I ask Nelida how and why she got involved with the formation of Abuelas. She tells me that after some investigation it turns out that her daughter had missed her period for two months...she had just written Julio a letter telling him the good news. They kidnapped her and her unborn child. Nelida continues to believe she can find her grandchild. She has been looking for 28 years.
Lia Jacobsen became interested in sex trafficking after last year’s Amnesty Symposium on the subject. Last summer, she focused on sex trafficking as an intern at the Collier County Sheriff’s Office in Florida and relates her experience in the article below. Lia’s passion is helping others. When she graduates, she wants to work in D.C. She doesn’t know in which capacity yet, but for reaction’s sake she says she is going to be the first blind, female, Jewish president!

In an attempt to change the world in three and a half months, I began my search for a summer internship. Skimming through webpages, I made my way to the Collier County Sheriff’s Office Witness/Victim Assistance Bureau. Perfect!

After a month of interviews, lie detectors, drug tests, and background checks, I was assigned as the first ever intern/volunteer in the unit. Covering domestic violence, violent crimes, crimes against senior citizens, and human trafficking, I knew I would be busy. The majority of my time soon became focused on human trafficking.

As the first county in Florida to have a human trafficking division, there was a lot of work to be done to establish programs, to create publicity, and to rescue and protect the enslaved. Our first goal was to create a pamphlet to be distributed to the community informing them of trafficking and how to help victims. Although healthcare and government officials had already been given basic information on how to recognize victims and what to do to help them, the general community was oblivious to the presence of trafficking within our community. As the third largest destination state for trafficked persons (in the largest destination country for slaves), we faced multiple forms of trafficking including sex trafficking, the trafficking of domestic servants, and the trafficking of forced laborers.

In aiding victims, we came across a case of a fifteen-year-old girl who was brought to the United States from Mexico. The man who brought her promised to marry her and said he would raise her baby. When she arrived to the U.S., he immediately forced her into prostitution. Escaping from the trafficker, she ran to a family nearby who aided her and said they would help her. They were quickly made into slaves.

Another challenge we faced was the ignorance of our community. Living in a rather wealthy community, domestic servitude is one of our most common forms of trafficking. The slaves are threatened with their lives and are told that the police are corrupt and will hurt them if they come forward; therefore, it is crucial that the community aid law enforcement to find the enslaved. Their lack of information, and, even worse, misinformation, about trafficking, served as a huge barrier in our work. One of the largest barriers we faced was in the nature of the trafficker. Previously, trafficking was not punished forcefully; therefore, traffickers generally feel invincible. Even if they are caught, they do not fear punishment because formerly it was minimal. Now, however, laws have changed mandating twenty years to life for those convicted of trafficking.

Although much of my internship was focused on changing the present, the primary focus was on the vision of the future. We want to minimize trafficking; we want people to know about trafficking and no longer ignore it. In the future, publicity will increase. Training of employees in law enforcement will heighten as the sheriff’s office (along with several other sheriffs’ offices who are now starting trafficking divisions in Florida) brings in specialists. One of the most exciting developments is the signing of the Proclamation of Mutual Agreement Against the Trafficking of Humans. This document was signed earlier this month in Naples, FL by state and national representatives and by representatives of almost every country in Central/South America. Symbolic of the world, or at least a portion of the world, uniting against such a blatant violation of human rights, the future is looking bright.

Sex trafficking Statistics

• Sex trafficking is 90% women and girls.
• Over 50,000 women are trafficked into the United States every year.
• Asian women are sold to North American brothels for $16,000 each.
• 2 million children are forced into prostitution every year. Half of them live in Asia.

Lia Jacobsen continued

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