

THE ALPHADELPHIAN

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BRAVE WOMEN WRITING: VOICES THAT COULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE

8TH ANNUAL RILEY LECTURE IN WOMEN'S STUDIES

Literature's influence lies in its power of suggestion; the world changes according to how people see it, and literature can change the way we see, according to writer and editor Susan Cahill in her April 21 lecture, "Brave Women Writing: Voices That Could Change Your Life."

Cahill, mother of Alfred University graduate and Fulbright recipient Joseph Cahill ('98) and wife of writer Thomas Cahill, delivered the eighth annual Riley Lecture on Women's Studies in the Knight Club.

The annual Riley Lecture is sponsored by Pamela Riley Osborn ('62), Patricia A. Riley ('65) and Melissa Riley in

honor of their parents, Charles P. Riley ('35) and Elizabeth Hallenbeck Riley ('36).

Cahill focused her talk on the subversive power of literature and its use particularly in women's lives, noting that "It is subversive to believe ... that, within limits, we are the authors of our own experience."

She discussed the idea of "dead" language, which is living language turned into passive, uncritical or propagandist ways of reflecting a worn-out world.

Cahill contrasted the idea of dead language to that of living language, which offers "free access to images of alterna-

tive selves." She quoted Toni Morrison as saying that the medium of language is "mostly an agency, an act with consequences."

This has always been especially important for women, who seek a sense of self in a society where that selfhood is "the casualty of casual misogyny," said Cahill. As both writers and readers, women use literature to claim the self or character within, said Cahill.

Women writers also serve as important role models, noted Cahill, but few would want to live their lives. Instead, Cahill claimed that it is their characters and

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This year's benefit production of Eve Ensler's "The Vagina Monologues," directed by Kristin Grillo and co-produced by Sarah Guariglia and Christin Sell, raised over \$2,000 for organizations helping to end violence against women. The focus of the V-Day Campaign was on American Indian and Canadian First Nations women.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

This has been another very exciting semester for the Women's Studies Program at Alfred University. From the second annual production of "The Vagina Monologues" in February to the eighth annual Riley Lecture in April, there has never been a dull moment. Women's History Month in March was particularly busy with films and a performance by slam poet Alix Olson sponsored by WIC, Bergren Forums by Jennifer Pepper and Zakia Robana, Linda Mitchell's Women's Studies Roundtable, and the highlight of the celebration: a lecture by Barbara Gittings, a pioneer of the gay and lesbian movement in the United States, entitled "Gay and Smiling: Tales from Our 55 Years of Activism." I would like to thank Vicki Eaklor and the members of Spectrum for all their work organizing this stimulating event. Equally successful and well attended was this year's Riley Lecture in which Dr. Susan Cahill, author, editor and professor of English, spoke about the empowering and transformative potential of women's writing. Again, many thanks to all those who helped organize this event, to the Rileys for their generous and enthusiastic support, and to Cahill herself for giving us such a rich and inspiring talk.

Finally, I would like to congratulate both the recipients of the Abigail Allen Awards and the graduating Women's Studies minors. The 2003 faculty award went to Pam Lakin, Associate Librarian at Herrick Library and Director of Study Abroad, in recognition of her immeasurable contribution to the Women's Studies Program and to improving the quality of women's lives in Alfred. Sarah Guariglia received the student award. Sarah was involved in everything this year: a Women's Studies minor, co-president of WIC (Women's Issues Coalition), editor of the *Alphadelphian* for the second consecutive year, and producer of this year's production of "The Vagina Monologues." When Sarah and the other graduating minors—Melissa Barley, Jill Culeton, Alison Green and Lindsay Olson—spoke about their research and experiences in the Women's Studies Program at Alfred at the April Roundtable, I felt both proud and fortunate to a part of this program.

Cecilia Beach
Director of Women's Studies

Alphadelphian editor Sarah Guariglia would like to thank Cecilia Beach, Susan Morehouse, Karen Porter and Erica-Lyn Robinson for their help in creating this semester's issue of the *Alphadelphian*. Best of luck to graduating minors!

FALL 2003 WST COURSE LISTINGS

WST 204 001B	The Art of the Personal Essay	3:20-5:10 MW	Burdick C	02
WST 253 001A	Social Welfare Institutions	1:20-3:10 TF	Porter K	02
WST 254 001	Women Writers (A)	2:20-3:10 MTWF	Morehouse S	04
WST 306 001	Gender in Communication	3:20-5:20 MW	Schultz P	04
WST 346 001	Sociology of Sex and Gender	1:20-3:10 MW	Porter K	04
WST 350 001	Topics: Literature of Romance	10:20-11:10 MTWF	Dill E	04



To submit information or
articles,
or to contact the
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email alph@alfred.edu



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GAY RIGHTS PIONEER SPEAKS AT AU

When Barbara Gittings first began to fight for equal rights in the 1950s, people stopped to listen. The scene on campus was much the same as the prominent gay rights activist presented a Women's Studies lecture titled "Gay and Smiling: Tales From Our Fifty-Five Years of Activism" in early March.

Gittings, who was an instrumental figure in the early years of the gay movement and who continues to be in the vanguard of equal rights issues, came to AU to lecture for Women's History Month, awing many of those who met her and who heard her stories of activism, work she described as "vital," "gratifying," and "fun!"

Gittings became active in gay rights long before the Stonewall Riots in 1969, the event that is often hailed as the beginning of the modern gay movement. She began her life's work at a time when it was still illegal for gay men and lesbians to work in any aspect of government, a time when they were conflated with communists. It

was also a period marked by frequent police raids on gay bars and regular discrimination against gay men and lesbians, "and I've seen all this change in my lifetime, thanks to Barbara Gittings," said Dr. Vicki Eaklor, Professor of History, who was instrumental in organizing Gittings' visit to AU.

So Gittings was truly a pioneer when in 1958 she established the first East Coast chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis, the first lesbian organization in the U.S. Many years later, she was active in the movement that challenged the American Psychiatric Association's anti-gay views, successfully removing homosexuality from its list of disorders.

Getting a woman of Gittings' stature to speak on campus was quite a coup for AU, according to Eaklor. "I was absolutely thrilled to be able to bring Barbara here, and afterwards she told me what a wonderful visit it was for her. Her status as a civil rights pioneer is unrivaled, yet she is com-

pletely approachable, warm and friendly. I will certainly treasure getting to know her," Eaklor said.

Cecilia Beach, director of the Women's Studies program, which sponsored Gittings' visit along with Spectrum and the National Endowment for the Humanities, agreed, saying she was "very privileged to have met Gittings. Her lecture based on her personal experience in the Gay and Lesbian movement really brought the history of the movement to life. It was an enriching and inspiring way to celebrate Women's History Month."

As Gittings wound down her lecture and brought to a close her successful stay here, the silence that gripped the Knight Club for her nearly two-hour presentation quickly ended as the room erupted into a rousing standing ovation. There were smiles, laughter, and a few tears for the woman without whom gay and lesbian life in America would be significantly different today.

—Sebastian White

"LEADING LADIES" IN CIVIL WAR FILMS

About a year ago I was talking to an older male family friend and in our conversation I mentioned that I was a feminist. A surprised look came on his face, and after a few seconds of looking completely caught off-guard, he leaned forward and whispered, "I didn't know you were a lesbian."

While some people might be appalled that he even said this, many fellow feminists find this funny. Some people like my family friend might make the assumption that feminists and women's studies students alike are man-hating, radical "femi-nazis" who believe that they need to take over the world.

What I have learned in my years in the women's studies program here at Alfred University is that we are human beings who want to understand our history, our health and ourselves. The faculty and my fellow students have shown me that on many issues I am not alone. My experience in the women's studies program has been both educational and emotional. What I have learned in my classes and in life is that the

ry have evolved with each decade, and finally in the past two centuries women have begun to decide these roles for themselves.

For my Women's Studies project, I decided to study the roles of women in Civil War movies created during the 1930's and 1940's in Hollywood. I looked at what was occurring in Hollywood at the time (i.e., the Hays codes) as well as comparing the true history of these women's roles versus Hollywood's conception of them. I decided to write four papers, each addressing roles which I saw repeated throughout the movies I watched.

1: The Leading Ladies I analyzed those women who were strong, independent, beautiful and rich. These women are present in each movie. Their roles reflect the changing roles of women in society at the time. Vivien Leigh as Scarlett in *Gone With the Wind*, Katherine Hepburn as Jo in *Little Women* and Clair Trevor as Mary McCloud in *Dark Command* are a few examples

2: Domesticity 101 This paper reviewed

and how many of these movies had women who were motherly, selfless, homemakers, romantic and in every way "ladies." Olivia de Havilland as Melanie Wilkes in *Gone with the Wind*, Barbara O'Neill as Mrs. Ellen O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* and Meg played by Frances Dee in *Little Women* possess all of these qualities.

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Women's Studies Roundtables Fall 2003

Roundtables are held at 12:20
in the Knight Club in Powell
Campus Center

September 5

October 3

November 7

December 5

WOMEN'S STUDIES ALUMNI NEWS

Michaela Cavallaro ('94) spent two years in Santa Fe at a now-defunct boarding school for Native American and Hispanic students, where she lived in the Girls Dorm and oversaw the day-to-day life of 60+ teenage girls, several of whom she still hears from regularly. It was an amazing experience—Women's Studies in action! After earning a master's in writing and publishing from Emerson College in 1998, she moved to Portland, Maine, where she is now managing editor of *Mainebiz*, a statewide business newspaper. One of her favorite pastimes is writing sto-

ries—about pay equity, the working poor and the impact of the current recession on blue-collar workers—that her largely male and almost entirely affluent readership wouldn't expect to see in a business publication.

Casey Norton ('97) reports that her work in WST has most affected her during her Peace Corps Mali service. In a country where polygamy is a status symbol for the men, and women work incredibly hard just to keep their families fed, there was a lot of emphasis in Peace Corps on women's groups. These

projects worked on setting up women in their own businesses, helping with agricultural and health education, and the art and enterprise of making products out of mud cloth and recycled plastic bags. The mission statement read, "Eduquer un homme, c'est eduquer un individu. Eduquer une femme, c'est eduquer toute une nation." Educate a man, you educate an individual. Educate a woman, you educate the whole nation—meaning that the women are the ones who raise and educate the children, the future of Mali.

NEWS FROM WOMEN'S STUDIES MINORS

Melissa Barley is a graduating psychology major with minors in sociology and women's studies. She has been involved with the campus-organized Women's Issues Coalition for three years, holding the position of secretary for the past two years. Her work in women's studies has also found her interning at the ACCORD Corporation in Belmont, twice on stage performing in the annual production of "The Vagina Monologues" and co-hosting the WIC radio show, "Just a Girl," on WALF for the past three semesters. After graduation, Melissa is moving to southern California for the summer, with hopes of a "real" job and graduate school in the not-so-distant future.

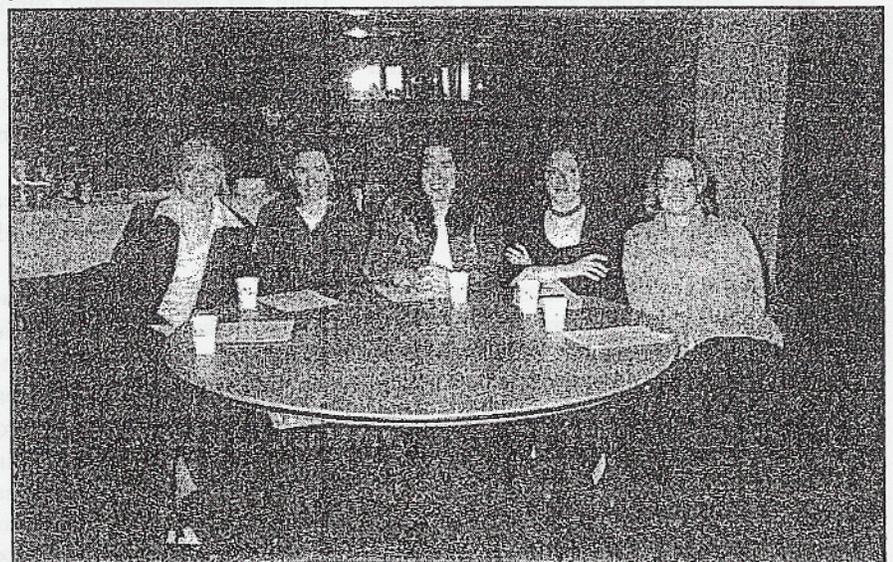
Alison Green is a graduating sociology major working on a documentary film about the impact of breast cancer treatments on socially generated ideas of femininity. The documentary is centered around videotaped interviews she conducted with breast cancer survivors that focus on their confrontation of mainstream ideas of beauty as they recover from a disease that attacks the parts of their bodies society deems most "feminine." The film will juxtapose the survivors' restructured definitions of womanhood and beauty with cultural ideals in order to effectively expose the hollowness and superficiality of the latter. Alison has been accepted into the New York City Teaching Fellows Program, and she will begin teaching and earning her masters degree after graduation

Sarah Guariglia is a graduating English major who recently completed her thesis project, "Composing Myself." The project is a series of essays and photographs dealing with issues of body image, perception, stereotypes and female identity. This year, she also served as co-president of WIC, editor of the *Alphadelphian*, producer of AU's second production of "The Vagina Monologues" and co-host of the WIC radio show. She plans to spend her summer in California as a teaching assistant at the CTY summer program for gifted students.

Natasha Mezhebovsky is spending a year in Prague; she reports that "the city is beautiful and my classes are amazing... I only have classes three days a week so I

am lucky enough to have the opportunity to travel all over Europe." Next semester, she plans to take courses such as "Milan Kundera within the Word of the Novel" and "Feminism in the Czech Republic."

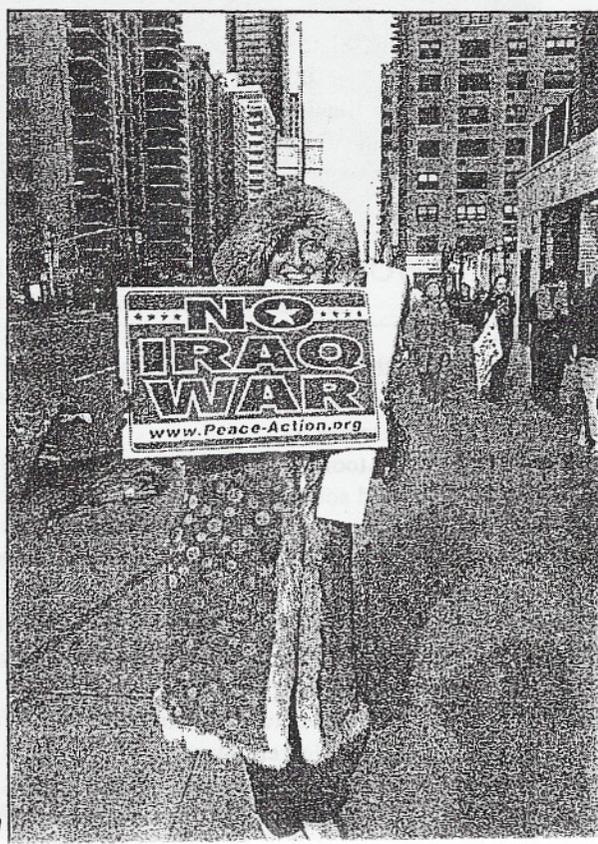
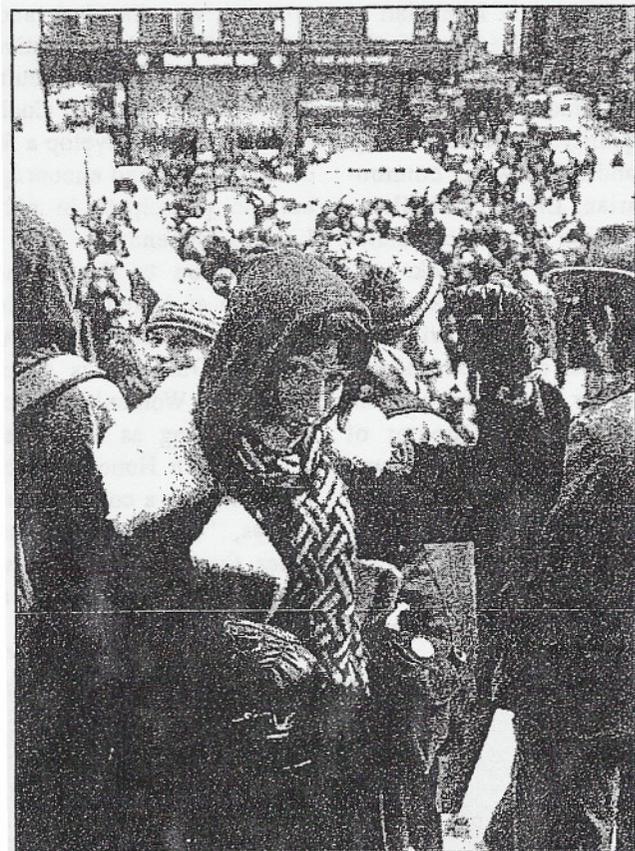
Lindsay Olson is graduating with a BS in Accounting in May 2003. The majority of her electives at AU were Women's Studies courses. This semester she completed an independent study, with the help of Dr. Porter, on women in the corporate structure, titled "The Glass Ceiling: Will My Head Hit?" Her future plans involve working for an accounting firm in Rochester. Her independent study helped her identify the problems that she will be faced with in the future.



Graduating minors Jill Culeton, Sarah Guariglia, Alison Green, Melissa

WOMEN ACTIVISTS

WOMEN FROM ALFRED AND BEYOND AT THE NYC PEACE RALLY, FEB. 15, 2003



photos
by
Erica-Lyn

2003 ABIGAIL ALLEN AWARDS

Pamela Lakin and Sarah Guariglia received the 2003 Abigail Allen Awards in Women's Studies. These awards were created in 1999 to recognize faculty and students who have contributed to the Women's Studies mission at Alfred, thus upholding the ideals of Abigail Allen, who was a founding mother of the University.

Abigail Allen began teaching at Alfred University in 1846 and founded the *Alphadelphian*, a women's literary society, "dedicated her life's work to advancing the cause of coeducation and encouraging women to pursue higher education." From the start, Alfred University has had a strong tradition of gender equality in education. Founded in 1836, Alfred was the second truly co-educational college in the country and the first in New York State, admitting women on

an equal basis to men.

Pamela Lakin, Associate Librarian at Herrick Library and Director of the Study Abroad Program, like Abigail Allen, has "contributed immeasurable to improving the quality of women's lives on our campus and in the wider community." As Librarian, Lakin has built an outstanding collection of research materials in women's studies at Herrick.

She is continually on the lookout for resources and conferences that will support the specific needs of Alfred students and faculty both for the classroom and for research purposes. As Director of Study Abroad, Lakin has helped young women expand their horizons and increase their global awareness by seeking diverse internships and study abroad opportunities.

Lakin has been an active member of

the Women's Studies faculty since the program was founded, and has served insightfully on the Executive Board for a number of years. As faculty advisor to the Women's Issues Coalition, Lakin helped students develop a feminist agenda on campus and encouraged the members to participate in political issues. Lakin's dependable and personalized contribution to the Women's Studies Program at Alfred truly exemplifies the spirit of the Abigail Allen Award.

Sarah Guariglia is a senior English major and Women's Studies minor who is graduating as an Alfred University scholar with Honors in her major. Her final project, a collection of non-fiction essays, "Composing Myself," interrogates the relationship between cultural images of femininity and actual female

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LEADING LADIES

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3: *Rags to Riches* I analyzed the changes from "poor white trash" to rich via marriage. Joan Bennett as Amy March in *Little Women* and *Gone with the Wind*'s Isabelle Jewell as Emma Slattery both marry rich men.

4: *Slaves, Free Blacks and Abolitionists* Blacks at this time did not have many roles available to them in movies, unless they were portraying a slave, a free black or an

abolitionist in a Civil War movie. Of these three possible roles, women could only play slaves. I analyzed those roles played by black women in the 30's and 40's, such as Hattie McDaniel as Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*, who was the first black woman to win an Academy Award.

Writing these papers has really opened my eyes to the struggles occurring not only in "real life" in the 30's and 40's but also the struggles in Hollywood for women to get roles as more than slaves, mothers and wives. Even in the movies of this decade,

we can see similar patterns continuing. Strong women like Erin Brockovich are portrayed in movies today, and there is a lack of perfect motherly roles, most likely due to the second wave of feminism. Poor to rich moves via marriage are shown by roles such as Jennifer Lopez's character in *Maid in Manhattan*, and true to history, black women are usually cast in historical movies, such as Oprah Winfrey in *Beloved* and Whoopi Goldberg in *The Color Purple*.

— Jill Culeton

BRAVE WOMEN WRITING

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their writing that fights for other women the way the writers could not always fight for themselves.

The speech took a political turn as Cahill discussed some of the uses of this dead language, and she wondered aloud what writers like Muriel Spark and Toni Morrison would have to say about Vice President Dick Cheney. Cahill also quoted a speech by Benito Mussolini and compared it to our country's recent campaign of "shock and awe," noting that the Pentagon's belligerent language was hardly new or different.

Later, Cahill discussed literature as a

quelched more if conveyed through a different medium. Here she again drew out the parallel of literature and subversion as she pondered, "A nation of passionate, insurrectionary readers and the Patriot Act... can this marriage last?"

Cahill stated that one of the most important things that this kind of writing conveys is a sense of belonging. "Literature sees things the way they are: connected," she said.

Whether this connection is to other people, God or the world at large, Cahill said that writing provides solidarity in the face of many difficult social and cultural issues that can divide people by race, class and gender.

"Writers record acts of courage, and

change," Cahill said by way of introduction to an essay by Grace Paley. She read the twin narratives about racism before the civil rights movement to a spell-bound audience to exemplify the power of living language.

Cahill, who also teaches at Fordham University, talked about her own students' reactions to Paley's essay and stories like Eudora Welty's "A Worn Path." Literature, she said, gives some of her students more generous alternatives to the closed worlds they were born into.

"Literature can change our lives if we pay attention to its language," Cahill concluded before fielding questions and comments.

— Sarah Guariglia

WOMEN'S STUDIES ROUNDTABLES

This semester, the Women's Studies Program presented three monthly roundtables with topics including cross-national studies of women's quality of life, historical profiles of unusual women, and the work of five graduating WST minors.

The first roundtable, on Feb. 21, was titled "Measuring Women's Well-Being: A Cross-National Comparison." Claret Mapalad-Ruane, assistant professor of economics in AU's College of Business, presented sets of statistics that supported the idea that, contrary to popular opinion, strong economic growth and a high overall quality of life do not always guarantee social progress and empowerment of women in countries around the world.

In introducing her comparison of economic and social well-being, Mapalad-Ruane noted that many factors besides income affect the quality of life in a country, including health, education, and access to resources and opportunities.

Mapalad-Ruane first presented basic average income statistics for the U.S., southeast Asia, and other Asian countries, including Japan, China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand, among others.

One of the most surprising statistics was the measurement of the gap between men's and women's average incomes in 2000. Some countries showed women as earning about half as much as men annually; in the U.S., women earned 62.16% of what men earned, and Japan showed an even smaller percentage. However, Vietnam, the country with the lowest overall income, showed the lowest income gap between men and women of any of the countries measured.

Another area with significant discrepancies, said Mapalad-Ruane, was education. While most of the "developed" countries had nearly equal male and female literacy rates, China showed the biggest gap between the genders in this area with 76.3% of women and 91.7% of men literate. This gap is surprising, given that China is often considered more developed and economically more secure than other Asian countries with less of a literacy gap.

In her conclusion, Mapalad-Ruane showed some information about women's participation in politics. Only two of the countries in her group had female leaders, one of which

was the Philippines, while most countries showed some involvement of women in various levels of politics. Still, the highest of these percentages was still well below half, showing that while women are at least half of the population and, in some cases, half of the earning power in each of these countries, they do not hold an equal share of political power.

Later in the semester, Professor of History Linda Mitchell presented "Marriage, Politics and Medieval Women: Isabella de Clare and Her Daughters" at the Women's Studies Roundtable on March 21 in the Knight Club. Despite restrictions on female authority in the Middle Ages, some powerful women such as Isabella de Clare managed to retain their own power and pass it on to future generations of women, according to Mitchell.

Mitchell described Isabella de Clare's situation as similar to many women of the nobility in medieval times: she married at a young age to William Marshal, a powerful man twenty years her senior, and their marriage was mainly a vehicle to provide him with land and progeny. To these ends, she was an ideal wife to Marshal, bearing him 5 sons who died without heirs and 5 daughters.

However, this is where Isabella's adherence to stereotypes ends. According to Mitchell's research, Isabella traveled everywhere with her husband, staying involved in his political affairs even in the later terms of her pregnancies. She ensured that her daughters would inherit her husband's estate, giving them more power than their marriages would have allowed and making them "significant actors in a political and social network," as Mitchell put it.

Isabella was considered a legitimate lord of her husband's lands and often worked to protect their interests at home as well as traveling with him. Mitchell said that Isabella was likely seen as "something of a tough broad," eager to punish traitors and ever a valuable partner to William Marshal in many respects.

Mitchell noted some problems with sources of information on Isabella and her daughters; because information about women in the Middle Ages was mainly recorded through their relationships with men, it can be hard to discover exactly what the women were involved in. While widow-

hood offered Isabella herself a certain amount of independence, other women's lives are largely untraceable due to a lack of information.

Mitchell also described the lives of a few of Isabella's daughters, including Eve and Maud. Maud, Isabella's eldest daughter, assumed her father's title of "marshal" of England after his death. She used the masculine form in legal and political documents, informing – not asking – Henry III of her new position. Maud made illegal inheritance arrangements for her children, and she "provided both continuity and connections for her family as Isabella had done," said Mitchell. Isabella "imparted her own dedication, strength, and values" in a way that made her "an architect of the political community" of the 13th century.

The final roundtable, on April 18th, featured this year's graduating WST minors. Lindsay Olson presented some of her findings from her study, "The Glass Ceiling: Will My Head Hit?" which focuses on the problems women face within the corporate structure.

Melissa Barley spoke about her experience as an "unsuspecting activist," describing her transformation from someone who wouldn't consider herself a feminist into an outspoken advocate for equality through activities such as performing in "The Vagina Monologues," being an active member of WIC, and interning at ACCORD.

Alison Green presented a short clip from her documentary project on how breast cancer and its treatments affect women's body image and perception of themselves as feminine; the clip focused on hair loss, which was for many of the women one of the most difficult physical changes they experienced.

Sarah Guariglia read an excerpt from her thesis project, focusing on body image and how reluctant women can be to see themselves as anything more than a collection of body parts to be scrutinized.

Jill Culeton wrapped up the roundtable with her study of women's roles in Civil War movies, ranging from the strong and independent leading ladies to quieter, maternal characters. (See page 3 for a more detailed description of her project in her own words.)