

Gender and Women's Studies Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1

Fall 2012

Saint Mary's College
Notre Dame, Indiana
The Nation's Premier Catholic Women's College

Words from Our Program Coordinator

Welcome to the first edition of the Gender and Women's Studies newsletter! Because of the program's interdisciplinary nature and non-sequential order of courses, you as students may not know each other as well as you do in your other majors and minors. This newsletter is an attempt to remedy that and strengthen your connection to the program and each other.

2012 was an exciting and busy year. First and foremost, we changed our name

from Women's Studies to Gender and Women's Studies to better reflect what faculty members teach and therefore what you study. The program also welcomed Professor Jamie Schmidt Wagman, our new joint appointment in History and Gender and Women's Studies. Although she just arrived, she already is doing excellent things for the program, including creating this newsletter. Speaking of creation, Professor Sonalini Sapra began the highly successful

GWS brownbag lunch series, in which faculty highlight their research interests and projects. Finally, the program submitted a prospectus for a major; keep your fingers crossed.

I hope that you enjoy this newsletter. Good luck with the end of the semester!

All the best,

Stacy

Stacy Davis, associate professor, religious studies, and GWS Coordinator



NWSA Conference:

Career Planning for Women's and Gender Studies Students

Our panel addressed ways we could help our GWS students be more confident of majoring/minoring in gender and women's studies particularly in a time of economic uncertainty. I talked specifically about the importance of internship and experiential learning in gender and women's studies classes. I also discussed

the importance of exposing our students to more global issues and encouraging their participation in national and transnational feminist conferences. Last year, I took three women's studies students to the Women's Worlds Congress in Ottawa, where they had an opportunity to interact with transnational feminist

scholars and activists. Through the process of attending the conference, they also received some important hands-on experience in grant writing, as they all applied for funding from the Center for Women's Intercultural Leadership. Other panelists shared best practices from their own institutions. A panel member from Hollins University talked about the importance of networking and bringing WGS alumni back to campus to speak about their career trajectory. Other panelists shared their insights on helping students to write resumes and improve their oral presentation skills. — Professor Sonalini Sapra

Saint Mary's College students awarded an American Association of University Women grant

Senior Laura Corrigan and recent alum Catherine Cleary ('12) received a \$4,000 grant from the American Association of University Women last spring to create a Campus Action Project in South Bend. Laura and Catherine visited three local High Schools to present writing workshops to 1,400 ninth graders called, "Use Your Voice."

After encouraging the high school students to share their stories about witnessing sexual harassment, Laura and Catherine discussed being advocates for themselves and others.

As the SMC students blogged, "Our presentation didn't just help girls who were being harassed, it also helped to liberate boys who didn't want to be



touched in the hallway or made fun of for their actual or perceived sexual orientations. Many of the school administrators we worked with were surprised that we wanted to talk to both girls and boys. But the reality is that talking to a single gender can't and won't solve this social problem. Our message this week was simple: Both girls and boys can use their voices to ensure that sexual harassment does not have to be part of their high school experience."

After the workshops, Laura and Catherine presented their work at the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders.

New Club on Campus: "She's the First."

She's the First is a new club on campus, and it is a campus chapter of the national nonprofit organization, She's the First. We creatively fundraise throughout the year to sponsor girls' education in developing countries. We recently held our first fundraiser, Tie Dye Cupcakes For A Cause and successfully raised \$300. All proceeds from the bake sale will go towards sponsoring a year of school for a girl in Nepal.

I first found out about She's the First while doing research on a final paper for my Intro to Women's Studies course. I had

chosen to research girls' education in the developing world, and found She's the First and instantly became interested in being involved. I saw that they had a campus chapter program, including a successful chapter at Notre Dame, and knew Saint Mary's could really make a difference with She's the First. As a women's college, I think we truly understand how important it is to educate women, to inspire and empower them. In the developing world, when you sponsor a girl, you can give her the chance to live healthier, delay marriage and

childbirth, resist domestic violence, secure a better job, earn higher wages, and break the cycle of poverty. Educating women and girls is such a powerful tool to better the world, and I am so excited to actively bring about amazing change with the Saint Mary's community.

-- Mileva Brunson; Class of 2014

Check out "She's the First" on the web at www.shesthefirst.org

Book Review: *Why Have Kids?: A New Mom Explores the Truth About Parenting and Happiness*

In true Jessica Valenti fashion, *Why Have Kids* argues that our culture has turned parenting—particularly motherhood—into an unattainable mold that no person can emulate. Valenti successfully argues that by defining motherhood as “the hardest” and “most rewarding” job on the planet, that women will continue to be underrepresented and undermined in the public because they should really be attending to their families.

Why Have Kids places motherhood in a historical, political, economic, and personal light that nearly every woman reading this book can relate to. Valenti speaks personally about her struggles

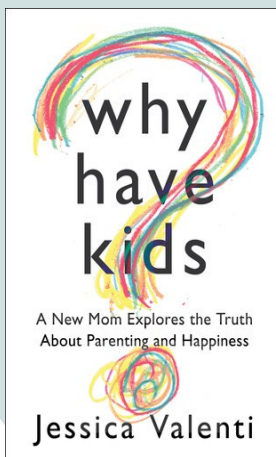
with motherhood, how current-parenting debates based on “research” pit mothers against each other and deter from valuable parenting, and the ideal of mother as occupation is a dichotomy because mothers do not answer to a boss or even get paid.

I think this book is a must read. We all have mothers, and many of us plan to be mothers. Valenti sheds light on cultural issues and ideals that need to be addressed, and can help readers understand where these parenting values come from historically. *Why Have*

Kids is a fun, and easy read that would be excellent to pick up over your holiday travels!

-- Abby Henning, Class of 2013

“Valenti successfully argues that by defining motherhood as “the hardest” and “most rewarding” job on the planet, that women will continue to be underrepresented and undermined in the public because they should really be attending to their families. “





We're on the Web!

<http://www3.saintmarys.edu/womens-studies>

Gender and Women's Studies Program
38 Spes Unica Hall, Rm. 164E
Saint Mary's College
Notre Dame, IN 46556

Using Facebook in the GWS classroom:



Professors Susan Alexander and Sonalini Sapra use facebook as a discussion tool in their Gender and Women's Studies courses. They post articles, statistics, and videos to engage students in current events.