



Women's Studies

A Different Act

By Dr. M. C. Santana, Interim Director Women's Studies Program

"When I think of feminism I think of power, vision and love"

I found a special home 12 years ago in the Women's Studies Program. My first mentor came from the Women's Studies program. My first lecture at UCF was for a Brown Bag Lunch Series for the Women's Studies Program and my first retrospective photography show reception was a gift from the Women's Studies Program. So you wonder, why it took me so long to be Interim Director? Well, life happened--tenure, children, sabbatical and other projects happened.

Being a feminist is more than a label for me. I believe that women and girls are special and have tremendous potential. My job as Interim Director is to seek students, faculty and members of the Orlando community to help educate, empower and change the lives of women and girls. I believe our program serves the whole university by educating women and men. You can read on this newsletter one interview and one unique piece by men minors in Women's Studies. We welcome all and we cherish all people. Diversity is a sister of feminism. We can't discuss feminism without talking about sexual preference, wellness, human rights, and leadership.

You can read the piece written by Leandra Preston about our new course offerings on Girl Studies. We are excited because we are tying our exceptional program for 12 years old girls with the courses that now we can offer our students. Why wait to get them in college when we can teach them leadership in middle school? Please make sure you read about our program jewel the Young Women Leaders Program and the article written by Nina Perez, the coordinator. Since 2007 this program has grown from 12 girls to 31 girls this fall. All Big Sisters are UCF students from different majors and all 12-year old girls are from Seminole County. We bring them to UCF one day in the fall for UCF Day. It is our way of promoting our home at UCF and showing them the exciting future that awaits them in college.

Our Service Learning component continues to be quiet active since all WST classes have it. It is through such partnerships that our program becomes stronger in the community. Please read Christine Mouton's article about our Introduction to Women's Studies class. This class showcases Service Learning and introduces the students to the idea of giving time and effort to others for the better good.

My vision for Women's Studies at UCF is of a Women and Gender Studies Center where the student's groups can meet, teach classes, and have peer advocates carry training sessions on how to help other victims of hate or sex crimes. A Center will then house a reading room/library (which we started in a humble fashion located in my office). We should also

have a space for graduate students to work on grants and service learning programs. We desperately need a center for our little and big sisters to meet for the Young Women Leaders Program. They would benefit from a space to lead discussions, listen to speakers and create crafts. I guess if I were to look around campus and think of half of the population of students I would think that women could also have a center like Multicultural Students do-a safe place where all religion or political ideas are welcome and students can have a voice without retribution.

Please let me know what you think of our new newsletter format. This newsletter was created with you in mind.

Girls Studies at UCF by Leandra Preston

"Because girl power' must be more than stickers, shoelaces, and songs."- Susan Hentges, From Girl Power to Empowerment

From Barbie dolls to riot grrls was the theme of this particular academic space as we explored the changing role of girls in American culture and globally. I taught UCF's first Girls Studies' course in Cocoa during Fall 2008 with twenty students who traveled from Orlando to participate in discussions about girls creating their own spaces, resisting negative stereotypes and counteracting unproductive social constructions that are reinforced to keep girls confined in small, quiet spaces. Girls are conditioned to behave in limiting ways-to cross their legs, use "inside voices," act ladylike, and generally tiptoe around life. The message I intended with this course was perfectly stated in a 'zine created by two of my students, Kathryn Quimby and Ashley Lee, "Take up space little grrr!!!" Since then, the course has been offered online and student service-learning projects have integrated the Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP), Girl Scouts, the PACE Center for Girls, BETA House, Rock and Roll Camp for Girls, and Rainwater Center for Girls, among others.

Girls Studies is an emerging interdisciplinary field of Women's Studies that focuses on the experiences of girls in U.S. and global cultures. Using academic and popular texts from various media, including those produced online, in print, and via television, film and music, we examine the position of girls in relation to dominant cultural practices and larger social, institutional, and political transformations. We also study texts produced by and for girls in Western and global contexts and attend to the expansion of female youth culture beyond consumer-oriented activities to those involving cultural production. Students learn to analyze representations of girls in dominant cultural texts and how girls, in turn, respond to these representations via their own media productions as they develop their identities. Our analyses recognize the ways that race, ethnicity, economic status, and culture shape the everyday lives of girls. We also discuss how girls around the world are impacted by and respond to technology, mass media and popular culture. Students apply academic knowledge, including feminist theories, to service-learning projects that benefit adolescent girls. By the end of the semester students are able to critically evaluate interdisciplinary perspectives of girlhood, examine how dominant cultural constructions of girls and women impact girls' experiences and daily lives and connect with larger institutional, cultural, and political practices and trends.

Since technology plays such a crucial role in the lives of girls today, our Girls Studies' courses include virtual components, including blogs, social networking for social change, electronic 'zines, and digital literacy. Many discussions in my Girls Studies courses take place on our blog at www.girlsstudies.blogspot.com where students respond to texts, share girlhood stories, post book and film reviews, and link one another to articles and websites focused on girls' issues. Scholars and students of Girls Studies from outside our class are also invited to

participate. During our first semester utilizing the blog, Rebecca Walker, third wave feminist icon and daughter of Alice Walker, commented on a student post, generating excitement among my class and a renewed investment in their blogging. The blog is also important because it makes our Girls Studies work accessible to girls themselves. Rather than only theorizing about girls, we seek to engage girls and girls' voices in our explorations.

This success and student excitement generated around Girls Studies inspired Women's Studies to develop a line of courses focused on issues related to girls. These courses will become a track on our Women's Studies BA pending approval. As few programs across the country house Girls Studies' programs (we can currently identify no tracks and one certificate in Girls Studies at other universities), Women's Studies at UCF hopes to provide a niche for those interested in further exploring issues of girls. New courses include Girls and Leadership, Girls in the Body, Virtual Girls: Girls and Digital Media, and Global and Transnational Feminisms. UCF's Young Women Leaders Program will play a central role in our Girls Studies work, as they did via service-learning in our first Girls Studies' class, with over half of our class acting as mentors or program facilitators.

Girls Studies is an important space to examine the often unexamined assumptions that dictate girls' journeys into adulthood and seeks to place girls at the center of academic inquiry. Making Girls Studies a central component of our Women's Studies Program reinforces the crucial role of girls in shaping our future and provides a unique opportunity to connect girls and women, honoring the past while looking forward, embracing the possibilities that dreams for women enable. As one of the 'zine pages in my class put it: "because there isn't going to be a revolution without us."

Women's Studies is at it Again. **by Farah Cato**

Despite budget crunches and admin changes, the WS program continues to thrive. This year brought us a new interim director, Dr. Maria Santana, continued work on the proposal for the WS Major; and course offerings that reflect an ambitious and promising curriculum for current and future WS students, faculty, and affiliates.

The curricular changes are, perhaps, the most exciting changes we can look forward to. The emphasis on Girls' Studies is a particularly important step, since Girls' Studies is still an emerging field under the WS umbrella. The Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP) is one facet of this, and courses like "Virtual Girls," "Girls & the Body," and "Girls & Leadership" are another. A Girls' Studies concentration has huge implications for all of us: not only will it engage students in exciting new scholarship, but it also provides us with increased service-learning opportunities, greater community outreach, and more recognition for UCF. Ultimately, of course, it also points to a more promising future for girls who are growing up; those particular possibilities are endless.

But the plans don't end there. Student interest in Global Studies, Thirdwave Feminism, Ecofeminism, Activism, and Theories have led to curricular enhancement in each of these areas. A Summer Study-Abroad program is in the works for Summer 2011, and our students are increasingly encouraged to (and interested in) submitting their work to UCF's Undergraduate Research Journal. There are more Independent Study and Internship projects than ever before, and more requests for WS expertise on thesis projects.

Women's Studies is absolutely growing. With all this already in the works, just imagine how much more we can expect. The possibilities are, indeed, endless.

Interview with ROSS TEMPLETON, Women's Studies Minor, Political Science Major.

Ross is a senior at UCF and a minor in Women's Studies enrolled in the course Theories of Masculinity. I was interested in knowing how Women's Studies appealed to me. He said that he came to Women's Studies out of a chance when he picked up a book at Barnes & Noble on Women's Evolutionary Psychology . "I read about Women's perspective on this issue and made a connection" said Ross. You come to different topics with a certain bias because it is a learning process with a different personal history.

Theories of Masculinity is a new Women's Studies class offered for the first time in fall 2009. The instructor is Leandra Preston. Ms. Preston and her class on masculinity have been working on handling discussions and valuing male perspectives on topics such as pornography.

Ross said that some of the things he has learned while doing his minor in Women's Studies is to have more empathy; to see the world from somebody else's shoes because he finds the dialogue enlightening.

I asked him if he was thinking of putting his major Political Science into work for women and he responded that he is trying to start a new student group in campus called "Men Against Rape".

We wish Ross good luck and invite any other student to enroll in our Women's Studies classes and minor.



FOCUS on GENDER: Interview with Graduate Gender Certificate student Elena Ahrens

The Gender Studies Graduate Certificate was "a way to keep going and keep my passion alive" says Elena Ahrens, Summer 2009 graduate from an M.A. in English and from the Women's Studies Gender Studies Graduate certificate.

Ahrens considers the Gender Certificate as a "minor" within her English masters because the certificate gave her a chance to focus. "I already had half the courses done and I saw the tie between English and Women's Studies" explained Ahrens about the flexibility of the certificate's course work. She regards the Gender Studies Certificate as "the icing in my cupcake" because Women's Studies is a small department and the interactions with other classmates and teachers allowed me to go further with my interest in Gender.

The turning point for Ahrens was during Advanced Feminist Theory with Dr. Kate Oliver. Dr. Oliver taught the class combining some undergraduates with graduate students. To Ahrens delight the combination had a dual dynamics, "a taste of everything" She goes on saying "because of that class and Dr. Oliver I can now teach how to write a good abstract". Ahrens is currently working fulltime teaching Effective Copywriting at Full Sail in Winter Park as Course Director for the Media Design MFA Program. Ahrens has experience as a freelance writer, graphic designer, promotions coordinator and as art director.



Russian scholar visits Global and Transnational Feminism class

On January 25, 2010, Women's Studies welcomed guest lecturer Irina Morozova. Morozova's presentation, entitled "Images of Women in the Works of Russian and Old South Female Writers in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century", was well received by

students in Jackie Mallan-King's Global and Transnational Feminism course. Morozova is a History Professor at the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow. Interim Director of Women's Studies M. C. Santana presented the speaker and joined the lecture.

Scholarship

Rhizomes' Special Issue: "Becoming-Girl"

Call for Papers

Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge,... a peer-reviewed online journal, invites submissions for its thematic issue, "Becoming-Girl." Deleuze articulates the notion of becoming as existing through multiplicity and alliances, a process that does not have a beginning or end, but is always in-progress; becoming is, much like girlhood, intermezzo. Deleuze claims that "Girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes." Girls' identities, interactions and relationships, particularly in cyber-contexts, are rhizomatic, complex, bordering the virtual and reality in their multiple becomings.

The purpose of this special issue is to explore how girls negotiate identity and practice resistance rhizomatically. We are particularly interested in how identity negotiations operate in digital cultures, such as social networks (Facebook, MySpace), virtual realities (Second Life), and activist cultural productions by girls, such as zines, blogs, instant message communication, and mobile phone texting. We are interested in multiple approaches, genres, and media that consider these issues, including mediums that resist categorization.

Proposals might address the following questions:

- o How can girls resist fixed identity constructs through digital mediums?
- o How do girls engage digital spaces to negotiate identity and the process of becoming?
- o How do such spaces foster connectedness rather than isolated action(s) for girls who resist dominant cultural messages about girlhood?
- o What are the everyday embodied conditions of girls' lives as constructed/experienced through new technologies and communication networks?
- o How is gender and femininity experienced in the virtual medium?
- o What are the possibilities of the so-called networked body or the body online?
- o How might girls' rhizomatic online identity constructions and alliances challenge or disrupt (or reinforce) traditional social interactions?

As a full text online periodical, *Rhizomes* emphasizes multimedia to foster imaginative work that challenges typical critical forms. While submissions need not necessarily include developed multimedia, authors are encouraged to consider how their work might be enhanced by elements specific to the online medium. For additional information and

submission guidelines, please visit the journal's website: www.rhizomes.net. Research involving girls directly (rather than only theoretically) must have IRB approval. Inquiries or abstracts welcomed any time; deadline for completed essays or multimodal works, August 1, 2010

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