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## Women's Studies Newsletter 09-2009

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# Women's Studies Newsletter

September 2009 Issue 2

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Welcome to the Women's Studies September 2009 newsletter! The 2009-2010 academic year promises to be an exciting time of new beginnings, developments, and transitions for the department.

We have moved! You can now find us on the second floor of Shatzel Hall. If you have any questions about the department, come by the main office, 228 Shatzel Hall. You can also find all information about the program on our website (which will be going through major renovations in the coming months).

And we are now on Facebook! Become a fan of Women's Studies @ BGSU to keep up with the latest program news and events.

## An Interview with New Undergraduate Coordinator Sarah Rainey

The Women's Studies department is very excited to have Sarah Rainey as the new Undergraduate Studies Coordinator. Dr. Rainey is originally from Marion, OH and earned her degrees from Ohio State University. She has a BA in Women's Studies (minor Film Studies), MA in Women's Studies, and PhD in Women's Studies (with a Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Disability Studies). She also has experience as a project coordinator at OSU for a HIV/AIDS research study. Furthermore, she has been active in sexuality education efforts at OSU and in the general Columbus community, work she hopes to continue at BGSU. She has had the prestigious honor of having her dissertation nominated by OSU as the University's official selection as the Best Dissertation in the Arts and Humanities for the (national) Council of Graduate Schools. Dr. Rainey took the time to answer some of my questions about her interests and her plans for the Women's Studies department. Please stop by her office (231 Shatzel Hall) and welcome her if you haven't had the chance to do so already.



CL: What are your research interests? Do you have any recent publications?

SR: Right now I'm working on revising my dissertation for a book. The book is called "Love, Sex, and Disability: The Ethics and Politics of Care in Intimate Relationships." It examines how couples in which one person has a physical disability (and the other person is

nondisabled) are treated by family, friends, and society. It compares this treatment to the experiences and beliefs about care and intimacy held by people involved in disabled/nondisabled intimate relationships. Contrary to popular portrayals, not all couples dealing with disability experience the impairment as a burden. In fact, some couples are able to integrate physical impairment into their sexual

intimacy. I hope that the book will be useful to people with disabilities, their loved ones, and feminist disability scholars alike!

I have two research studies beginning.

The first is a follow-up to the dissertation and will look specifically at same-sex disabled/nondisabled couples. Typically disability rights organizations are dominated by heterosexual people and LGBT organizations are dominated by nondisabled people. Thus, in addition to learning more about these couples' experiences as queer and disabled, I will be asking

about their experiences with both disability and LGBT organizations. My goal is to better understand ways in which disability and LGBT organizations can build coalitional politics.

The second is a larger study that will investigate the experiences of parents of lesbians who become mothers. I want to conduct interviews and focus groups with parents, asking them, how do they feel about their daughter's decision to parent? What is their relationship with their grandchildren like?

What do they tell their friends and co-workers? How well is the lesbian family integrated into the wider family network? Does it make a difference if the lesbian parent is a bio- or non-bio mother? Currently, there is no information out there for moms and dads of lesbian daughters who become parents themselves.

CL: What attracted you to BGSU and this position?

SR: I was initially attracted to BGSU because my partner is a BGSU alum (MA in Philosophy). I also liked the idea of having administrative duties--I really enjoyed my work at OSU as the administrative assistant for the Disability Studies program and I was excited about working on program development for Women's Studies at BGSU. At my campus interview I met so many wonderful people and I'm honored to now get to work with such esteemed scholars and activists.

CL: What are some of the plans that you have for the direction that the Women's Studies program will take this academic year?

SR: My main goal for 09-10 is to increase the number of majors and minors in Women's Studies. I plan to do this by reaching out to undergraduates across the campus, publicizing and promoting WS, facilitating a vibrant undergraduate community of WS majors and minors, organizing career fairs and services for WS majors and minors, and encouraging WS undergraduate research and publication.

CL: Anything else you would like to add?

SR: I really love Bowling Green! I'm so proud to live in a city with such progressive housing and employment policies.

My partner, Jessica, and I just officially changed our last names to Rainey. We live in town with our two dogs, two cats, two rats, and five goldfish. My step-son, Zachary Rice, goes to George Washington University. He is the son of my late partner Max Rice. Zachary is majoring in History (perhaps with a minor in Women's Studies) and plans to work as a museum curator.

Interview by Clare Lemke

### **Dr. Radhika Gajjala: Interim Director 2009-2010**

During Dr. Vikki Krane's sabbatical, Dr. Radhika Gajjala will serve as the Women's Studies Interim Director. Dr. Gajjala is a professor of Communication and Cultural Studies. Her primary research interests are queer theory, global feminisms, globalization and culture, and cyberfeminism.

Dr. Gajjala plans to focus her efforts this year on working with the Women's Studies Steering Committee to diversify curriculum in order to enrich the experiences of Women's Studies majors, minors and graduate students pursuing a certificate. Furthermore, Dr. Gajjala aims to partner with the Steering Committee and the Women's Center to actively recruit and retain returning adult students. She notes, "Returning adults students tend to have families to support – whether they are men or women. Further, returning adult women students and part-time women students tend to need particular kinds of bridging in the curriculum and Women's Studies courses can provide this sort of curricular intervention."

Dr. Gajjala asserts that the Women's Studies program is particularly equipped to meet the needs of returning adult students because,

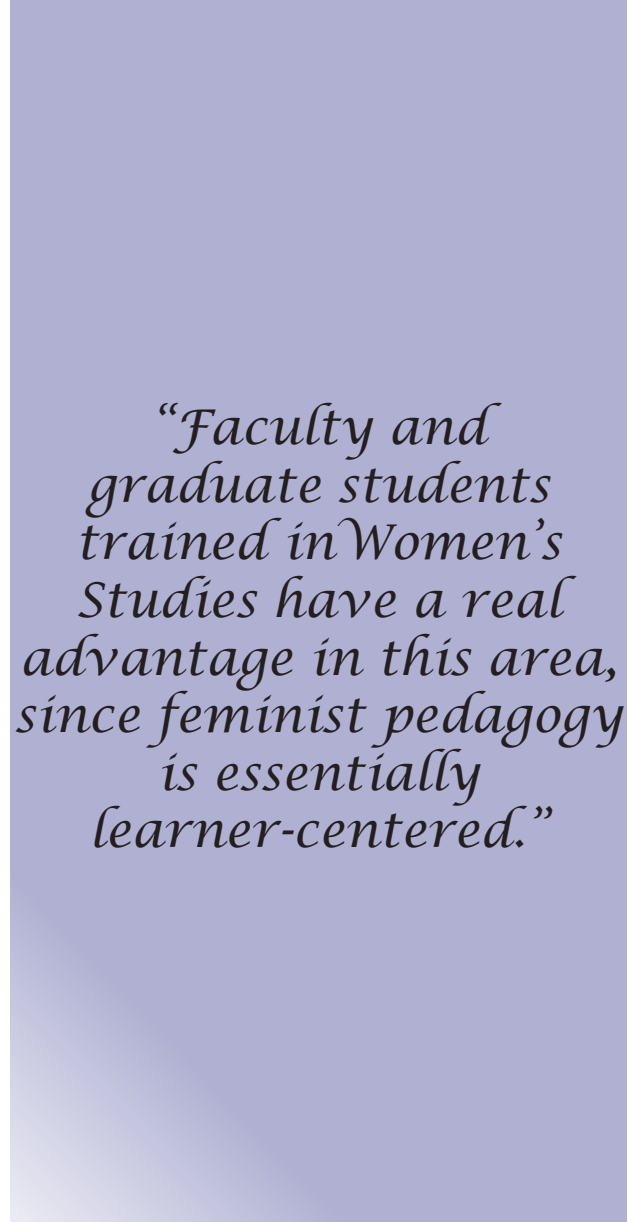


“Faculty and graduate students trained in Women’s Studies have an advantage in this area, since feminist pedagogy is essentially learner-centered.”

Hence, a Women’s Studies curriculum has great potential to be sensitive to the needs of re-turning adult students, and for making certain accommodations that offer non-traditional students support. Some of the ways that Dr. Gajjala plans to make Women’s Studies courses more accessible to returning adult students and other non-traditional students is to develop online access “to existing courses for returning adult populations and part-time students worldwide,” and also to “develop curricular additions such as courses, workshops and seminars – focused on returning adult students.”

The Women’s Studies department’s focus on the recruitment and retention of returning adult students is at the center of the program’s larger commitment to integrate community outreach within the Women’s Studies curriculum, and to foster dialogues between the department and the broader Bowling Green/Toledo community. Dr. Gajjala states, “Women’s Studies courses tend to be community oriented and lead to outreach activities and community engagement. Students doing a Women’s Studies major or minor at the undergraduate level or the certificate at the graduate level tend to be involved in social justice issues and to learn to be involved in community activities. Thus, as interim director, my goal is start diversifying Women’s Studies program collaborations and connections, not only across campus, but with community partners by involving them in curriculum based collaborations.”

With these goals in mind, Dr. Gajjala hopes to further the Women’s Studies program’s long-standing efforts in feminist community building and socially engaged pedagogy.



*“Faculty and graduate students trained in Women’s Studies have a real advantage in this area, since feminist pedagogy is essentially learner-centered.”*

# Graduate Student Leadership:

## Graduate Women's Caucus & QueerGrads

There are two exciting new developments in graduate student organizing on the BGSU campus this year: the resurgence of the Graduate Women's Caucus (which was reactivated in the 2008-2009 academic year after a long lapse) and the new group QueerGrads.

### Graduate Women's Caucus

Few people know that there was a Graduate Women's Caucus at BGSU back in the 1970s, but it was disbanded years ago for unknown reasons. In 2008, Dana Roof decided to reform the organization, which is designed to provide graduate women an opportunity to engage in feminist activism on campus and in the Bowling Green community.

In terms of specifically addressing the needs of graduate women, we are committed to the academic and professional enhancement of women across all disciplines. In addition to supporting the Women's Studies department, the Women's Center, OWI, QueerGrads, and other organizations with similar interests and goals, GWC is planning several events to serve our members and other graduate women. First and foremost, we would like for the GWC to offer a place for peer support where all graduate women can discuss any and all concerns related to academics, feminist activism, or other issues. As we build a community of graduate women, we would like to develop a means for mentorship between women at various stages in their scholarship and professional development.

Throughout the course of the year, we will be sponsoring a series of facilitated discussions

that will address the various issues concerning academic and personal life as a graduate woman. The first roundtable discussion will take place on Wednesday, September 23rd at 1pm in the Women's Center and the focus will be gendered power relations in the classroom, specifically power challenges faced by female TAs and professors. We hope that this lively discussion will allow graduate assistants and faculty to share their personal experiences, insights in feminist pedagogy, and advice on establishing and maintaining authority in the classroom. Other focus topics being considered for upcoming events include how to balance family in graduate school and how to navigate identity-based dynamics among colleagues and faculty. As the GWC is committed to serving the interests of all graduate women, any suggestions or requests for specific discussion topics are always welcome.

For the spring, the GWC is planning a benefit show at Grumpy Dave's pub to showcase local women musicians, poets, and other artists. While this benefit will be our organization fundraiser, we also will be donating a portion of the profits to a local non-profit organization for women. Another event currently in the works for spring semester is a screening of a couple of films to-be-determined in order to raise awareness about various feminist issues. Our goal is to eventually establish a regular

film series at the Gish that would be co-sponsored by other feminist, queer, or cultural groups on campus.

We would like to encourage all women pursuing graduate education to stop by a GWC meeting and let us know how we can better serve their interests. With more people involved in the Graduate Women's Caucus, we will become a richer resource for women at all points in their personal and professional lives.

By Megan Adams,  
GWC President

## QueerGrads

QueerGrads is a promising and long-awaited addition to the BGSU community. Founder Adrienne Hill, a PhD student in American Culture Studies, says she wanted to start a group that addressed the needs of queer grad students ever since she came to BGSU two years ago. She notes, "At the time, the only real official space for queer graduate students at BGSU was the GradSTEP workshop Cynthia Mahaffey held every year--and, of course, we didn't get to meet grad students who had been here for a while at that workshop. So there were really no official spaces for queer grad students--only small social networks people carved out for themselves, if they were lucky enough to be in a program with other queer students."

The group in its official form this year is the result of lots of informal networking. Encouraged by Annie Russell of the LGBT Resource Center, Hill began to organize people through "an online e-mail list, and occasional invitations to local bars and clubs to get drinks after class

and associate with other LGBTQ grad students. That is where we started to see that interest existed." After seeing the need for a group such as this in BGSU, Hill collaborated with Em Hurford (of the Rhetoric and Composition department), Sheana Miller-Director (of the ACS department), and Megan Adams (also of ACS, the president of the Graduate Women's Caucus, and Support Chair of QueerGrads) to write the group's constitution. QueerGrads just last week held their elections for board positions and determined that Matt Dauphin will be Social Chair, Anna Katherine Amacker will be Activism Chair, and Em Hurford will be Treasurer.

Hill notes that the primary goal of QueerGrads at this point "is just to get the word out that we exist, and to provide a space for queer grad students to voice their concerns." She hopes that QueerGrads will offer a necessary space for queer graduate students who may otherwise feel cut-off from a larger queer community. She states, "I think the biggest problem queer graduate students face right now is alienation--we're all isolated in our specific grad programs, which may be more or less queer-friendly, all of the existing social networks for LGBTQ people in Bowling Green cater to people who are either younger or older than we are, and we don't know how to find each other. I want us to be able to find each other, and once we have found each other, we can have a safe space to figure out our commonalities, support one another, and hopefully come up with some concrete ideas and systematic plans for making BGSU more hospitable to queer graduate students."

Specifically, Hill would like to see the group develop workshops on issues that affect queer grad students. Topics might include neg-

otiating one's sexuality in the classroom, transitioning from one gender to another while in grad school, and issues that arise between academics and their partners. Furthermore, Hill would like to see QueerGrads network with other LGBTQ groups on campus and queer faculty to address specific political concerns, noting, "for example, the fact that 'gender identity and expression' is not currently a protected identity category in BGSU's antidiscrimination policy." While these plans focus on issues particular to Hill's interests, ultimately she sees QueerGrads' efforts and objectives as something that should be shaped by the interests of QueerGrads members.

When asked who can participate in QueerGrads meetings and events, Hill states, "This is an important question, because when I talk to people about the group, the question I am most frequently asked is: 'Is there space in your group for [fill in the blank]?' The blank might be anything: married bisexual mothers, polyamorous heterosexuals, same-sex partners of grad students who are not affiliated with the University in any other way, etc. The answer is always 'yes.'" Hill goes on to say, "If you in any way identify with the term 'queer,' or with any of the other identity labels that hang out underneath the queer umbrella, or just consider yourself to be queer-friendly, there's a space for you in QueerGrads."

QueerGrads meets every other Tuesday from 1-2pm in room 315 of the Bowen-Thompson Student Union (their next meeting is on September 29th). QueerGrads also plans to have at least one large social gathering a month. Anyone interested in joining the e-mail list or who has questions about the group should contact Adrienne Hill at [achill@bgsu.edu](mailto:achill@bgsu.edu).

## **Undergraduate Leadership: OWI**

We are the Organization for Women's Issues, or OWI. As an undergraduate group, we have dedicated ourselves to promoting women's rights, increasing awareness of these rights, and taking actions on campus and in the community. We are not a very large group, but the people we have are dedicated and passionate.

We, as a group, are trying to break the stereotype of what the majority of people think it means to be a feminist. There is no one set definition as to what a feminist is, even for people that consider themselves feminists. Even among our small group there are differing ideas and beliefs, but there is always a common goal, and that is to raise awareness of the unequal treatment of women. Our group is dedicated to changing that inequality.

If anyone is interested in joining our cause, we meet every Wednesday night in the Women's Center, Room 107, Hanna Hall.

By Amanda Henderson,  
OWI Secretary



# FALL EVENTS

## WOMEN'S STUDIES FALL RECEPTION

The Women's Studies Fall Reception is an event in honor of new women faculty and newly tenured women faculty. It will be held on Thursday September 24th from 4-7pm in the Dorothy Uber Art Gallery. This event is open to the public.

### Ongoing Events



The Women's Center has three ongoing lecture series (Brown Bag Series, Women's Professional Development Series, and the Women's Research Network) which address a wide spectrum of academic, social justice, and professional issues.

All lectures and workshops are held in the Women's Center in 107 Hanna Hall. For a schedule of events, see <http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/women/page53193.html>

## SILENT WITNESS UNVEILING CEREMONY

The Silent Witness Project is a national organization dedicated to memorializing women who have been murdered by their intimate partners. The project constructs a life-sized wooden silhouette to represent each victim in order to use this "silent witness" to share her story.



The Northwest Ohio Silent Witness Project has been representing women and girls killed by their husbands, boyfriends, and dating partners for the past decade. There have been more than 55 murders of this nature in Northwest Ohio during that time. Every year, an unveiling ceremony is held during which each victim's story will be read, allowing the community the chance to mourn her death and honor her life.

This year's ceremony will occur on October 5th at 6pm in the Dayspring Assembly of God Church. For more information about The Silent Witness Project see <http://www.bgsu.edu/organizations/silentwitnessno/index.html>.