



## Talking Sex: Knowledge and Power

BY LEAH HOUK AND LAURA REYOME

While Michel Foucault argues that "talking sex" is not a political, Leisa D. Meyer emphatically disagrees. An Associate Professor of History and American Studies at the College of William and Mary, Meyer's main interests lie within women's, gender, and sexuality studies, and she has authored many articles on these topics, as well as a book: *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps During WWII*. Meyer contends that knowledge of and conversations about sex and sexuality are completely political, especially for women. At "Speaking Sex: Women 'Talking Back' About Sexual Knowledge," this year's combined Riley Lecture in Women's Studies and Willis Russell Lecture in History, Meyer examined this history and how political sexual discussion and knowledge can be.

Meyer discussed the Kinsey Reports and how they brought sex into American public discourse. With the resulting public discussion of sex came the effort to control the dissemination of sexual knowledge, especially to women.

We feel there is something particularly powerful about women's sexual knowledge in the context of a culture that defines women by their sexuality and ability to bear children. For many women, their

ter decisions the more informed they are about sex, and those who believe possessing knowledge encourages dangerous or immoral sexual experimentation.

This is exemplified in the arguments over whether or not Planned Parenthood has the right to educate young women on contraceptives, Meyer said. Conservatives stand firm in the idea that sex is a private act and that it is morally corrupt to provide information about contraception. Others argue that this is knowledge that women need in order to function as sexually responsible members of society.

Meyer asserted that "the right for women to speak about sexual knowledge is both a path to legitimacy and a path to power." We live in a culture that still upholds a blatant sexual double standard for women, one in which women are either uninformed or seen as too informed and "loose." According to Meyer, "Sexual discourse can invert systems of power."



This year's Riley and Russell lecturer Leisa D. Meyer

power as political beings is tied up in how they are viewed in this context.

Sexual knowledge and the ability to have it or withhold it from others is most certainly, Meyer reasoned, wrapped up in politics. There is always a tension between those who believe young women make bet-

## So, What IS Up With the F Word?

BY LIBBY TSIBULSKY

To celebrate Women's History Month, the staff of the Alphadelphian hosted an event titled "What's Up with the F-Word?" We hoped the event would spark an interest in feminism on campus, and provide answers to several questions that were boggling our minds—had the struggle for women's equality been resolved and if so, what does that mean for women in today's society? Why were women hesitant to refer to themselves as feminists? Why on a campus that has a rich history of campaigning for women's rights and equality was there little interest in women's issues among today's students? What we found, after voicing our frustrations and discussing our personal

experiences with women of all ages, was that the issues hadn't changed much.

Although we had invited close to sixty faculty members and students of both sexes to the event, I wasn't surprised that our attendees were a small group of women. After all, as one professor observed, didn't it say something about the current state of feminism that no men and few students had shown up?

We split into small group discussions, ate some snacks, covered a wide variety of topics and reached some very interesting conclusions.



Redefining feminism at Susan Howell Hall

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Top from left: Leah, Libby, Cori, Dionne, Lily

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## A Message from the Director of WMST

For my term as Director of the Women's Studies Program at Alfred University I have three goals which will shape and ensure the viability of our program. The first is to build community among the students, faculty and staff. The second is to maintain and to promote intellectual rigor within the program. If we maintain an intellectually engaged and unified WMST community, then the final goal, our program's greater visibility, is more easily achieved. The foundation for success in meeting these goals has been laid by



Dr. Kerry Kautzman, Director

our outstanding previous directors and by the exceptional students, faculty and staff that contribute continuously to our program.

### Community

Shared events this year included both old favorites like the Women's Studies Roundtables, organized by Sandra Singer, and new efforts like the Director's fall luncheon with WMST minors and the "What's Up With the F-Word" spring event organized by the Alphas. These new social avenues helped me get to know the WMST minors, a list that currently includes Cori Pignatelli, Breann Bresovski, Amanda Sullivan, Ashleigh Hardes, Leah Houk, Laura Reyome, Amanda Fazzino and Abby Griffith. These names are the most important words in my message. I want these amazing young women, as well as future WMST minors, to find in our program a community that is personally fulfilling and also intellectually challenging.

### Rigor

WMST faculty taught 8 courses in the program this academic year. Fall semester included "Sociology of Sex and Gender," "Willa Cather," and the WLC's "Leadership Academy Capstone." Spring semester includes our core course "Women in Society," "Social Welfare Institutions," "Jane Austen," "Women in Art," and the WLC's "Gender and Leadership." Each of these courses was an opportunity for our minors and others to incorporate women's issues and women's history into their respective disciplines. Next semester we offer four more interesting courses to our students.

An excellent way to foster intellectual development is through research. Accordingly three Alfred University students attended the "Seneca Falls Dialogues: Women in Leadership" conference this October. Upon their return, they reported on the conference during the fall lunch with the director. There are many regional and national conferences that provide opportunities for our minors to expand their horizons beyond Alfred. I will encourage students to consider conferences such as the AAUW national convention "Breaking through Barriers" or the next "Seneca Falls Dialogues" conference.

In addition to these off-campus experiences, our Roundtables allow members of the Alfred community to share knowledge gained through experience or research. The roundtables this year are bookended by student contributions in September and April. WMST faculty also contributed to Roundtables this year discussing either current research or current course development. Finally, the Phi Beta Kappa speaker, Lori Damrosch, shared with our students her experience in the legal, professional world.

### Visibility

The annual Riley Lecture in Women's Studies provides our highest visibility each year. This year's speaker, Dr. Leisa D. Meyer, turned us on to "Speaking Sex: Women 'Talking Back' About Sexual Knowledge." The Riley Lecture was enriched this year by the presence of the Women's Leadership Center's Advisory Board members.

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# A Conversation With Judge Moskowitz

BY LEAH HOUK

Justice Karla Moskowitz received a Bachelor of Arts degree, *cum laude*, from Alfred University in 1963, and graduated from Columbia Law School in 1966. Moskowitz has served as a judge since



Karla Moskowitz '63

1982, when she was elected Judge of the Civil Court of the City of New York. In 1987 she was appointed Acting Supreme Court Justice, and she was elected to the Supreme Court in 1991 and re-elected in 2005.

Moskowitz has been a generous and involved alumna at Alfred University. In 2005, she hosted a group of AU students on a visit to the Supreme Court in lower Manhattan organized by the Women's Leadership Center. She was inducted into AU's chapter of Phi Beta Kappa as an honorary member in April 2006, and gave a Women of Influence talk while at the University for her induction. She also gave the commencement speech to the 2008 AU graduates.

As she tells it, Moskowitz's career path was paved with plain good luck. She remembers that she had only one female professor in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Alfred University.

At first she chose Alfred for its pre-med program, but in her second year Moskowitz struggled with organic chem-

istry, and a seemingly well-intentioned professor advised her to switch her major.

"I only realized recently that he probably told me that because I was a woman. I bet he didn't do it consciously, but I'm sure that's why. I wasn't the only one who struggled with that class," she said.

Moskowitz decided to double major in history and political science, but wasn't sure what to do after that. "I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I knew I didn't want to be a teacher," she said.

In the fall of her senior year, Moskowitz and two other male students spent a semester taking courses at American University through an exchange program. Moskowitz took the GREs, and since her male counterparts were taking the LSATs, she decided to take those too.

"I just took the LSATs on a whim. We didn't even study for them," she said.

Moskowitz scored higher than her male companions, and she decided to apply to both graduate and law school. Although she was accepted into Columbia and Chicago and Maxwell grad schools, Moskowitz received a full scholarship to law school, and that was the reason she decided to attend. "I think I was just lucky," she said. "I got in right at the start of when schools were wanting more women."

Moskowitz's father didn't encourage her academic pursuits, but her mother, who had dropped out of college for financial reasons, always supported her. "She was very smart, and she wanted her kids to succeed," Moskowitz said.

Recently, Moskowitz served on the first all-women's appeal panel for the court that hears appeals from NY and Bronx counties. "There are lots of women on trial court," she said, "but never more than one or two on this Court. This was the first time there was a bench of all women judges."

Moskowitz has lectured extensively on the importance of having women in the courtroom. She explained that in many cases, especially matrimonial cases and cases involving children,

having more women on the jury alters the perception of the jurors. "It changes how the men who sit with women view women defendants," she said.

It is so important to have people of many different backgrounds in the court," Moskowitz said. "We need to have many eyes looking at things, because even though it's the same law, people are always looking at it differently."

Moskowitz is very supportive of educational programs for women in prison, in addition to programs that focus on the rights of imprisoned women and help them work toward regaining custody of their children.

Supporting breast cancer programs has also been important to Moskowitz. "Many lawyers aren't getting mammograms because they're so busy," she said. The organization she supports is currently working on developing programs for the children of underprivileged women diagnosed with cancer.

A mother of two and grandmother of three (soon to be four), Moskowitz is all too aware of the pressure women have faced and continue to face in balancing family and work. "I couldn't have done it without my husband and parents' help," she said. "And even though they helped out a lot, there was a point where I worked part-time for a while. I wanted to be out by five or six at night, and public service jobs don't pay a lot, but they're the only ones flexible enough."

Neither of Moskowitz's children decided to go into law. "My husband and I were always discussing cases at the dinner table, and the kids got sick of it," she said. Both of her children live nearby, so, she said, "We get to see them all the time, and we get to babysit."

Hesitant to label herself a feminist, Moskowitz said she has never set out with the explicit intention of changing the social status of women. "I've just always done what I felt was right, what I thought needed to be done," she said. "How can we do things better for women and minorities within the system?"

# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



Breann  
Bresovski

With a degree in History and two minors in Women's Studies and English, I am looking forward to ending my career as an undergraduate.

As a transfer student I've spent a total of five semesters in Alfred trying to figure out what's appropriate for me to do with my life only to find that I have come full-circle. Where I have been swayed and diverted

from becoming a social servant I've discovered it's the only course of action I want to pursue.

My Passion and desire to work towards a career that will enable me to become involved in uprooting social injustice as well as inequality is heavily based on my experience in the Women's Studies program.

I have also been volunteering at a local Planned Parenthood chapter this last semester. I have appreciated the experience and hope to continue to volunteer once back in Rochester. Although I have only been reorganizing patient cards and filing, I look forward to learning more about this organization and how I may be able to contribute to the continual fight for women's reproductive rights.

Cori  
Pignatelli



Come May, I will be graduating with a major in Psychology and minor degrees in Women's Studies and Anthropology.

With the exception of moments of incredible anxiety, I feel more than prepared to leave Alfred, knowing that the experiences I had in Alfred will help inform the decisions of my future.

After studying abroad in Kenya, I have returned to the United States more determined than ever to devote myself to the fight for social justice, recognizing that while it is difficult to fight against social injustices, it is perhaps more difficult to sit back and watch them occur.

Immediately upon graduating I am traveling to Australia for a month of exploration while I continue applying for jobs in the field of social justice with non-profit organizations. My plan is to apply for graduate school to earn a Master of Arts in Social Justice and Human Rights. Ideally, I would like to focus on women's and gender issues as well as LGBTQ rights, with the connection between both being sexual politics and sexual freedom.



Glam Slam attendees go wild "in the jungle" of the Knight Club

## Spectrum Update

Spectrum is Alfred's LGBTQQIA organization. We meet every Wednesday at 6pm in the Multicultural Suite. The purpose of this group is to promote awareness, tolerance and acceptance for the queer community. Each week, we have discussions on topics chosen by the president. Topics we have had so far this year include Hate Crime/Hate Speech, Gay Marriage, Religion, Coming Out, Being Gay Around the World, Gays in the Media and many in-depth conversations about queer labels, new and old.



# SEARCHING FOR FEMINISM IN A FOREIGN CLASSROOM

BY ABIGAIL GRIFFITH



Trinity College campus, Dublin

**I knew there was something wrong when I perused this semester's essay titles.**

Initially, I shrugged the feeling off. I've been studying abroad at Trinity College Dublin for almost six months now, and their literature program still succeeds at making me feel like a first-year flailing about on the first day of class. With that in mind, I suspected it was just the way the topics were worded or the massive headaches each essay would lead to down the line that were causing me to wince at each list of options. After a cursory glance, I shoved my disturbingly large pile of possible paper titles into my backpack and tried to block out the writing-induced hysteria that would haunt me in the coming weeks.

A couple days later, I forced myself to smooth the crumpled sheets. Once again, I felt myself balk at the options. It's not like there were any surprises. Chaucer, Melville, Forster, Faulkner...Ah. Light bulb moment.

One rushed look through the other lists was all it took to confirm my suspicions. List after list of male writers. Sure, there were a few women on my lists. Emily Dickinson. Angela Carter. Elizabeth Bowen. But I had to work to find these women, buried under paper topic after paper topic on their male peers. What bothered me more, however, was that it had taken this long for me to realize just how one-sided my curriculum had become. It wasn't as though I was taking classes on just Chaucer or Shakespeare. These were core courses, courses that every English student was required to take.

At Alfred, women writers in one of my English classes would be more or less a given. Heck, I've even taken an AU course in which my professor apologized for not including more women on the syllabus. Now, faced with list after list in which there were, on average, thirty male writers to every female writer, I wanted to cry. Or, at the very least, ram my head against the nearest wall.

Mine was not an isolated experience. A quick glance at my kitchen table can tell you how many women are featured in a Trinity education. My roommate Kate, an economics major, reads article after article by men. My flat mate, a theater major, has her textbooks strewn about our work surface. Stacked in piles, not a single one of these plays has been penned by a woman.

It's amazing what you take for granted.

Suddenly, I was forced to confront truths about my classroom environment that had never seemed so painfully clear before that day. Why did I spend four years in high school, and never once was taught a book by a woman? Why, three years later, has my brother had the exact same educational experience? Maybe if I had asked the former question earlier, I'd feel better about asking the latter. Feminists have fought and won many battles, but it's easy to forget about the little fights we lose everyday, often without even realizing it. It's easy to miss those insidious, institutionalized forms of sexism, easy to ignore something as trivial as an essay topic, but that doesn't make these fights any less important. If anything it makes them more so, as this sly sexism is more often than not unknowingly supported by men and women alike. My American Literature lecturer hadn't even realized the lack of women writers on the course until I asked her about it.

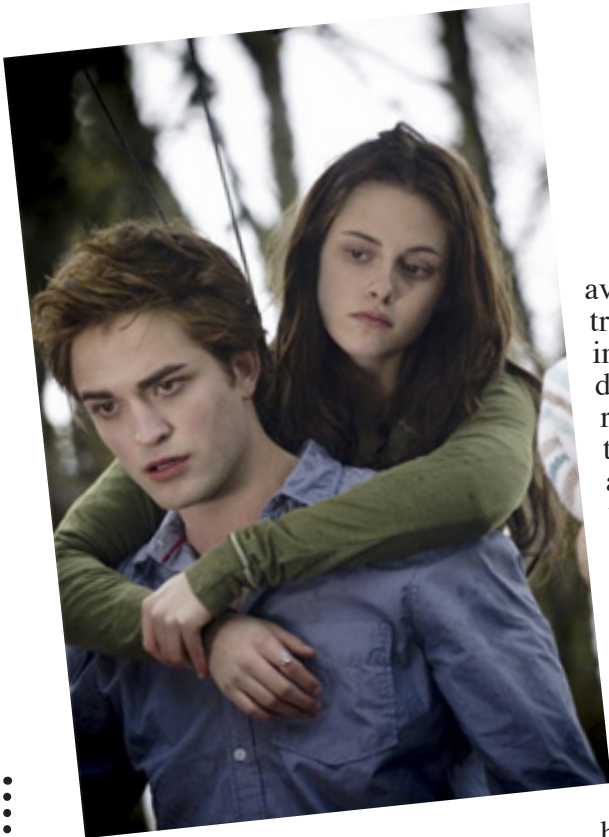
"I hadn't noticed," she said. "This is just the syllabus we've always done."

A fellow student asked why there weren't any women of color on any of her syllabi. She was taking five classes, and not one featured a woman writer who wasn't white. I hadn't noticed. Our peers hadn't noticed. Our professor looked astonished. Two tutorials later, and there's talk of adding Edith Wharton and Toni Morrison to next year's lesson plan. It hadn't even occurred to the professor that the syllabus she'd inherited from a male predecessor might not offer the most inclusive classroom environment. She wasn't even attached to the writers it featured; she just hadn't thought to switch things up, for fear of offending her fellow teachers.

Sometimes feminism is marching, picketing, taking over Capitol Hill. Sometimes it's loud. Sometimes it's even televised. But more often than not, it's taking a step back to ask a simple question: why?



Abby in Ireland



# Bite Me:

## Why Millions of Pre-Teen Girls are Going Crazy for Twilight - And I Am Too

BY LIBBY TSIBULSKY

average, middle-class, and prone to tripping over her own feet. He fell in love with her mind which, coincidentally, was the only one he couldn't read (did I forget to mention his telepathic powers?). All in all, it's a typical Cinderella story—with a unique twist. Bella was willing to give up not only her friends and family, but also her mortality, to be with her leading man.

The series soon became my favorite way to procrastinate and I talked it up until I thought my friends and family might disown me. It was during one of my rants that a friend informed me of

his shock upon learning that of all people, I would be so fond of a phenomenon that was riddled with anti-feminist undertones and conservative ideals.

I found the ways that Meyer chose to have her characters deal with situations like death, marriage, and sex offensive. It was always Bella who begged Edward for sex and Edward who denied her, claiming that he didn't want to be responsible for tarnishing her soul. Also, Meyer was constantly alluding to Bella as a masochist who found Edward's over-protectiveness and ability to kill her instantly both appealing and oddly endearing. Among other creepy and unnecessary behaviors, Edward often spent entire nights watching Bella sleep and would fly off the handle when her best friend Jacob, a werewolf (I told you it was cheesy), would so much as make eye contact with his future wife.

It was at this point that I began to ask myself a few questions. What kind of role model was Bella? Why were young girls idolizing a character whose whole life was dependent upon a man whom she was afraid to anger because he might decide to leave her or hurt someone she cared about? And perhaps the most important question, could I consider myself a feminist and still love a book that endorses the very values I claim to be against?

Instinctually, humans are motivated to do things that will bring happiness

into their lives. I think most women are conditioned, both covertly and overtly, to believe the best way to achieve happiness is through finding validation in another. These beliefs can be hard to disregard completely, especially when we are constantly bombarded with images and stories that affirm such twisted values. I can understand why young girls relate to Bella. Her happy life, albeit fictional, is still more attainable in many respects than that of the rail thin models or glamorous movie stars which surround them daily. After all, she embodies what many of them feel, self-conscious and unaware of their own potential. However, it's not fair to say that it's just young girls who fall prey to these cultural and social stereotypes; I often do as well.

I considered myself to be a well-educated feminist. *Twilight* was never a trend I thought I would become a part of. I believe what drew me to pick up *Twilight* that day was some unconscious desire to not have to think. I let my guard down and chose a book not because of its content, but because everyone else was reading it. I knew what I was reading went against my own beliefs but I never allowed myself to admit it. I kept quiet, which is one of the worst things a self-proclaimed feminist can do.

*Twilight* taught me that becoming a true feminist involves a lot of trial and error. It's a lifelong process of questioning your beliefs and feelings, your culture and society, and your likes and dislikes. I still can't say why I love this series or if I can do so and still consider myself a feminist, but I have come to the conclusion that not knowing may be the best answer. The not-knowing is what makes me think about my own values and beliefs and what makes me want to learn more about myself, even if that self enjoys reading about vampires who drive silver Volvos.

Not since the incredible success of the Harry Potter series has a book captured the attention of the masses quite like *Twilight*, the newest phenomenon to hit bookshelves and the big screen. Written by Stephenie Meyer, the hugely popular series consists of four novels which detail the budding romance between an introverted, self-deprecating, and helplessly clumsy high-schooler named Bella, and Edward, a devastatingly beautiful vampire who has been trapped in the body of a seventeen year old for over a century.

If this premise sounds ridiculous and cheesy to you, you're not alone. While absentmindedly walking the aisles of Barnes & Noble last year I stumbled upon an overwhelming display of *Twilight* memorabilia which was being swarmed by teenage girls. Having nothing to read over summer break, I decided to buy a copy and see what all of the hype was about. Admittedly a bit self-conscious, I stood in line with the other girls to purchase my own copy, completely unaware that it would consume every moment I could spare over the following week.

Two chapters in and I was hooked. There was something about the way Meyer described the forbidden relationship between Edward and Bella that captivated me. He was beautiful, rich, talented, and said all the right things at the right time. She was



# Doomed Lesbians?

BY LAURA REYOME

We all know relationships on television are doomed from the very beginning, but I have to ask: what is up this television season with all of the doomed lesbian relationships? One producer even went so far as to call the lesbian relationship on his show “a bump in the road,” just a plot device there keeping the character from her true relationship, which is with a man. Now, I am not following all of the shows with lesbian relationships this season, but two of the shows I watch regularly have toyed with these relationships.

First, we have a show I’ve watched for about three years, *House, M.D.*, a medical show that’s more about the mystery of diagnoses than it is about the characters (other than Dr. Gregory House, the show’s namesake). However, last season a new character was added onto the show who sparked my interest: Dr. Remy Hadley or Thirteen, as most of the characters refer to her. At first we didn’t know much about her, which was probably why I found her curious. Eventually we learned a few important things about this character: she has Huntington’s disease, she’s bisexual, and she has a tendency towards depression.

As I said before, *House* is a medical show and not really character-driven, so it took the viewer a while to learn anything about Dr. Hadley, and even longer to see any of it in action. But this season we finally got to see her in a relationship with a woman (or rather relationships with multiple women). I was thrilled. I wanted to see how the writers would approach it, but in the end I was immensely disappointed. What could have been really interesting turned sour.

At the end of last season Thirteen discovered she had Huntington’s and as we opened into this current season she was spiraling out of control, heading towards depression. And what’s the best cure for depression? Drugs and one night stands, it would seem. Thirteen took to going out, getting completely wasted, and picking up women. After her nights of debauchery she would push the other women out of her life, chalking it up to being afraid of having someone in her life, when her life was going to be so short.



*Bones*’ Roxie and Angela Montenegro

However, after a grueling process that included losing her job (and eventually regaining it again, of course), Thirteen decided she had to clean up her life.

Cleaning up her life included getting rid of not only the dugs but also, seemingly, any interest she had in women. To top it off, she gets together, at an alarming speed, with a male co-worker. One of my friends commented that this relationship came out of left field, and honestly it did; it surprised me when they got together. They had had very little to no real interaction before. Because this is when she is cleaning up her life, the relationship shows a belief that heterosexual relationships are “clean” and lesbian relationships are along the same lines as hard drugs, something that is inherently “dirty.”

The other show I follow that decided to play with a lesbian relationship, again with a bisexual character, is *Bones*. Now, this is not a show I ever have high expectations for; it is (for me) a guilty pleasure.

On a show full of “squints” (scientists) and FBI agents, Angela Montenegro is the artist and resident wild child. From the first season it is clear she loves being in love and loving others, so it was not a surprise when she made it perfectly clear she had been in relationships with (a lot) men, as well at least one woman: Roxie.

This season decided to take the plunge and excavate Angela’s past with Roxie. However, the relationship was doomed from the beginning. One of the producers clearly stated that the relationship would not last. It did not help that it was made clear Angela was getting back together with Roxie not because she still cared deeply about her, but because she was lonely after her engagement to another character on the show was broken off. On the other hand, Roxie was very much devoted and still in love with Angela from their earlier relationship. Sadly, after Angela and Roxie get together we do not see much of the latter, and she is only mentioned in passing, until the break-up.

From the beginning the viewer knew this relationship would eventually end, as they all do, but I wasn’t sure if it would be like *House*, or if it wouldn’t quite bring me to such agony. Surprisingly, I was actually not really upset about the break-up; if anything I was slightly happy. Why? Because Roxie is the one who breaks up with Angela. I thought this was a nice move on the part of the writers because Roxie was the character invested in the relationship and I felt it was empowering for her character to be the one to ultimately end it. On the other hand, I was not thrilled that Angela jumped right into bed with her former fiancé after the break-up. Though this relation-



Olivia Wilde as Remy Hadley on *House*

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Doomed Lesbians? continued...

ship did not upset me the way House's portrayal did, I felt the relationship was not taken as seriously as the heterosexual relationships on the show. I felt the whole purpose of the relationship was to propel Angela back to her former fiancée, not to show two women in a relationship. The choice of having it be two women seemed to be more to remind the viewers that Angela is a wild child.

Maybe this is nothing new. I know relationships are often used as plot devices and "bump[s] in the road" whether they are heterosexual or otherwise. However, it caught my

interest when friends and I noticed how many lesbian relationships there were on air this season (not only on *Bones* and *House*, but also on shows like *Grey's Anatomy*), and how quickly those relationships crashed and burned or fizzled out. It could be a good sign that lesbian relationships are being used in big name shows like *House*, M.D. and *Bones*, but please, I'd like to see one where both characters are emotionally invested, it's portrayed as healthy, and where neither jump into bed with a man afterwards.

A CALL TO ACTION TURNED FEMINIST REFLECTION

BY CORI PIGNATELLI

Am I doing all that I can?

This is a question I wish all young women, and men for that matter, would ask themselves. Not only once, but every day. I recently returned from Kenya where I had been living and studying for five months. During this time I became friends with a group of women who are active in the fight for human rights in Kenya and in Africa as a whole. Some of these women are involved in movement building for women's rights, focusing on the health and development of Kenya. Others are staunch advocates for LGBTI rights in Africa, recognizing the need to rediscover African religious traditions and move away from the oppressive institutions of colonization. Another friend found her passion in the African Liberation movement, which essentially focuses on all aspects of post-colonial African identity. Regardless of what it is these women are advocating for, it is obvious that they are working towards change and doing it in the name of an inclusive society.

After returning to the United States, I was feeling an emptiness that I could not name. At first I thought I was simply missing my friends and the foods I had grown accustomed to eating. I thought I missed the sounds of busy downtown Nairobi or the peacefulness of a coastal village. After giving myself time to work through this, I recognized that the thing I missed the most, and the thing without which I felt a sense of emptiness, was the politically engaged community I had left. I missed feeling as though change was a real possibility.

Since my return, I have been kept up at night wondering what sort of action I could take that would allow me to feel as though I am truly making a difference, the type of difference my Kenyan friends are making in their own society. It is for this reason that this article began as a sort of "call to action." However, when it came time to think about the type of action I wanted to make a call for, I realized mine was not going to be a new one. We have heard it time and time again. I am calling for feminist activism, but I am not speaking of the kind which rallies exclusively for women's rights. I am speaking here of all

kinds of activism, all being done from a feminist perspective.

Feminism is not an entity unto itself, and it is all too easy to forget this, especially in a society that ultimately delegitimizes feminist theory. Feminism is an ideology, a set of beliefs and concepts that inform a way of living. Such is the case with Liberalism, Conservatism, Pan-Africanism, Catholicism or Marxism. Feminism is a framework through which we can view the world. It offers us a unique standpoint from which to critique the social structures we live within. It is through feminism that I can begin to question, understand and work towards improving socio-economic issues, race relations, international relations and a variety of other aspects of society.

While many people will wax political and say "gender-based violence is wrong" or "the new immigration laws are



backwards," less of them will take these beliefs further to think—"Why do these injustices exist?" "What is my role in perpetuating inequalities such as these?" and ultimately "What can I do to try to change this?" These are the questions of a feminist activist. The majority of today's would-be reformers have found themselves in a situation whereby simply disagreeing with the current state of affairs is considered enough of a standpoint. Feminists have a long history of making difficult inquiries into "the way things are" and now we all too often do not dare question in this feminist tradition.

There are, in fact, thousands of organizations working to create positive change in various spheres. However, there are fewer organizations that work to create positive change within a consciously feminist framework. Feminism forces us to question capitalism, sexism, racism, ableism, anti-



Semitism; the list goes on. Feminist activism and activists take a stand on an issue, sure to always process it through a lens that focuses on the various social structures we live with today. While an activist may work to decrease gender-based violence, true feminist activists will not do it without recognizing the role that racism and sexism play in the issue. Activists may put their efforts into reforming immigration laws but a true feminist activist will not dare take a stand on this issue without first considering the effects of capitalism and globalization.

Feminist activists will work to promote change by sharing with others, through teaching, through social resistance and through active parenting. They will do it any way they can. Feminist activists are strong and fearless because it takes courage to question the structures we are told we must live with. They recognize interlocking oppressions and also the ways in which these oppressions limit our society's ability to move forward. Feminist activists un-

derstand that it is considered dangerous to take this stand, but know that it is more dangerous to shy away from these important issues.

I'm not exactly sure that I can offer any concrete theories on how to promote feminist activism. After all, isn't this the question that has plagued self-identified feminists for years? If I cannot make suggestions on how to promote activism, I am not sure this can be the "call-to-action" article that it began as. Perhaps it is more of a social critique and a sort of reaching out to the courageous feminist activists who exist everywhere—past, present and future. Maybe it is my way of urging people to reconsider feminism as a valid approach to social change. It is to me one of the only ways for us to move into the future, for I am unwilling to move into a future that does not include the radically inclusive living and radically conscious thinking which feminist activists are capable of promoting.

## In the Spirit of Abigail Allen

Each year we remember Abigail Allen, AU foremother and champion of higher education for women, by honoring a faculty or staff member, student, and alumna in her name.

The committee was pleased to recognize Dr. Susan Mayberry's years of service to AU women with the 2009 faculty award. Mayberry, a member of the English division for 25 years and director of Women's Studies from 1988 to 1991, exemplifies Abigail Allen's famous exhortation to be "radical, radical to the core." In nominating her for this award, colleagues reflected on the force she has been – and continues to be – on the AU campus: "She held her own in a faculty of mostly men, she introduced texts like [Zora Neale Hurston's] *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to the campus community, [and] she let it be known that just because she was small and a woman didn't mean she wasn't in charge."

Trained as a Renaissance scholar, Mayberry continues to reinvent herself. In addition to teaching Shakespeare (and bringing students to the Stratford festival every year), she offers courses in Southern literature, British and American poetry, and Black Women Writers. Her recent study of Nobel laureate Toni Morrison, *Can't I Love What I Criticize? The Masculine and Morrison* (University of Georgia Press), was lauded by the preeminent expert on Morrison's work—Morrison herself.

An exemplary teacher who inspires, nurtures, and offers tough love where needed, Mayberry has been recognized with AU's Excellence in Teaching award many times. She has also inspired and nurtured her junior colleagues, who value her "generosity as a mentor."

The 2009 student award was given to senior Cori Pignatelli, who has recently returned from a semester of

study and activism in Kenya. A Psychology major with minors in Anthropology and Women's Studies, Pignatelli conducted research into the achievements, goals, and future of the LGBTI movement in Nairobi. She has brought a strengthened commitment to activism back home with her, organizing a local book drive for the feminist book club project she is initiating with Kenyan activists, creating a Women's History Month display for Herrick library, and contributing her energy and insight to the Alphadelphian. Faculty members who have worked with Pignatelli appreciate the global perspective she brings to Alfred, as well as her enthusiasm, deep commitment to social justice, and warm personality: "Cori contributes a unique spirit to the AU community, and though she'll be missed when she graduates, she will have much to contribute to the wider world."

Teri Knopf '88, the 2008 alumna honoree, was recognized during Alumni Weekend last June. After graduating from AU with a B.S. in industrial engineering and minors in mathematics and marketing, Knopf earned an M.A. in adult education and human resource development from Seattle University. She has been employed with Merrill Lynch, Penguin Putnam Publishing, and Boeing Commercial Airplane group, and is currently a principal of Knopf Consulting - Individual and Organizational Effectiveness. A member of the Women's Leadership Center Advisory Board, a past member of the AU Alumni Council, and a past member of the College of Business Dean's Executive Advisory Board, Knopf contributes to the professional development of AU students, faculty, and staff through frequent seminars at the Women's Leadership Center.

The 2009 alumna award will be given in June.

# World News

## Europe

Amnesty International says that Armenia is failing to take on the violence and domestic abuse that Armenian women face today. Studies show “over a quarter of Armenian women have been hit or beaten by a family member.” The group is rallying for the authorities to provide new legislation to help protect the women and work to end domestic violence.

## Asia

Fifty years ago on March 12th, 15,000 Tibetan women came together in an up-rising against Chinese rule. On March 12th, 2009, women across Tibet came together to honor these women and to continue their struggle against the Chinese government.

## United Kingdom

For the first time since their conception sometime in the Saxon period, the Freeman of the City of Oxford, a gild of merchants, has decided to admit women into their civic body. Chairman Howard Crapper said this decision was a sign of “history taking a step forward.” 12 women were admitted into the group of 250 men in a special ceremony.



## South America

Argentina is stepping up to the plate and creating a new law which will fight against violence — emotional, physical, or economic—in both their private and public lives. The new law was approved on March 11.

## Africa

Rwanda has become the first country where women outnumber men in parliament. The country already had the highest number of women in parliament, due to their post-genocide constitution, which ensured 30% of the seats had to go to women.

## South Asia

The first women-only hotel in the Middle East, the Luthan, opened its doors in Saudi Arabia. It not only serves guests that are women, but it is run by women as well. Hotel manager Lorraine Coutinho says, “the concept was an all-women idea, the owners and investors are all women, and the designer was a female. It’s a place created by women, for women.”

## Australia

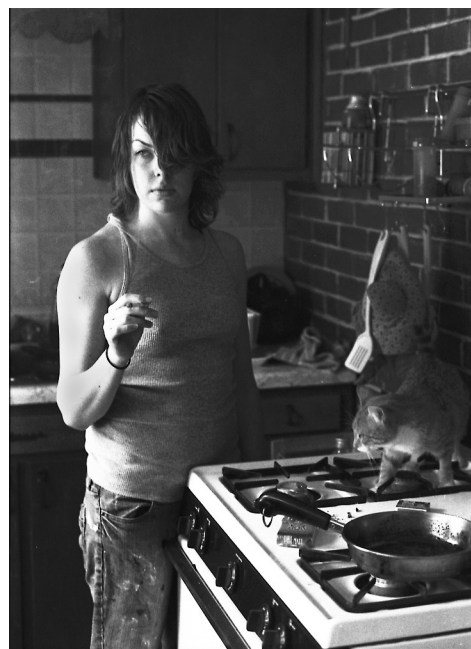
A recent study has shown that the most commonly prescribed medication for Australian women are antidepressants. Because of these findings the Australian government has put 5 million dollars into the study to continue it for the next three and a half years.

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# Artist Showcase:

## Examining the American Family



Dionne Lee

Starting my first series as a photographer turned out to be an unexpected and exciting endeavor. What began as a simple portrait assignment manifested itself into an exploration and critique of the role women play within the household in today's society. The current generation of working moms counters the former expectations of women happily or passively conducting domestic activities. The "Housewife" series is meant to express the frustration, confinement and/or boredom women may face with society's traditional domestic expectations of them and to confront the stereotypes that still exist for many women, regardless of the advances that have been made.

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My most recent work incorporates a rich sense of my family history. I have been printing from negatives that belonged to my mother's parents and in the process of doing so, discovered a history I never knew I had.

The series "11 Forest Lane" is printed from black and white 127 mm negatives using the "Gold" process I learned from Ivan Dalla Tana, visiting professor from Italy, which causes a metallic sheen to the print. My images are saturated with details emphasizing the quintessential American nuclear family of the 1960s.

Individual images of family life form a series, each

photograph validating the person's roles from the photograph before it: my grandfather's American heroism as a volunteer firefighter; their son standing in his Boy Scout uniform; their young daughter, my mother, a shy girl wearing dresses; and her mother, captured as the wife and faithful nurturer. Little touches like the American flag repeating in each photograph, take these images out of the family photo album and place them into a greater context.

Finding these negatives has started me on a life-long journey of uncovering my family heritage and seeking a greater understanding of where I come from.



Amanda Louise



# faculty profiles

## WELCOME NEW FACES TO ALFRED!



Assistant Professor of Human Studies  
Shannon Hickey



Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Mary McGee



Director of the Women's Leadership Center  
Julia Overton-Healy

**P**rofessor of Art History **Martha Anderson** is in the midst of an ongoing research project on Jonathan Adagogo Green, Nigeria's first photographer, who worked in the late 1800s.

Anderson traveled to Jamaica over spring break to interview the Ijaw people about Green's photographs and will travel to Sierra Leone this summer to do more research. She believes that photography includes a rich sense of history and reveals important information about culture, which effects developments in many other areas of study.

Anderson is teaching Women in Art this semester. The course looks at early African and Native American women's art and continues through history to the feminist movement of the 1970s.

**T**hough she isn't teaching on subjects pertaining to women this semester, **Professor of French and Chair of Modern Languages Cecilia Beach** continues her research on 19th century

novelist, socialist, feminist, and activist André Léo, an "independent thinker" who was committed to educational reform. At this past November's Pacific Ancient and Modern Languages Association Conference in Claremont, CA, Beach discussed Léo's critique of the Catholic Church's role in education in a paper titled "Anticlericalism in the Novels of André Léo."

On the topics of California and women, Beach mentions a previous trip to the west coast. This time, she visited San Francisco with some friends and encountered the Women's Building. What fascinated her were the two outside walls of the building which were covered with murals of mythological women from stories from all over the world.

**A**fter nearly 16 years and much soul-searching, **Sylvia Bryant, Associate Vice President for University Relations**, is leaving Alfred this summer for the Lakes Region of New Hampshire. As Executive Director for Institutional Advancement,

she will direct the advancement shop at Plymouth State University in Plymouth, NH.

Bryant was named interim vice president of University Relations in May 2006. She was the University's primary grant-writer for proposals to corporations, foundations and state governmental agencies, as well as responsible for overseeing the University's corporate and foundation portfolio, valued in excess of \$1 million annually. Although she is sad to be leaving dear friends and colleagues, she is very excited about the opportunity. She expects to visit Alfred often, and asks everyone to please stay in touch. Visit her Facebook page for contact information. Though she will be greatly missed at Alfred, we wish her great success at Plymouth State University.

**P**rofessor of Philosophy **Bill Dibrell** has been on the Women's Studies faculty for 26 years. In fact, he introduced Women, Knowledge



and Reality, a course focusing on feminist theory, to Alfred. He is also the only male professor to date to teach the introductory Women's Studies course, Women in Society, and he still makes guest lecture appearances every year.

Currently, he is teaching two upper-level topics courses, Freedom and the second, Equality. One class read Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom*, which postulates that one of the only ways to develop a nation is to increase women's rights. When asked if he feels women's issues can be incorporated into his philosophy classes he replied, "I may teach Sartre, but I also teach Simone de Beauvoir."

**A**rming her students with disposable cameras, **Professor of Art Theory Beth Ann Dobie** asked her honors class, appropriately titled Mirror, Mirror, to try to capture beauty on film. This and other creative assignments, such as using mirrors for introspective study, investigating how beauty is influenced by culture and rank ordering pictures of faces online, attempted to end the debate over whether beauty is subjective or objective.

When she's not teaching or taking walks with her dog, Dobie enjoys attending the Bergren Forum. In the fall she gave a riveting lecture called "Women Artists, Feminist Art?" in which she discussed the connection between politics, art and feminism.

Dobie hopes to publish an article based on her Bergren lecture which would incorporate the different ways people have come to use the term "art" in society.

**W**hen she's not teaching her American History classes or giving percussion lessons, **Professor of History Vicki Eaklor** keeps busy with new projects. After the success of her most recent book, *Queer America: A GLBT History of the 20th Century*, she has become "heavily engaged in research" for

articles on *Jurassic Park* and *The Boys in the Band* for an encyclopedia on American film.

For Eaklor, the most rewarding part of teaching WMST is having "the chance to introduce new generations to the ideas of feminism," as her Women in Society class is made up of all women this semester—the first time in a decade. She is encouraged by seeing "young women come into themselves" and "become more confident."

Eaklor loves watching strong women in TV series such as *Murphy Brown*, *Mary Tyler Moore* and her latest find, *30 Rock*.

**C**ommunication Studies **Professor Robyn Goodman**, advisor of the Fiat Lux, insists that journalists need to do a better job covering women's issues. Goodman makes an effort to keep WMST prominent in the classroom so even when she isn't teaching a course based on women, she "feels a real commitment for people to understand the women in their lives."

Goodman has brought Safe Zone training to campus to help create a safe environment for students with different sexual identities, and she is always searching for updated research to present in her Women, Minorities and the Media class.

After their first California marriage was overturned in 2004, Goodman recently re-married her long-term same-sex partner in 2008 in San Francisco. Now that Proposition 8, eliminating same-sex couples' right to marry, has passed, it's unclear whether her latest marriage will be overturned as well.

**B**etween fierce games of online Scrabble and helping to cure plague-ridden students with cough drops and tissues, **Assistant Professor of English Juliana Gray** finds time to work on a manuscript for her next book of poetry, tentatively titled *Roleplay*.

Because *Roleplay* contains a lot of persona poems, Gray taught a class this semester on dramatic monologues and persona poems, *Dramatis Personae*.

When she's not working on her manuscript or teaching, Gray enjoys bad

movies (and good movies too) and cuddling her kitties, Milo and Huck.

**P**rofessor of Sociology **Larry Greil** is looking for three experienced bridge players to make his life long dream of playing his favorite card game with actual humans, and not a computer, a reality. Unfortunately, even if Dr. Greil were able to find a few willing participants, it's unlikely he would have any time to play. Over winter break he visited colleagues, worked on several papers, and spent countless hours shoveling his driveway.

Greil's biggest undertaking continues to be his research on infertility, which he hopes to fund through a federal grant. Most recently, he has been researching sterilization and sterilization regret in women of varying ethnicities. Greil also attended an international conference on infertility in Norway where women's health issues were discussed by professionals from around the world and a bowl of soup cost forty dollars.

**A**fter having "one of the best semesters ever," **Professor of Political Science Laura Greyson** observes that the 2008 election season was "the best time to be teaching political science because people were paying so much attention."

In reflecting on her travels to Turkey this past summer, Greyson contrasts this more secular society, where women aren't allowed to wear head scarves in public buildings, with the more traditional culture in Morocco, which she had visited this previous summer.

Another contrast Greyson draws is that between her daughter's college experience and her own; the culture, lifestyle and the quality of relationships have changed, she says, since texting and Facebook have become so accessible.

**A**ssociate Professor of English and **Director of the First Year Experience Program Allen Grove** says that at his company, Whitlock Publishing, "Most of what I'm publishing is women's stuff." He is currently working on getting *Dainsbury House*, "a Victorian novel about alcoholism and abstinence," back into print.

Grove's edition of the Gothic novel *The Monk* will come out soon from Barnes and Noble.

Grove attended a First Year Experience conference in Florida this semester. "It was seventy degrees and sunny—a real drag" he says.

Grove continues to teach women writers in all of his classes, and this semester he is teaching a course on his favorite author, titled Jane Austen and Her Contemporaries.

When he is not teaching, Grove "moonlights" as the guide for college admissions on About.com. Of his children, Nathan, 7, and Abby, 4, Grove says, "They always keep me busy."

**Assistant Professor of Human Studies Shannon Hickey** is a new faculty member at Alfred. Before accepting her position, she earned her BA in Political Science and worked as a journalist in the San Francisco Bay area. She earned her MA in Buddhist and Christian studies in 2001 and the Master of Divinity degree in 2003. She is an ordained Soto Zen priest (which she has practiced since 1984) and has taught people with disabilities to use voice-activated computer systems.

Hickey believes her job is to "cultivate broader views of the world and of religions, and to help others do the same." She goes on to say that "our views are always constrained by our vantage point, so it is important to remember that the big picture always includes more than we can see at any given moment."

**Professor of English Emerita Sharon Hoover** has kept her hand in this year by editing the annotated bibliography of Willa Cather's reading that she and Melissa Ryan are compiling. She has also been writing book reviews and short articles and editing the Friends Peace Teams newsletter.

As program chair of the facility where she lives, she sprinkles the schedule of residents' programs liberally with young writers, physical trainers and women who are mak-

ing a difference. She reads the Women's Leadership bulletins regularly and is thankful that the work appears to be flourishing.

**Associate Professor of Spanish Ariana Huberman** has left New York for Pennsylvania, where her husband now teaches at Penn State, and she is in the midst of the job-search process. Now that baby Mia finally sleeps through the night, Huberman has more energy for that search. "I'm absolutely loving motherhood," she says.

Last December, Huberman organized a panel titled "New Approaches to Jewish Culture in Latin America" for the Association for Jewish Studies 40th Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. At the same conference, Huberman presented her paper "Keeping the Mystery Alive: Jewish Mysticism and Difference in Alejandro Jodorowsky's Works."

Huberman and her family have a mind-boggling travel schedule planned for this year. Argentina, Korea, Japan, and possibly Brazil and Israel are on the itinerary. However, exciting adventures outside the country and a big move haven't replaced Alfred in Huberman's thoughts.

"I miss Alfred like crazy," she says. "I already bought tickets to fly back in May."

**Alfred University's newest Director of Gift Planning** and the former **Director of the Women's Leadership Academy, Amy Jacobson** was inspired by her pre-AU legal career to become active in women's issues. She believes that the law "empowers people to do things they feel passionate about."

In January, Jacobson co-presented a workshop on the wage gap at the Western New York Leadership Conference. The workshop, originally created by her mentor, women's rights activist Evelyn Murphy, addressed the Equal Pay Act that was recently signed by President Obama.

When she's not traveling for work, Jacobson enjoys cross-country skiing with her family, and is looking forward to being able to run outdoors again.

**Associate Professor of Spanish Kerry Kautzman** hit the ground running in the fall of 2008 as the new Director of Women's Studies. Last semester, she brought three students to the Seneca Falls Dialogues Biannual Conference. Through events like the conference and WMST lunches, Kautzman hopes to foster more of a sense of community among the Women's Studies minors.

As for her own scholarship, Kautzman presented a paper in the fall at the International Conference on Masculinities, Femininities, and More, an Interdisciplinary Conference on Gender and the Humanities. Kautzman's paper was titled "Femininity versus Queer Ideology in My Mother Likes Women and Beatriz and the Celestial Bodies."

This semester, Kautzman is also teaching her first Honors class, Purity and Porn, in which students discuss, among many other things, what effects participating in and viewing pornography have on women.

"I followed Dame Maggie Smith into a drug store once," **Professor of English Susan Mayberry** reveals. When she's not following famous thespians, Mayberry enjoys writing and researching. *Can't I Love What I Criticize?*, a book on Toni Morrison's representation of masculinity, came out this past fall.

Though she's been on a sabbatical this year, Mayberry still has been a presence on campus. She taught one of her favorite, and most popular courses, Shakespeare in Cinema, both Fall and Spring semester of this year. In October, she also accompanied Alfred students to Stratford, Ontario, for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, one of her favorite events of the year.

When she's not hiking in the summer or snow-shoeing in the winter, **Herrick Librarian and University Archivist Laurie McFadden** is reading. One of the several books she is



interested in is *Jailed for Freedom*, the testimony of 1920's suffragist Doris Stevens.

McFadden explains that there is a lot of "hidden history" at Alfred; Abigail Allen and Ella Eaton Kellogg, she says, were just a few prominent female figures that attended the University. She hopes to do more teaching, possibly a research or honors class on the subject, in the near future.

McFadden's minor in WMST helped raise her awareness of women's issues, which she brings up with her growing 13-year-old son, Sawyer. She is the treasurer of her son's Boy Scout Troop and the president of the local historical society for Baker's Bridge, known today as Alfred Station.

**Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences Mary McGee** brings a rich background in both religious studies and WMST to her new position at Alfred. McGee, who worked as an administrator and professor at Columbia and Vassar before Alfred, used to teach two WMST courses—Women in Religion and The Feminine in Indian Tradition.

McGee has worked with Madhu Kishwar, founder and editor of *Manushi*, the oldest feminist journal in India, on getting the journal articles into books. McGee also once held a workshop in India on women's health and traditional medicine, with a focus on how allopathic (Western) medicine can be influenced by traditional medicine.

McGee says, "Most of my writings have to do with women and gender issues." McGee is a member of the WMST faculty committee at Alfred, which she enjoys "partly because it is so democratic—we can all be involved."

**Professor of Art History Mary McInnes** is thrilled about her upcoming summer course, *Craft: Theoretical Anxiety and Material Strategies*, which will focus primarily on post-war glass and ceramic studio art.

McInnes claims that there are "very strong woman artists" in the field of 3-D arts and conceptual writing and that it is a "great time to be a woman

artist," because although "sexism exists, there are certainly a lot more opportunities and openness for aesthetic forms" in the art world today.

McInnes has recently been published in *Walter McConnell, Itinerant Edens and Interpreting Ceramics* (Winter 2008). She is also the editor of the North American section on current pedagogies for the upcoming issue of *Interpreting Ceramics* (no.12).

McInnes will be busy this summer attending the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts conference in Phoenix, visiting the 2009 College Art Association Annual Meeting in Los Angeles and spending time with her children, Ellen and Carlos.

**While neither of the courses Professor of English Susan Morehouse** is currently teaching are WMST specific, she explains that she "always teaches as a feminist because she can't just check it at the door."

Morehouse is currently working on a number of stories about the relationship between mothers and daughters and explains that "motherhood is the relationship through which I see the world." She has also written an essay titled "Trespases," which is due to be released in June.

This summer, Morehouse plans to expand her own knowledge while attending a Council on International Educational Exchange Faculty Development Seminar in Spain and Morocco. The seminar will explore the importance of crossing cultural boundaries and she hopes to bring this experience into her writing as well as her teaching. She believes it will always be important to "take the time to discuss the world from a woman's perspective."

**Professor of History Gary Ostrower** recently wrote an article on the subject of "United Nations Women's Conferences" that will appear in a collection about women to be published online by Facts on File in 2009.

This summer, Ostrower will be giving a paper on the subject of inter-war foreign policy at a historical conference for high school teachers in the

hometown of one of his presidential heroes, Harry Truman.

While ambitiously attempting to better his skiing performance last January in Park City, Utah, he did manage to avoid avalanches, but he didn't avoid paying good money at the Sundance Film Festival to watch the worst film he has ever seen—*Lunch Break*, by Sharon Lockhart.

**"T**oday's college students are going to be leading the country in twenty years," says the new **Director of the Women's Leadership Center, Julia Overton-Healy**. Having joined Alfred University in January of 2009, Overton-Healy has been busy adjusting to the new environment and thinking up creative ways to inspire student leaders.

After Overton-Healy earned her Master's Degree in Speech Communication from Eastern Illinois University, she began working in higher education and has been doing so for twenty years. She believes that women's leadership capabilities are underused and that the world would benefit from recognizing the unique styles of leadership that women bring to the table. This is the belief that drives her to work with young women to build confidence and leadership skills.

Overton-Healy says that she is really enjoying the opportunity to engage with students and is excited about tapping into their wisdom and "helping them to take the next step into excellence."

**Professor of Sociology Karen Porter** has been busy expanding her progress in service learning by requiring students in her Social Welfare Policy class to serve hours with a local agency. She's also the faculty advisor of the students working with the Gary Horowitz Center for Service Learning on our campus.

This past fall, Porter helped organize a conference on Alfred's campus called "Collaboration in Action: Coordinating Legal, Social and Community-Based Services for Rural Families and Youth," where she presented a talk called "Why (Not) Collaborate Now?"

Porter is currently directing a two-year project funded by the U.S. Department of Justice titled "Enhancing

**W**hen **Professor of Theater Becky Prophet** isn't working on political campaigns (she was Hillary Clinton's greatest supporter), she enjoys teaching her honors class, *Earth Works: The Nature of Life and Literature*, which was inspired by the local scenery. She is particularly interested in the relationships between authors and the environment and the impact the public has on nature.

Prophet continues to debunk the myth that the history of theater is reserved for "dead white guys" by insisting that her students learn about the roles women in theater have played "beyond acting." She is currently teaching a Performance Lab in Improvisation course, where her students plan to write their own script and perform it at local schools.

Viewing free time as "something to fill," Prophet recently took fourteen female students to a directing seminar at the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.

**R**eal feminists understand their society and work with it," declares native Tunisian and **Assistant Professor of French Zakia Robana**. A product of post-revolutionary Tunisia, Robana attributes her love of education both to her mother and to the former President of Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba, whom she describes as "the father of the feminists."

Although Bourguiba provided Tunisian women with several unprecedented rights such as access to education, chances to participate in government and opportunities to travel without male consent, it was Robana's mother who encouraged her to reach her highest academic potential by telling her that an education leads to financial wealth, which in turn leads to freedom.

Robana continues to uncover and document the lives of pre-revolutionary Tunisian women like her mother and to annually attend the World Conference of Francophone Studies.

**T**he most exciting development in **Assistant Professor of English Melissa Ryan's** life is her daughter, Lillian. "There aren't enough femi-

nists in the world, so I made one of my own," Ryan jokes.

In Ryan's fall class on Willa Cather, students wrestled with the question of whether or not Cather was a feminist. Ryan explains: "Cather was in some ways a New Woman who found New Women somewhat distasteful."

Last summer, Ryan presented a paper at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women. She also started an essay dealing with gender and racial passing, but was interrupted by Lillian's early arrival. She looks forward to wrapping it up just as soon as Lillian gets interested in taking naps.

**A**ssociate Professor of **Communications Pamela Schultz** has been enjoying her sabbatical this semester. She is currently working on papers to present at two conferences coming up this year. The first paper, titled "A World of Made is not a World of Born: Neuroscience, Visual Rhetoric and the Monstrousness of Child Sexual Offenders" will be presented at the 31st Congress of the International Academy of Law and Mental Health in New York City. "Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging in the Court of Popular Opinion: The Tension Between Science Law and Public Perception," and "Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging in Court: Technologies of Control and Predictions of Dangerousness," which she co-authored with John Douard, will be presented at the 2009 Meeting of the American Society of Criminology in Philadelphia.

Aside from the academic stuff, which Schultz claims, "really isn't as stifflingly dull as it sounds," she enjoys being with her family, which includes husband Brien Pye and kids Eileah and Brysen.

**W**hen **Professor of German Sandra Singer** isn't teaching, she enjoys listening to NPR and learning about different global issues. Recently, she has become very interested in the water crisis around the world.

Also, Singer has found herself reading German literature that deals with women and aging. This topic,

she says, interested her when she was in graduate school, and it's the first time she has gotten back to it since then. The books, Singer admits, are a bit weird; one includes a scene of "women being churned up in a mill and spat out as young women."

Singer also makes sure to find time to take walks with her dog and folk dance with students.

**D**iscussion of race, as well as gender, plays a large part in **Assistant Professor of Political Science Bob Stein's** research at the moment. Stein says, "One of my goals is to make everyone aware of having a race." He is currently working on a pedagogy piece exploring how different people react to or are aware of race when viewing a popular rap music video. Stein is exploring the idea that white people as well as black people need to confront their racial past in a direct way, and that appreciation of rap and hip-hop may be an attempt to do that.

Stein spent much of the summer reading writer and civil and gay rights activist James Baldwin's essays, and he has begun writing a piece about how, despite Obama's election to the presidency, we do not live in a "post-racial society." Stein is also working on an analysis of all the State Senate candidates' campaign websites, and he's interested in what, if any, effect the websites had on the campaigns.

**F**ormer Reference Librarian **Susan Strong** published *Thought Knows No Sex: Women's Rights at Alfred University* in May 2008, the same month she retired from Alfred. The book analyzes the history of women and women's rights at nineteenth-century Alfred University.

She and her husband, Professor of English Emeritus Paul Strong, have moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, near their two grandchildren, Sofia (nearly 4) and Michael (nearly 2). The Strong's are playing tennis again, working out, reading, taking courses, taking care of their grandchildren (taking them to the playground, shopping, to the museum and the South Carolina beach), watching UNC basketball and traveling. In trips this year to Texas, Georgia and Florida, they visited a number of Alfred friends who have moved south.



*F Word continued from cover...*

We spent a lot of time discussing the word “feminist” and its personal and social implications. Personally, I have considered myself a feminist since high school. I joined the Women’s Leadership Academy as a freshman and I found the experience invaluable. I couldn’t understand why any woman would be opposed to calling herself a feminist because to me, the word carried with it nothing but positive connotations—I saw feminists as strong, intelligent and independent women. However, several women in attendance felt that labels of any kind were dangerous and had the potential to prevent us from seeing the commonalities we share with others. This idea of labeling was also threatening to women who felt that espousing such views would alienate them from their family, culture or religion because it might compromise the traditional roles they played as women.

Our discussion also revealed the many generational differences

and similarities that exist between women. It seemed that young women today found it harder to take a stand against inequality because the issues that affect them are not as apparent as they were twenty or thirty years ago. What I found interesting was that the solutions to these problems had not greatly changed. It seemed as though having confidence and being unwavering in your personal beliefs and convictions were as useful and powerful then as they are now.

We seemed to agree that feminism is an all or nothing ideal. It is not a philosophy that one can use in certain aspects of their lives and conveniently forget in others. We need to teach it in our classrooms, exemplify it in the workplace and stand for equality in all social situations where we feel discrimination exists. We realized that being aware of one’s gender and need for feminism does not have to generate negative feelings — it can be empowering. Throughout the night one of the most exciting things to see was some

women discovering their feminism.

We also seemed to agree that the fight for women’s rights is far from over. While it may be easier to sweep such issues under the rug in today’s society, many women feel their rights should come second to things like war, poverty and the environment, what really needs to occur is a greater mass consciousness. I don’t believe that being a woman today is any easier or harder than being a woman a hundred years ago. I believe each generation of women face their own unique struggles and circumstances and that it is their responsibility to overcome them.

I feel like the event was a great success. I hope it will be hosted again next year and that turn out will be even greater. I think that awareness is the first step in keeping feminism alive. Though simply discussing the issues may not seem to accomplish much, it can impact the way we approach the world.

ALFRED UNIVERSITY 2008 - 2009

Women’s Studies Roundtables

**September.** AU students La’Quesha Garner, Leah Houk, Hannah Meier, and Laura Reyome: “Experiences at Summer Internships and Conferences”

**October.** Lori Damrosch, Columbia Law School: “Women’s Rights in International Law”

**November.** Sandra Singer, Professor of German: “Crazy for Peace: From Clara Immerwahr and Bertha von Suttner to Cindy Sheehan”

**December.** Jessamyn Tracy, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice: “Serial Killers: Killing Women and Women Killing”

**January.** Kerry Kautzman, Associate Professor of Spanish and Director of Women’s Studies Program: “Porn and Purity in America”

**February.** Zakia Robana, Assistant Professor of French: “The Widow: a Pariah or a Messiah?”

**March.** Vicki Eaklor, Professor of History: “An LBT History of the Blues (no, it’s not a sandwich!)”

**April.** Graduating Women’s Studies Minors: Breann Bresovski on “GLBTQ Youth and School Climate” and Cori Pignatelli on promoting feminism on campus

*A Message from the Director Continued from page 2...*

This is a great example of how community-building between our academic program and the WLC’s student affairs program can increase awareness about WMST and help our students connect with the professional world off-campus.

The Women’s Studies Executive Committee, which includes Vicki Eaklor, Robyn Goodman, Laura Greyson, Zakia Robana, Laura Reyome, Melissa Ryan, and Jess Tracy, has worked steadily all year in service to this program and its goals. As a testament to the vitality of all the faculty, staff and students in Women’s Studies, I end my first year as Director more inspired and determined than I began it. Thank you very much.

## Courses Offered in Women’s Studies

### Fall 2009

WMST 201: Gender and Leadership - Julia A. Overton-Healy

WMST 246: Sex and the Body Politic - Laura Greyson

WMST 348: Sociology of Families - Karen L. Porter

WMST 400-01: Topics: Escritoras espanolas contemporaneas - Kerry A. Kautzman

WMST 400-02: Topics: Women’s Leadership Academy Practicum - Julia A. Overton-Healy

# PORN:      DEGRADATION OR LIBERATION?

BY LEAH HOUK

Many people heralded the arrival of the Internet as a new way to rearrange social hierarchies and start everyone off on even footing. The Internet held great promise as a space in which gender potentially wouldn't matter. In cyberspace, the body no longer had to be at the forefront of people's interactions with others. However, the body still appears on the Web, and one of the most prominent ways that the body—especially the female body—appears on the Internet is through pornography.

Many women go into the business of Internet pornography because it is highly lucrative, but the majority of porn distributors are men, and the largest profits go to those men. Despite this, some women make the claim that pornography can be a form of empowerment for women.

Wendy McElroy has written extensively from the perspective that pornography can be a feminist statement. She writes that rather than being degrading, participating in and viewing pornography can be a sexually liberating experience for a woman, because it allows her to get in touch with and experiment with her sexuality. Although it may be risky to participate in the making of porn, viewing it is as safe as masturbation. McElroy argues that the "objectification" of women, as long as the women are willing participants, does not have to be a bad thing.

In her essay "A Feminist Defense of Pornography," McElroy writes, "Women are as much their bodies as they are their minds or souls. No one gets upset if you present women as 'brains' or as spiritual beings. If I focused on a woman's sense of humor to the exclusion of her other characteristics, is this degrading? Why is it degrading to focus on her sexuality?"

At first McElroy's essay angered me, but I did find it intriguing. If our culture had historically celebrated women's minds and souls with the same one-pointed intensity that we have focused on their bodies, that would be one thing. However, her argument mentions nothing of the historical context of hundreds of years of valuing women's bodies over their minds, and for this reason, McElroy seems a little naïve to me. One can't suddenly say that focusing on sexuality is equal to focusing on a sense of humor, because any representation of women takes place within, and takes meaning from, an historical context.

This argument gets into tricky, interesting territory, though. Can pornography validate a woman's sexuality—both experience and expression—while simultaneously subverting a power structure that has historically reduced women to mere objects?

Although she attempts to justify her arguments' relevance to the sexual liberation of women as a whole, I think McElroy's ideas fall more into the category of individualistic achievement. Individual women can benefit from participating in and viewing pornography, because it may help some to express their sexuality. I

have to wonder, though, even in this case, how much of the woman's sexual desires are shaped by her knowledge of what porn dictates women should want. According to most heterosexual pornography, what women want most is to satisfy a giant penis. Perhaps it isn't possible to talk about women's desires that are unshaped by a cultural mold.

Paradoxically, much porn on the Web looks the same, whether it's supposedly empowering for women or not. Two bondage scenes in which a woman whips a man could be made with completely different ideas behind them, and yet to viewers, they may be indistinguishable. This means that while it may be empowering for an individual woman to get in touch with her sexuality in this way, it is still feeding into the overall dynamic of patriarchal power and the devaluing of women, often regardless of the intentions of the woman when she filmed the tape. I would argue that as far as our society as a whole is concerned, most pornography is harmful insofar as it reinforces the mind set that women are sex objects to be used by men, and who exist mostly (or completely) to pleasure men.

My roommate and I are currently taking an honors class, "Purity and Porn," that examines such questions. She pointed out that on many porn web sites, "Lesbian" porn is listed as a subcategory of porn aimed at heterosexual men, along with "Foot Fetishes" and "Large Tits." Gay male porn, however, usually has its own category, which she thought legitimized it as truly aimed at the audience implied in its title.

Even most of the supposedly lesbian porn films, which ostensibly focus exclusively on the woman's pleasure, are aimed at titillating men.

So how can a woman who enjoys making or consuming pornography break the cycle of women merely displayed as sex objects, without martyring her sexuality in the process?

The only solution I can see, and I don't know that it's a great one, is to make the purpose of the woman-empowering pornography explicit. State the ideology behind it. Instead of beginning the video with a story or title that involves the "horny slut who can't get enough cock," use positive language that affirms the woman's desire (as well as the man's, if there's a man present). This sort of stuff does exist, but it is rare, and you usually have to pay for it.

I am still skeptical of pornography as a tool of empowerment, but I think there's a potential to reclaim some of it as a healthy expression of sexuality that's not at odds with feminism. The problem is, my acceptance would depend entirely on the context in which the porn were both made and consumed. The director, all of the actors, and everyone else involved in the process would have to have the express intention of making pornography that legitimized and accurately represented the desires of women (and men, if men were involved). That intention would also





## What Color Is Your Leadership Style?

BY LAURA REYOME

Last fall, the students of the second Women's Leadership Academy created the culmination of the skills we learned in the Academy, our capstone project. We decided that unlike like the year before us, we wanted to work together as a large group to create one project that the entire group worked on. What we came up with was an evening workshop for young women between fifth and eighth grade, and we worked together with Alfred University's Children's and Youth Learning Initiative to help create and run the conference. The class broke up into three groups, three sections for the conference to focus on: leadership, ethics and self-esteem.

During the conference we asked the students to think of themselves as leaders, to be aware of the ethical situations they run into on a daily basis, and to be conscious of the effect the media has on self-esteem.

My group, which focused on leadership styles, was the first to present. My favorite activity of the evening (though I might be biased) was given during this section, a quiz on the color of your leadership style. Now this might seem a little silly and very simplistic as a way to think about leadership, but it's fun. As a leader you can be a blue, red, green or gold; each color encompasses different qualities of your personality. When I took the quiz my results told me I was a blue leader, which means I'm good at making tough decisions, able to make things happen, imaginative, and focused on the future.

During dinner, the ethics group performed skits that dramatized

typical adolescent situations like gossip, hooking up and Facebook. After each short skit, moderators discussed with the students the actions that took place and what they would have done in the situation. We also asked them to share their own ethical quandaries. Many of the students had stories to share, and felt that this section was especially pertinent to their everyday lives.

The final group to present was the self-esteem group. They shared videos from the Dove Real Beauty Campaign and asked the girls to think about the mass media culture of beauty. After some discussion, they had the girls construct what they think the media portrays as the "perfect" woman out of magazine cut-outs.

It was amazing to see where the project evolve from an idea in our heads into an actual event. The process of putting together the conference was arduous. Coming up with

just the right activities, figuring out what young girls today would be interested in and what effected their lives--it seemed to take forever. Leah Houk comments, "It was one thing to spend weeks on our lesson plans, but it was more exciting to spend the time with the young girls, I felt like we were bringing something important to them."

Many of the Academy members felt that one of the most important things was the fact that the girls we were working with were not only just young women, but girls who came from impoverished backgrounds. I personally felt this was the most important thing about the conference. College is not a concrete fact in many of these girls' futures: for some of these girls it will simply be too expensive, and for others there isn't any support at home. Giving them a few hours on a college campus and letting them see women who are pursuing higher education was, in my opinion, more important than any of the other activities we asked them to do.



Academy member Liz Tolson assists girls in an activity on body image