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Interview with Nancy Topping Bazin: "Old Dominion University: Affirmative Action in the Curriculum"

Peggy McIntosh

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The Forum for Liberal Education

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The Study of Women: Implications for Reconstructing the Liberal Arts Disciplines Peggy McIntosh	1
Wheaton College	3
Old Dominion University ..	5 ✓
Montana State University ..	6
Indiana University, Bloomington	7
University of Maine at Orono	8
Mankato State University ..	10
Guilford College	11
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ..	12
Additional Programs	13
Resources	16

The Study of Women in the Liberal Arts Curriculum

The new research on women has challenged the assumptions that only men have made significant contributions to history, the arts, and the sciences. Researchers have demonstrated that by including women as relevant subjects for study, disciplines are not only expanded by the contributions of women but are also enhanced by new theories and discoveries that place the roles and activities of both sexes into a realistic perspective. This issue of The Forum for Liberal Education examines the ways in which colleges and universities are responding to the new scholarship on women.

Elaine Reuben, former coordinator of the National Women's Studies Association, characterizes women's studies as a process of curricular change. The discovery of knowledge about women by feminist researchers provides a new perspective by which to examine and to transform both the content and the shape of the curriculum. According to Dr. Reuben, approximately 350 U.S. colleges and universities now recognize women's studies programs that annually coordinate the offering of thousands of courses in traditional departments and in instructional units identified as women's studies programs. Some schools, such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Mankato State University, have established academic programs in women's studies and offer specific courses focusing on women. Others, including Wheaton College, Montana State University, and the University of Maine at Orono, are examining ways in which research and perspectives on women can be integrated into all courses. This latter approach is often referred to as "mainstreaming women's studies" and is occurring both at schools which have established women's studies programs and those which have not formalized their activities.

In her essay, Peggy McIntosh calls for a reexamination of the content and methodology of the traditional disciplines. She challenges faculty members in every department to move beyond the study of white Western males and suggests how the curriculum will be transformed by the inclusion of women and non-Western persons of every caste. This issue closes with a list of resources that can be used to begin an exploration of the new research and scholarship on women. The list was compiled with the assistance of Dr. McIntosh and Dr. Reuben.

The Study of Women: Implications for Reconstructing the Liberal Arts Disciplines

by Peggy McIntosh

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Research on women—the study not only of the women we are allowed to call “notable” but of women as half the world’s population—poses challenging

Old Dominion University *Affirmative Action in the Curriculum*

Believing that the concept of affirmative action should extend to the curriculum, Nancy Topping Bazin, director of the Old Dominion University (ODU) Women's Studies Program, has strived for a change in the school's mission statement to reflect this conviction. "If we have a consensus that equality is a good thing," says Bazin, "then the commitment to the philosophical principle of equality should automatically transfer to the curriculum. We should hire people who are experts in women's, black, and third world studies who can integrate their research into the various departments and help other people change their courses."

Bazin would like the university's mission statement to include the commitment to a curriculum that reflects the perspectives of women, minorities, and third world and nonwestern persons. She recognizes that this change may be a long time in coming and concentrates her energies on a three-prong effort. Bazin's current projects include developing more women's studies courses, integrating a multicultural perspective into current women's studies courses, and influencing the curriculum-at-large by working to get women's studies courses accepted on the list of courses that fulfill university and school requirements.

In her first effort, developing more women's studies courses, Bazin has been successful: the number of women's studies courses has risen from six to 37 in three years. The original six courses were designed in 1977-78 with funds from a National Endowment for the Humanities pilot grant. The purpose of the grant was to fund release time for the development of six team-taught, interdisciplinary women's studies courses. Part of the university's commitment to the project was the agreement to hire a director of women's studies and to take over the budget of the program when the grant expired. In 1978 Bazin became the director of ODU's Women's Studies Program, which is sponsored by the School of Arts and Letters. The half-time director also holds a 50 percent associate professor appointment in the English department.

Bazin's second goal is to integrate a multicultural perspective into the women's studies courses. She is a member of a committee using funds from the U.S. Office of Education to review the representation of third world perspectives in the curriculum. Bazin has examined how these viewpoints might be included in her own courses and will speak with faculty members offering women's studies courses in other departments about the necessity for this international perspective in texts, lectures, and classroom discussions.

The third focus of Bazin's current efforts is on the inclusion of women's studies courses in the list of accepted university core courses. She is hopeful that Introduction to Women's Studies will be approved sometime in the future.

Meanwhile Bazin manages the day-to-day operations of the Women's Studies Program. The program offers a 15-hour certificate option, and students may pursue a major in women's studies through the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies. In addition, a master's degree with an emphasis in women's studies is available through the School of Arts and Letters Institute of Humanities.

During the 1980-81 academic year 27 undergraduates pursued women's studies certificates and 461 students enrolled in women's studies courses. The Women's Studies Program offers several of its own courses, which are taught by either Bazin or faculty from other departments. Introduction to Women's Studies, Women in the Military, and Women in the Developing World are examples of courses offered by the program. Additional courses are offered by other departments and cross-listed with women's studies.

Bazin encourages students to begin with the introductory course. It focuses on the research findings, theories, and issues that have emerged from this new interdisciplinary field. Students explore such topics as the domestic and public power of contemporary women and the origins of misogyny and inequality through readings from Sheila Ruth's *Issues in Feminism: A First Course in Women's Studies* and *The Longest War: Sex Differences in Perspective* by Carol Tavris and Carole Offir.

Another women's studies course, Women in the Military, is of special interest to active-duty women or wives of active-duty men stationed in the Norfolk area. The course covers sexuality, women's combat abilities, and sources of stress.

Cross-listed courses include Women and Crime, American Women Artists, and Women's Health: Major Concerns for the 80s. The Women and Crime course, for example, is offered by the criminal justice department and examines the role of women as offenders, victims, and employees of the criminal justice system.

Other activities of ODU's Women's Studies Program are its monthly newsletter and its women's studies series and faculty and graduate student development conferences. The newsletter contains information on various program courses and events as well as opinion pieces by faculty members. The yearly women's studies series is of interest to faculty, students, and the community. During fall 1980 such speakers as author Maya Angelou and musicologist Jeannie Pool gave lectures, and in spring 1981 Rosalind Mitchison, economic historian from the University of Edinburgh, spoke on "1900-1925: The Labour Party's Contribution to the British Feminist Movement." The development conferences have been held twice a year since 1978 and include participants from ODU and other Tidewater schools including the College of William and Mary, Norfolk State University, and Hampton Institute. Conference topics have included how to build a women's studies program and consciousness-raising in the classroom.

Bazin is using a new approach for these programs during the 1981-82 academic year. Two development conferences will be held featuring Sue Lanser from Georgetown University and Irene Brown from the University of Connecticut. Each speaker will present a public lecture the day before the conferences: Brown will discuss feminism and the family, and Lanser will deliver a lecture on "Power and Motherhood: Can the Hand that Rocks the Cradle Rule the World?" Additional public lectures will be presented by black feminist scholar Mary Helen Washington speaking on black women writers in a presentation titled "As American as Jazz and Lynching" and artist May Stephens who will discuss feminist artists. Monthly seminars on the impact of feminist scholarship on the traditional disciplines also will be held. Revolving around Dale Spender's book,

Men Studies Modified, the seminars will cover a different discipline each month. Chapters discuss feminist research in philosophy, sociology, psychology, and history, and faculty members from appropriate departments will lead the seminar sessions. "The seminars will provide participants with a better idea about what is happening in different fields," says Bazin, "as well as opportunities for intellectual exchange."

The seminars are not the only ways in which Bazin encourages faculty to pursue research on women. By attending faculty orientation meetings she can suggest new courses or areas of research to new faculty members. The dean of the School of Arts and Letters regularly sends faculty to her for advice on the new scholarship. National and regional women's studies conferences provide new audiences for scholarly research, according to Bazin. After making presentations at women's studies conferences, ODU faculty have received grants to continue their research on women and have presented their findings at the national meetings of their own disciplines.

By providing faculty members with new research ideas, Bazin recognizes that she is changing both them and the curriculum. But, she says, individual faculty development will not alter the basic focus of the curriculum. This can be achieved only by changing the university's mission statement.

In the past Bazin has had the support of the university president, dean of the School of Arts and Letters, and the University Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunities Committee in recognizing the appropriateness of including a commitment to the philosophical principle of equality in the curriculum in the mission statement. With membership changes in the affirmative action committee, Bazin anticipates that she may be starting over in gaining their acceptance of the need to change the mission statement. "I've learned to be patient," she says. "A lot of positive things have happened on campus, such as programming and administrative support. At the fall university-wide faculty meeting, for example, the first thing the president said to the faculty was, 'no matter what the national policy is, we'll still have affirmative action here.'" P.B.

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Office of Education Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) Program, 40 faculty members participated in the two-year project which began in 1979.

The MSU WEEA project, Seeking Women's Equity Through Curriculum Revision, had its roots in a 1975 class action discrimination suit which the university lost, says Betty Schmitz, director of the MSU WEEA project. The university reacted seriously to the suit and began to research equity issues.

This research was expanded by the contributions of the MSU faculty working on the WEEA project. According to Schmitz, the 40 faculty participants were chosen on the basis of the quality of their proposed curricular reform projects in their fields and their experience and credentials in curriculum review and development. Schmitz also wanted representatives from each of MSU's seven colleges involved in the project. Faculty working on the two-year project had the option of receiving a stipend or release-time for their involvement, which was primarily during the summer quarters.

During the project's first year the faculty participants attended a three-part seminar series on sex bias in higher education and began review of their own discipline's curriculum materials. The first seminar was led by Myra and David Sadker from American University who discussed six forms of sex bias in the classroom. The Sadkers described these forms as:

- invisibility — underrepresentation of members of certain groups;
- stereotyping — assignment of traditional and rigid roles to members of certain groups;
- unreality — presentation of an unrealistic view of history or experience;
- imbalance/selectivity — presentation of only one interpretation of an issue;
- fragmentation/isolation — separation of issues relating to a certain group from the main body of a text; and
- linguistic bias — reflection of the discriminatory nature of the language.

The other seminars focused on the bias against women in science, and curriculum revision from a women's studies perspective. The participants rated the seminars as being quite useful, says Schmitz. As they learned review techniques to apply to their own discipline's curriculum, they also became aware of sexism and stereotyping in their children's elementary and high school classrooms.

Assisted by the theories and methodologies learned in the seminars, participants analyzed 124 textbooks, eight advising manuals, and various teacher-produced hand-outs, recruitment brochures, and primary readings. For example, a faculty member in the School of Nursing discovered that nursing texts do not present materials on the expanded role of the nurse, the contributions and roles of men in nursing, or how to overcome the traditional stereotype of the nurse. In a review of eight of the ten anthropology texts published since 1978, a professor noted that while women's position in societies is covered, textbooks omit materials on women's cultural and economic roles, rites of passage, and involvement in religion and politics. The participants concluded that while most textbooks no longer contained linguistic biases, they continued to exclude information on women, women's issues, and sex roles in society.

Montana State University

Seeking Women's Equity Through Curriculum Revision

Seeking to eliminate sex role stereotyping and sex bias from the university curriculum, faculty members at Montana State University (MSU) have been examining instructional materials in order to revise and develop courses integrating the study of women. With funds from the U.S.