

FALL 2013, ISSUE 3

GENDER & WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWSLETTER



A FEW WORDS FROM OUR PROGRAM CHAIR

Welcome to the fall 2013 edition of the Gender and Women's Studies newsletter! It has been a busy semester. The program underwent an external review in September; three scholars from Denison University, DePauw University, and Fordham University evaluated our curriculum and gave us a favorable review. The week of 7 October was our first GWS week and included an alumnae

panel and a faculty discussion of *Lean In*. And Professors Sapra and Wagman, along with several students, went to the National Women's Studies Association meeting in Cincinnati in early November.

And in really big news, the program received permission to submit a proposal for a major! We will turn in the paperwork next month, so cross your

fingers and toes. If all goes well, there will be GWS minors and majors next year!

Enjoy the newsletter, and good luck with the end of the semester.

All the best,

Stacy Davis, associate professor,
religious studies, and GWS

FEATURED INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Student Cara Lutz discusses her experience attending the National Women's Studies Association
- Student Abigail Burgen writes about her SSTAR research grant with Professor Sonalini Sapra
- Remembering SMC and ND Gender & Women's Studies event, "What Does Your Halloween Costume Say About You?"

GROUP OF ELEVEN FROM SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE ATTENDS ANNUAL NATIONAL WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

Going to the NWSA conference in Cincinnati was a great experience.

Although we as a group stayed until the morning of the 9th, the conference ran from November 7-10 at the Duke Energy Center in downtown Cincinnati. Not only did I learn a lot at every panel I attended, but I also got to know

some great Saint Mary's girls. Guided by Saint Mary's faculty, Dr. Sonalini Sapra and Dr. Jamie Wagman, they were able to give us this opportunity to learn from a large spectrum of feminist ideas. SMC students who attended were senior Grace Connolly, juniors Allison Sheets, Clarissa Frederick, Cara Lutz, Payton Moore, and Ellie Fitzpatrick as well as freshmen Katlynn Dee, Alexandria Henke and Emily Beaudoin.

One of the panels I attended was titled, *Princesses, Ladies, and Girls: Self-Reference and*



Empowerment among College Women. Topics such as self-identity, culture, dating violence, and life goals were often brought up. I enjoyed this session because I grew up and aspired to be one of the Disney Princesses. As a college student I am now in touch with reality, but young girls today still have the drive to live in this "princess culture." It embodies not only in ideology but also in material objects such as movies, toys, clothes, furniture, jewelry, makeup, etc. What struck me most was the

discussion regarding Disney Princess movies and dating violence – that princess culture pervades into adulthood unknowingly and leads women to fantasize that "happy ever after" is only achieved through getting the "prince."

Another panel I went to was called *Bite Me: Food, Power, Politics.* This panel really resonated with me because I am interested in researching food studies for my senior comprehensive. I have looked into

gendered foods, but not foods that correlate with certain races, which I found interesting. This panel showed that the dieting empire can act as a religion. Many treat dieting as a daily ritual whether it is through constant reading about the latest and greatest trends, spreading its benefits to others, having that continual reminder to stay on track, or idolizing a certain weight goal or person. The NWSA conference was an eye-opener for me because it inspired me to think about critiques that I never thought of before. It also sparked my attention because I will be starting my senior comprehensive and the conference helped me understand what good research entails. – Cara Lutz, Gender and Women’s Studies minor

STUDENT SHARES HER EXPERIENCE WITH FEMINIST RESEARCH

This past summer, I was one of three lucky recipients of the SSTAR research grant. The SSTAR research grant allows students to work on similar projects alongside professors in a specific discipline; I worked on this project with Professor Sonalini Sapra from GWS/POSC as she studied women’s labor rights in India. I chose to examine how transnational advocacy networks (TANs) utilize the human rights approach in order to get women’s sexual and reproductive health (SRH) on the international agenda, which is an interdisciplinary study of both POSC and GWS. Sexual and reproductive health programs address issues of inequalities in areas like maternal health, safe access to abortion, elimination of female infanticide, HIV/AIDS prevention education, family planning, elimination of sexual violence against women, and ability to express human sexuality.

I compared two networks, International Women’s Health Coalition (IWHC) and the Women’s Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR). I examined how IWHC and WGNRR used the human rights framework to advocate for women’s sexual and reproductive health at the international level. I analyzed both networks’ websites, social media sites, reports, brochures, and press releases from the past year. I did this to see the progress IWHC and WGNRR were making in advocating and implementing SRH in the agenda for the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the plan to follow the UN Millennium Development Goals. I compared both networks progress and collaboration with UN Women in order to evaluate how transnational advocacy networks impact change regarding women’s SRH in the post-2015 world.

Discussing women’s sexual and reproductive health is beneficial for an informed and knowledgeable college education. It is imperative that students understand sexual and reproductive health not only as women, but as academics as well. Improved women’s SRH will have a positive impact on gender and development on the international scale. In order to move discussions about women’s rights forward, women, especially future scholars and college graduates, must know the issues and create change via social action. – Student Abby Burgan

HALLOWEEN PROGRAM IGNITES
DISCUSSION AT SMC AND ND

The Gender and Women's Studies program at Saint Mary's College and University of Notre Dame presented a program, "What Does Your Halloween Costume Say About You" on October 28. Student monologues and presentations challenged an audience of approximately 30 students to examine the cultural insensitivity of many popular Halloween costumes and costume party themes in South Bend. Payton Moore, a junior at Saint Mary's, is featured here in her opening monologue about the inappropriateness of sexist and racist costumes embraced by many college students today.

