

studies

college of arts and sciences • university of south carolina

Women's Studies
30 years

Women's Studies Conference 2005

The 2005 Women's Studies Conference, "Looking Back, Stepping Forward," builds on the success of the Women's Studies Program during the past 30 years. Continuing our one-and-one-half-day format, the conference will include paper sessions, a community panel, and a keynote address.

The first day, Thursday, March 17, begins with a concurrent paper session at 1:15 p.m. at the Daniel Management Center, eighth floor, Moore School of Business, followed by a panel discussion at 3 p.m. The keynote lecture at 5:30 p.m., in the School of Law Auditorium, is sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences and features Frances Smith Foster, the Charles Howard Candler Professor of English and Women's Studies at Emory University in Atlanta.

The second day of the conference, Friday, March 18, includes concurrent paper sessions beginning at 9 a.m. During the luncheon, Dr. Lisa Hammond Rashley, associate professor of English and women's studies at USC Lancaster, will present the 2005 Josephine Abney Lecture. Dr. Rashley's lecture will focus on her research project, "Cultural Percep-

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Frances Smith Foster Keynotes Women's Studies Conference 2005

On Thursday, March 17, at 5:30 p.m., in the School of Law Auditorium, Frances Smith Foster, Charles Howard Candler Professor of English and Women's Studies at Emory University in Atlanta, will present the keynote address for the 18th Annual Women's Studies Conference. This year's theme is "Looking Back, Stepping Forward: Women's Studies at 30." The title of her lecture is "Why Historical Research Matters in Women's Studies: The Case of Marriage and Family in Early African America." She will discuss her research on 19th-century Afro-Protestant ideals of motherhood, marriage, and sexual morality.

Professor Foster has authored or edited 10 books and numerous articles. Among her most recent publications are "Race, Region, and the Politics of Slavery's Memory," "African Americans, Literature, and the Nineteenth Century Afro-Protestant Press," *Written By Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892*, and *Behind the Scenes* (edited with extensive introduction). Her co-editing projects include the *Norton Critical Edition of Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (with Nellie Y. McKay), the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (with Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, et. al.), and the *Oxford Companion to African American Litera-*



Frances Smith Foster

ture (with William L. Andrews and Trudier Harris). Professor Foster's current research centers on feminist sexual ethics, antebellum African-American families and religion, and best sellers and literary societies.

Her course offerings have ranged from undergraduate seminars such as "Becoming a Woman" and "Slavery and the African-American Literary Imagination," to upper-division courses such as "African American Prize-Winning and Prize-Worthy Literature" and "(W)right Things Right in Nineteenth Century African American Literature," to graduate seminars such as "Family, Marriage, and Sexual Morality in Early African America," "African American Literary Theories and Practices," and "Provocations: U.S. American Women Writing." ■

Faculty Forum: Local and Global Reflections on Women's Health Issues



Dr. Deanne K. Hilfinger Messias
Associate Professor, WOST and Nursing

As the University of South Carolina Women's Studies Program (WOST) celebrates its 30th anniversary, we have been examining our progress and anticipating our future, not only as an academic program but also as part of a broader movement for women's rights and equality. The theme of our 30th anniversary celebration is "Looking Back, Stepping Forward: Women's Studies at 30." In the fall newsletter, WOST Director Lynn Weber reflected on the struggles and progress of women's studies programs—at USC and other universities around the country—and reported on our celebration of success held on Sept. 30, 2004.

During the fall semester I also had the opportunity to participate in several international women's health and nursing forums: the 15th International Congress on Women's Health Issues (ICOWI), in San Pedro, São Paulo, Brazil, and the International Nursing Theory Conference in Bogotá, Colombia. Participating in these international forums and being a part of this collective reflection process with my WOST colleagues has prompted me to take a look back at the women's health movement and consider the future steps needed to address current women's health issues.

It is heartening to celebrate the progress and expansion of the women's health movement, from the relatively narrow emphasis on reproduction to the current recognition of the diversity of women's health issues. As we go forward, however, we face increasingly complex local and global challenges. In local South Carolina communities and around the globe, women's health initiatives encompass a broad range of issues, from violence to reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, mental health, tobacco, and substance abuse. Across these health issues, the multifaceted intersections of gender, race, class, and geography are evident. Women's health reflects other crucial issues—social justice, economics, politics, and the environment, as well as women's work and roles in the home, community, workplace, and broader society.

In the ICOWI keynote address, Dr. Afaf Meleis called for "safe womanhood" initiatives to address the multiple sources and types of violence against women – physical, emotional, and sexual. Her message hit home. Each year, intimate partner violence affects some 1.5 million women in the United States. Sadly, South Carolina ranks among the top in terms of women's deaths related to intimate partner violence. In Colombia, a beautiful country filled with very cordial people, decades of political violence have taken a toll on the health of the population, and particularly on women's health. In conferring with nurses and nursing faculty in Bogotá, family and community health issues resulting from the guerilla war and displacement of entire rural communities to urban areas were of particular concern. The man-made violence of the ongoing war in Iraq and the devastating violence of

the forces of nature in the Indian Ocean remind us that the goal of making the world safe for women is clearly a global challenge.

Despite the growing recognition that women's health is much broader than reproductive health, the looming threats to basic human and reproductive rights are a major issue for women's health advocates locally and globally. As a result of current political, economic, and social forces, the availability of affordable, accessible, culturally appropriate reproductive health services for all women is at risk. Many women around the world do not have affordable access to contraception and reproductive health care, and more than one-half million women die in childbirth each year. Maternal mortality is a major women's health issue in many parts of the globe. But many people do not realize that the maternal death rate in the United States (9.8 deaths per 100,000 births) is far higher than it is in Canada (3.4 deaths per 100,000 births).

Increasingly, women are the face of HIV/AIDS, making up 50 percent of the HIV population worldwide. Nearly 60 percent of those infected in Africa are women. In the United States, African-American and Hispanic women accounted for 83 percent of the reported AIDS diagnoses in 2003. The highest rate of new HIV infection in South Carolina is among African American women, who constituted 84 percent of the new cases diagnosed in 2003. Around the world, social and environmental conditions, including poverty, hunger, lack of basic sanitation, barriers to education, and illiteracy, contribute to the spread of other infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Women's multiple roles and work overload not only put women at risk for infectious diseases but also increase

obstacles to accessing adequate and timely medical treatment. Other factors impede women's timely access to affordable health care. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 47 percent of U.S. women who delay seeking prenatal care when they know they are pregnant report that they do so because of lack of money or insurance. For immigrant women in South Carolina, particularly those with limited English proficiency, understanding and effectively navigating the fragmented, complex U.S. health care system is a major issue, whether for prenatal care, well-child visits, or acute illness.

Domestically, uninsured women are more likely to be of minority racial and

ethnic groups, to have less education, and to be poorer than insured women. Uninsured women may be especially vulnerable to heart disease and other chronic diseases because they are more likely than insured women to smoke and to be overweight and are less likely to engage in physical activity and participate in screening tests for chronic diseases (hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease). Heart disease and stroke are the major causes of death and disability in aging women, accounting for nearly 60 percent of all adult female deaths. One of the advances of recent years is the recognition that heart disease is a women's health issue—after years of medical research and treatment regimens based

on the assumption that heart disease and stroke were men's health problems. Diabetes is a more common cause of coronary heart disease among women than men. And among people with diabetes, the prognosis of heart disease is worse for women than for men, and women have a poorer quality of life and lower survival rates than men. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among women in the United States. In South Carolina, however, more African-American women die of breast cancer than lung cancer. Although African-American women have a lower incidence of breast cancer, they are twice as likely to die within five years of being diagnosed.

Women's Health Issues continued on page 7

What Does It Mean To Be a Woman? Perceptions of USC Students



Suzanne Swan, assistant professor, left, and Alice Fields, graduate student

Suzanne Swan, assistant professor, Women's Studies Program and the Department of Psychology, and Alice Fields, graduate student in psychology and women's studies, along with other WOST faculty members, are conducting a qualitative study of USC students' per-

ceptions of what it means to be a woman. The primary goal of the project is to examine the range of students' perceptions regarding both the possibilities available to women and the barriers women must overcome to achieve those possibilities. Ultimately, Swan and Fields would like to use the data to help them understand how perceptions of gender relate to women's well-being in South Carolina. *The Status of Women in South Carolina* Report of 2002, written by the Institute for Women's Policy Research and Lynn Weber, director of WOST, found that women in South Carolina are behind most other states in a number of important indicators of well-being. For example, the report found that South Carolina ranked last among all 50 states in the number of women in political office and has higher rates of poverty and lower rates of women with

college degrees than most other states. South Carolina is also notorious for consistently having some of the highest numbers of women killed by intimate partners in the United States.

Last fall, students in women's studies classes wrote essays answering questions about what being a woman means to them. Male students were asked to describe from the perspective of a man what they thought it meant to be a woman. Students described how their families and communities influenced their ideas of what it means to be a woman while they were growing up and any changes in their perceptions of the meaning of womanhood as they have grown older. Students also described key experiences they have had that affected their ideas of what it

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Perceptions

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means to be a woman. In the spring semester, Swan and Fields piloted a Web-based version of the study.

One interesting theme that has emerged from the data is consistent with ambivalent sexism theory, which states that sexist attitudes toward women are ambivalent, containing both negative attitudes that justify women's subordinate status and positive attitudes toward women who conform to traditional gender roles (homemaker, being beautiful). Many essays expressed the duality of living with both these views of femininity. One student, for example, wrote: "Being a woman means we have certain perks: being proposed to, walking down the aisle wearing a gorgeous dress, having the door opened for us, meals paid for, and being treated with a certain level of respect. ... Being a woman also means we get paid less than we deserve, getting pushed around by upper management and others in the workplace, and being susceptible to physical abuse and rape. Our size can be a disadvantage because more women don't have the strength to fight off an attacker. In my eyes I try to see the positive over the negative, but at the same time I'm aware of my vulnerability."

A second goal of the project is to make the data available to WOST affiliate faculty and students who are interested in analyzing the data for themes related to their own research areas. Interested faculty and students should e-mail Swan at swansc@gwm.sc.edu.

Event Calendar

Spring 2005 Research Series

Reception following lectures

**"Women and HIV:
A Neurobiological Perspective"**
Thursday, January 20, 2005, 3:30 p.m.
Gambrell Hall, Room 429
Speaker: Rosemarie Booze, Ph.D.,
Department of Psychology

**"Profiles in Activism:
Women and the NAACP"**
Wednesday, February 16, 2005, 3:30 p.m.
Gambrell Hall, Room 250
Speaker: Patricia Sullivan,
Ph.D., African American
Studies Program and
Department of History

**"Students Creating New
Knowledge"**
Wednesday, March 2, 2005, 3:30 p.m.
Gambrell Hall, Room 250
Women's Studies Graduate
Student Panel

**"Teresa of Avila and
20th-Century Vocal Music"**
Wednesday, March 16, 2005, 3:30 p.m.,
Gambrell Hall, Room 250
Speaker: Helen Tintes-Schuermann, DM,
School of Music

Spring 2005 Pedagogy Brownbag Series: Teaching for Social Justice

**"Powerful, Non-Defensive
Communication"**
Wednesday, January 26, 2005, Noon
Flinn Hall, Room 101
Facilitator: Sharon Ellison, MS,
Communications Consultant,
Oakland, Calif.

**"Imagining Social 'Justice' Work:
The College of Social Work Response"**
Thursday, April 7, 2005, 12:30 p.m.
1731 College Street
Facilitator: Sadye L.M. Logan,
DSW, LISW-CP,
I. DeQuincey Newman Professor

March is University-wide Women's History Month, coordinated by the Women's Studies Program and the Office of Women's Student Services. If you are sponsoring an event and/or would like to sponsor an event, please e-mail Rosa Thorn: thorn@gwm.sc.edu. ■

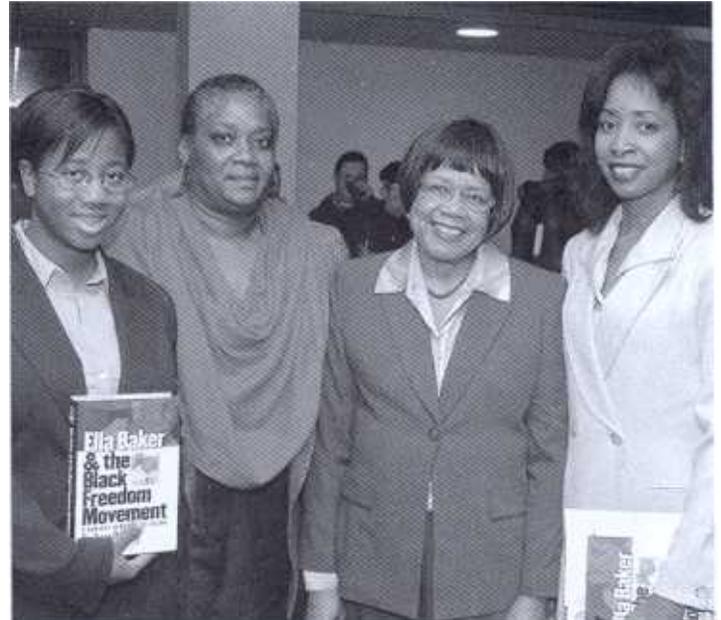
Mission Statement

University of South Carolina Women's Studies Program

Women's studies at the University of South Carolina promotes understanding of the diverse array of women's experiences through a complete program of teaching, research, and service to the University, the local community, the state, and the nation. Through its research mission, women's studies reconceptualizes existing knowledge and creates new knowledge through the lens of gender and the prism of diversity.

Through its teaching mission, women's studies shares this knowledge with students so that they learn to think critically, to communicate effectively, to solve problems, and to interpret human experience. Emerging from an activist tradition, women's studies serves University, local, state, and national communities by acting as a resource and guide for issues related to women and gender. Our research, teaching, and service missions interweave as we create, share, and apply the knowledge, skills, and values that promote the full participation of women in society. ■

Fall Semester Highlights



top left: Barbara Ransby, Professor, Department of African American Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago, delivered the 2004 Adrenée Glover Freeman Lecture in African American Women's Studies.

bottom left: Women's Studies faculty, staff, and students enjoy the annual networking luncheon.

top right: Freeman family members attending the lecture included (left to right) Adrenée's daughter, Karma Frierson; Karma's Godmother, Bertie Howard; Adrenée's aunt, Christine Gilliard; and family friend, Ava M. Brumfield. Adrenée's other daughter, Savannah Frierson (not pictured) attends Harvard University.

bottom right: Jackie McClary, administrative assistant, left, and Teresa Walley, grants coordinator, sort applicant files for the Women's Studies Race, Class, and Gender Faculty Search. Over 350 applications were submitted.

WOST Graduate Certificate Program



Dr. Wanda A. Hendricks

The Women's Studies Graduate Certificate Program is one of the most diverse on campus and continues to draw some of the University's best students. Our students include women and men from several different ethnic and racial groups and from various academic areas and research interests: anthropology, education, English, public health, history, nursing, political science, psychology, and sociology. Many are committed to community activism, volunteering, and creating programs to support women and girls. Julie Jacobson, for example, is currently engaged in the Women's Studies Program's West Columbia Project, teaching students success through art.

Our students were quite successful during the fall term. Jessica Labbe, also in English, won the Harriott Hampton Faucette Award. She presented the paper "Love, Sex, Violence: The Dangerous Dissolution of Boundaries in Achy Obejas's Memory Mambo" as part of a panel titled "Our Bodies Ourselves: Merging Sexual Violence and the Self in Multicultural Women's Fiction" at the 10th International American Women Writers of Color Conference in Baltimore, Md. Two were awarded the certificate:
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Meet Star Student Winifred Thompson



Winifred "Winnie" Thompson receives congratulations from USC President Andrew A. Sorensen and Dr. Wanda A. Hendricks.

Winifred W. Thompson is one of the Women's Studies Program's outstanding students. She enrolled in the certificate program during summer 2002 and since then has been a model student and a wonderful asset to the program. Currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program in the Arnold School of Public Health in the Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior, she received her Master of Social Work and her Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Georgia. Awarded the South Carolina Public Health Association Public Health Scholarship in April 2003, she is also a recipient of the Women's Studies Harriott Hampton Faucette Award and the Emily Thompson Award. A dedicated student, mentor, and teacher, "Winnie" currently holds one of the highly competitive USC African American Professor Program Doctoral Scholarships, cosponsored by USC, the Kellogg Foundation, and the South Carolina Higher Education Commission. Winnie is an actively

engaged scholar whose primary research focuses on the prevention of cardiovascular disease in African-American women, as well as on holistic health, maternal child health, and eliminating health disparities. She has presented papers and published several essays and articles including the co-authored "A Personal, Social, and Physical Environmental Correlates of Physical Activity in African-American Women in South Carolina" in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (with Barbara E. Ainsworth, Sara Wilcox, Donna L. Richter, and Karla A. Henderson). She received her WOST graduate certificate in December 2004. ■



While the global epidemic of tobacco use among men is slowly declining, the epidemic among women is on the rise, with enormous consequences on the health and well-being of women, children, and families worldwide. Women who smoke have an increased risk of cervical cancer, heart disease, chronic bronchitis, cataracts, hip fracture, conception delay, and primary and secondary infertility; smoking during pregnancy is associated with lower birth weight infants and pre-term delivery. The lists go on and on.

Improving women's health across the lifespan and eliminating health disparities related to gender, race/ethnicity, class, and geographic location is both a local and a global priority. At first glance, the challenge may seem overwhelming. Where do we start in addressing these multiple women's health issues, inequalities, and injustices? How do we identify feasible and effective solutions to the multiple, interrelated women's health issues that address local and global realities? In South Carolina and other communities

across the globe, the root causes of women's health problems—and the solutions to those problems—are embedded in relationships of power, resources, and knowledge. Certainly advances in science play a role in improving health—but solutions also depend on social and political will.

If we look to the past, we find examples of grass roots women's health movements that have made a difference. The future also will require determined, community-based activism on many fronts, from reproductive rights, health care reform, affirmative action, immigrant rights and environmental dumping to gender-based violence and war. Expanded community-based health promotion must be implemented in a variety of settings, including schools, workplaces, senior centers, religious and civic organizations—the places where women of all ages live, learn, work, and play. Such efforts must be tailored to the interests and needs of women of diverse age groups, sexual orientation, geographic locations, and cultures. Key to any and all effective pro-

grams will be increasing consciousness, empowerment, advocacy, and resource sharing. You can be certain that student, faculty, and graduates of the USC Women's Studies Program will be a part of these efforts. Through our teaching, research, contacts, and connections with our local and global communities, we are engaged in the daily pursuit of health and well-being for all women. Thank you for being a part of this effort! ■

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tions of Breastfeeding Online: Support, Community, Judgments.”

A \$40 registration fee is required for conference attendance. Students can register for \$20. The registration fee includes materials, lunch, and receptions. Registration forms are available in the Women's Studies Program Office, 201 Flinn Hall, and online at www.cas.sc.edu/WOST. For more information, call 803-777-4007. ■

WOST Undergraduate Program



Dr. Laura R. Woliver

Our women's studies undergraduates are busy and productive. We have an impressive array of women's studies majors and minors. Many

of them are leaders on the campus in student government, community service, and student mentoring. The BA in Women's Studies now has 37 graduates. We currently have about 33 women's studies majors and dozens of women's studies minors in the program. Our courses continue to be very popular on campus and are quickly enrolled to capacity. The

program is now graduating several BA students each semester.

Many students involved in women's studies are also active in the now annual production of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*. In 2005, the play will be performed at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 12, Sunday, Feb. 13, and Monday, Feb. 14, in Gambrell Hall Auditorium, Room 153. As in the past, all proceeds from ticket sales will be donated to local anti-violence community organizations. The Women Student's Association plays a leadership role in *The Vagina Monologues*. This fund-raising and consciousness-raising event is one of the most successful on campus. Two years ago the Women's Students Association and Ms. Bronwyn McNutt won USC's Distinguished Student Service Organization and Leader Award for their good works.

In fall 2004, four women's studies majors contributed to community development through their WOST 499 Community Service Internship class. Kate Kingma worked on healthy body images for women at the Strom Thurmond Wellness and Fitness Center on campus; Kindall Chamberlin assisted Sexual Trauma Services of the Midlands with its health choices and healthy relationships advocacy programs in the public schools; Andronette Williams helped with community empowerment development in West Columbia; and Lou Belou was a mentor and counselor at The Shack, an on-campus student Christian ministry. Next semester's interns plan to work in the South Carolina Statehouse, the South Carolina Center for Equal Justice, the Salvation Army, and the Anderson County Literacy Council. ■

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Jill Carroll, English, and Winifred Thompson, public health.

After four years as graduate director, I will be stepping down at the end of this term. I am looking forward to becoming a full-time faculty member again. My book manuscript has been neglected far too long, and several projects have been on hold because of my administrative responsibilities. I want to thank everyone

who has assisted me and made my job much easier, particularly the great women's studies students with whom I have had the pleasure of interacting and the Graduate Committees (current members are Carol Harrison, Nancy Lane, DeAnne K. Messias, Ann Ramsdell, and Susan Schramm-Pate) for their unwavering support, diligence, and hard work. I leave a vital and

thriving program that will continue to grow under new direction.

For more information about WOST awards or about the graduate certificate program, please contact the Women's Studies Office at 803-777-4007 or Wanda A. Hendricks, graduate director of Women's Studies, at 803-777-4009. ■

Support USC Women's Studies and the Initiative for Women's Well-Being

The Women's Studies Program is growing. We invite you to join our efforts to promote the understanding essential to improving the lives of women and girls by becoming a Friend of Women's Studies.

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