

University of Rhode Island

DigitalCommons@URI

Gender and Women's Studies Publications

Gender and Women's Studies

2-2012

Gender and Women's Studies Newsletter for February 2012

URI Gender and Women's Studies Department

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/wms_pubs

Recommended Citation

URI Gender and Women's Studies Department, "Gender and Women's Studies Newsletter for February 2012" (2012). *Gender and Women's Studies Publications*. Paper 3.

https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/wms_pubs/3

This Newsletter is brought to you by the University of Rhode Island. It has been accepted for inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons-group@uri.edu. For permission to reuse copyrighted content, contact the author directly.

Gender and Women's Studies Becomes a Reality



As we go to press, we learn the sad news of the death of one of our majors, Erica Knowles. Erica was wearing her seatbelt in the backseat of car driven by someone driving under the influence of alcohol. The car went out of control at the bottom of a very steep hill in South County. She was a gifted thinker and writer, and a joy to know and teach. I extend our condolences to her family and friends.

It seems awkward to turn from this terrible news to offering good news about our Program, but I try to assure myself that this good news also emanated from and buoyed Erica.

This year has been very exciting and busy in Gender and Women's Studies. Not only do we now have over 50 majors and two additional one-year lecturers, but we have also managed to make it through all

the committees and Board of Governors to become the Gender and Women's Studies Program.

In fact, we held up the publication of our newsletter so we could make the official announcement, pending the vote of the Board of Governors on March 19. The shift to Gender and Women's Studies links to several decisions. We want to have our name reflect the growing 21st century global emphasis on understanding gender as the primary social construct that impacts the lives of women and men. We also want our name to reflect the gender focus of our curriculum and pedagogical approaches.

In addition, we want to represent our Program as one that insists on the need for men also to understand how they are part of the problem and part of the solution.

Our choice to lead with the term "Gender" rather than "Women's Studies" stems from our desire to communicate our Program as inclusive and welcoming to all women and men. We have chosen to keep "Women's Studies" intact as a phrase, to celebrate and honor our long URI history (40 years next year). At the same time we have chosen not to use the term "Gender Studies," recognizing it is a contested term that has evolved as part of the masculinist response to feminism.

The new name will not alter

our current function, structure, or budget. As the Gender and Women's Studies Program, our mission will continue to be to educate students to identify, understand, and challenge ideologies and institutions that knowingly or unknowingly oppress and exploit others, and/or deny fundamental human rights. By necessity this education builds on commitments integral to achieving freedom from sexism, from discrimination, and from gender bias.

This year, WMS has also had the pleasure of having two full-time lecturers adding their expertise to our curriculum. The

Continued on p. 11

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Note from the Editors 2

URI Student Protest 3

What are WMS Grads doing now? 4-5

It Gets Better: URI Coming Out For Change 6

Bias and Border Mentality in University Structures 7

Meet the WMS150 TA's 8

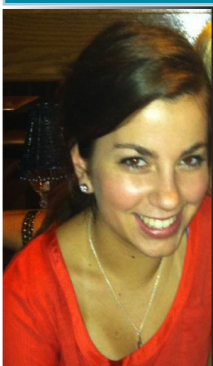
Miss Representation 9

Female (Homo)Sexuality in Greece 10

FALL 2011 WAS A BUSY SEMESTER FOR THE WMS PROGRAM!



A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS



We are excited to present the Fall 2011 WMS Newsletter. This is our first time as editors, so we could not have done it without the help of Jody Lisberger and Jacqueline Atkins; thank you both so much for all your guidance and support.

We are both proud to be Gender and Women's Studies majors as well as Psychology majors. Devlin is also an English major and Maddy is an English minor. We hope this newsletter reflects how much the WMS (soon to be GWS) department has to offer to its students and to the URI community. We both feel proud and blessed to be a part of this program, especially during such an exciting time of growth and change.

We are thrilled about the program name change to Gender and Women's Studies; we strive for a welcoming and inclusive learning environment, and we are happy to have a title that reflects those values.



GENOCIDE AWARENESS PROJECT FACES PROTEST FROM URI STUDENTS

BY MADDY MORRIN

The Genocide Awareness Project (GAP), managed by the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, is a pro-life organization that compares abortion to genocides and hate crimes such as the Holocaust and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

This semester, GAP brought its larger-than-life-sized displays of botched and mangled fetuses to URI. Next to the billboards of aborted fetuses were images of Holocaust victims and school-aged children with black eyes and bruised faces.

Jody Lisberger, Director of Gender and Women's Studies, made me aware of these displays a few days before they were scheduled to arrive. I contacted a few professors and urged them to warn their students and encourage them to take action against the GAP. I also created a Facebook group that urged my peers to do the same.

As a Gender and Women's Studies major and a passionate activist, I am deeply disturbed by GAP for many reasons. I was angry that this group had been invited to URI by the URI College Republicans. I was angry that GAP was discussing abortion in a way that completely disregarded women, our rights, and our circumstances. I was angry that GAP was using graphic imagery, rather than logic or facts, to emotionally

manipulate students into thinking of abortion as a hate crime equivalent to genocide.

Most of all, I was angry that GAP claimed to love and support women.

I didn't think I would have much support, but I have too much respect for URI, and for its women, to have let the GAP go unopposed. On the day of the protest, I stood alone in front of the demonstration and held my simple sign: Abortion is Not Genocide.

I experienced some harassment from GAP workers before I was politely escorted away from the display and across the street by the URI Police.

Students noticed me on their way to class and stood with me for a few minutes, promising to come back after class was over. They came with friends, posters, and markers. By the end of the first day, I had twenty people standing on my side of the street, holding signs and standing in solidarity.

That night, the Facebook group I had created went from having five

members to eighty members. On the second day of the protest, thirty people stood with me. Many of them had called out of work and skipped class to be there.

Throughout both days, GAP workers repeatedly crossed protest lines and attempted to harass students holding pro-choice signs.

The support I got from my peers, professors, and URI Police was touching and astounding. For days afterwards, I received emails and Facebook messages from people who wanted me to know how proud they were of me, and of the URI community, for standing up to GAP.



CATCHING UP WITH OLD FRIENDS: WHAT ARE WMS GRADUATES DOING NOW?

BY DEVLIN HEALEY



This past May, Women's Studies majors, Danielle Henderson, Nelli Ruotsalainen, and Melanie Carrazzo graduated from the University of Rhode Island. These three students were extremely involved in the Women's Studies Program during their time at URI; all three were also Teaching Assistants for WMS 150. The Newsletter decided to catch up with them and ask them three important questions: What are you doing now? What has surprised you about post-undergrad? How has URI prepared you?

What are you doing now?

Danielle: I am a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a Teaching Assistant for an Intro to Women's Studies course. I am starting to work on my thesis, which examines racially exclusive spaces in third wave feminist activism. I also write a blog called Feminist Ryan Gosling, which has received international

press and was recently featured in *The Huffington Post*, *The Guardian*, and *RollingStone.com*.

Nelli: Right now I am a Gender Studies Masters student at the University of Helsinki. I am also a student member on the board of Finland's Women's Studies Association (Suomen Naistutkimuseura—SUNS). I also work part time for Tehy, which is the union of health and social care professionals in Finland.

I am part of a research team conducting a survey on the integration of immigrant labor into the Finnish health and social care field. Being a part of this research group has been of immense importance as I think of future research I may conduct: applying for research permits, constructing the questionnaires, determining my position towards the research (biases etc), and determining the impact this research might have and on whom.

Also one of my co-workers, who is head of International Affairs at the Union, asked me join Eurooppa Naiset (European Women), "women's voice in Europe," a politically unaffiliated group, which looks at questions of equality in the European Union (EU). From the beginning of next year I will be their secretary of the board. Other than that, I live in Kallio, Helsinki and started playing full contact American Football on the Helsinki Women's team GS Demons.

Mel: Alright, what am I doing now? Currently it is Sunday morn-

ing, and I am sitting in a dorm room in the midst of Boston, watching the sun shine off the Prudential building. I have a pile of library books about post-feminism, television, gender, and geeks, as well as several more discussing sexuality and queer theory sitting beside me on a ledge untouched for the moment since I still have a few more days until my final papers are due, and grad school certainly hasn't changed my procrastination habits at all.

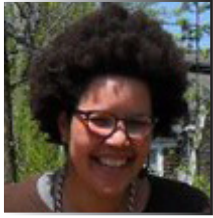
What has surprised you about post-undergrad?

Mel: Post-graduation what surprised me the most is how much I didn't want to leave. You work so hard for so long to get a degree and then suddenly it's done and there is this big void in your life where you find yourself unsure of what the next step is.

I knew I wanted to go to grad school, but did I really want to go right after I finished school? Well, for me the answer was yes, so I applied to Simmons College (in the summer, I recommend applying earlier if you can) but I did get in to the Gender and Cultural Studies program. So far, I love grad school.

Nelli: What has surprised me most about post-undergrad life is how isolated doing my MA seems. At this point, it is my research interest and me, and what I represent to my program is a number that they can tally graduating the program
continued on page 5

tally graduating the program in the desired two years. I am in charge of my own studies, if I do not take care of them, no one will. Being an MA student places all the responsibility on me, but in a way I think it makes it more lonely as everyone is so immersed in their own thesis topic. At least this is the case at University of Helsinki. Now here it is important to note: school is free for EU residents in Finland, we are not “customers” who pour money into the school, and need to be kept happy because of our investment, as is the case in the States. Funding and resources are scarce.



Danielle: I am most surprised by the intensity of the theoretical study. It’s wonderful to be challenged, and I enjoy what I’m learning, but it was a tough adjustment. I didn’t work with theory as an undergrad. I’m also surprised by how much and how quickly I’ve bonded with my fellow classmates. Everyone is focused on their own interests, so I thought that would make graduate school sort of a solitary endeavor, but we’ve all been bonded over the experience of being in this new space. As an undergraduate I was frequently in classes with people who didn’t care about education; it’s wonderful to be in classes with passionate, intelligent people.

How has URI prepared you?

Mel: If you’re a Women’s Studies major at URI, you’re already well prepped to head out into the world. If you’re planning on going to grad school, you’re prepared as well, you know how to write, how to think critically, how to take complicated ideas from texts, and examine them and use them. I had a really awesome class in feminist theory with Gail Cohee while I was at URI and it has really helped in diving into dense theoretical works while I’ve been here, particularly as much of the teaching is done by yourself. Being a TA for WMS 150 was amazing and started me on the path to thinking that maybe being a college professor wasn’t quite as farfetched a dream as I imagined it would be. Also, WMS 400 was a great help in preparation because it taught you how to lead a class of your peers. So far I’ve only had to do it once in grad school but I know the time is coming where I will have to do more. It also teaches you to think outside the box, which is important in life in general. You’re going to end up seeing gender everywhere you go, no matter what you’ll look at things in a gendered perspective and that isn’t a bad thing at all. In fact it is a really amazing lens to see the world through.



Lastly, in my case I really have to say that Jenn Brandt was especially helpful in preparing me for grad school, and in some ways making me want to go as well. Taking a class talking about pop culture started me on the path toward media studies and really that is where my focus is starting to head. I love watching television and talking about it, so that could actually be a career? Amazing. But, on that note I should return to putting off my final papers.



Nelli: My advice for women’s studies students... As an undergrad, start thinking of your specific interest in the field if you are thinking of going right into grad school. On your application you will be asked your ideas about a thesis, the more you have thought about it, the easier it will be. Also once in grad school, you need to start gathering research and really thinking about your thesis soon, so it helps if you have at least some focus. Also as an undergrad, join student organizations on campus and get involved! You will get great contacts, support and experience, which is not only a resume booster, but a chance to enrich your studies/time at URI. Lastly, Women’s Studies can be a really tough major/minor because it seeks to give voice to the margins and expose injustice; I know for me more often than not it seemed like everything in our society/world was wrong and that behind everything there was an oppressing power structure. Therefore it is important to keep the perspective that feminist thinking/talking/activism is a positive power creating change all over the world, weather or not is labeled specifically feminist. It is brave to be passionate about something so compelling! Oh and study hard: grades DO matter.

Continued on pg. 11

"IT GETS BETTER" AT URI: COMING OUT FOR CHANGE

BY MADDY MORRIN

This semester, the University of Rhode Island's LGBTQ Women's Group premiered its own "It Gets Better" video of faculty, staff, and students sharing their stories of struggle, triumph, and survival.

"It Gets Better" is a nationally recognized campaign intended to help prevent suicide in young people who are struggling with sexual and gender identities. The movement is in response to the high suicide rate in gay teens, and focused on the idea that even though life as a young homosexual may often be lonely and difficult, it will get better.

At the presentation of the film, URI President David M. Dooley said, "We are a place that is all about hope; the hope that we can build a future better than the past and become the kind of community where everyone feels welcomed, confirmed and supported."

Students, faculty, and staff were featured in the video. They spoke openly about coming out to their friends, families, and URI coworkers.

Cole Warre, a member of URI's baseball team, noted that the event was mandatory for all athletes, but added, "It's a good thing that we were all asked to come tonight. It's eye-opening. Not everybody sees what happens to these kids. There's a lot we don't know."

Billy Baron, a member of URI's basketball, said that he was not there because it was mandatory, but because he wanted to be there. He said it was important that he and his teammates be in attendance so that they can "see another aspect of life."

"We are here to celebrate people coming together to create a message of hope," Dooley said.

Portia Burnette, LGBTQ Group member advised gay faculty to "come out to their students because even as someone who is out, it is very inspiring to see adults who have lives and professions and careers and families; it's inspiring to see that and know that it's possible to be there."

"It's important that students know that there are happy and functioning gay and lesbian people on this campus" said Lynn McKinney, Dean of Human Science and Services. After coming out to a group of 70 of students, he commented, "I made those kids happy to know there is somebody in a senior position who is not only gay but who is out."

Gender Women's Studies Program director Jody Lisberger said, "I think students and faculty need to realize that there are an enormous number of people who support them, that it is most important to be who you are."

The video, featuring gay faculty members, staff, and students, as well as those who identify as allies, emphasizes URI's priority to become more accepting and inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities. This video is a gigantic step in the right direction.



"Out of Diversity, We Speak"

Women's Studies sponsored event for URI
Diversity Week, October 2011

This year's speakers beginning left, Dr. Mercedes Rivero Hudec (Chemical Engineering); Matt Guertin (Math and Secondary Education); Dr. Robert Carothers (former President of URI); Brittany Pailthrope (Writing and Rhetoric); Dr. Jody Lisberger (Director, and Associate Professor, Women's Studies); Sarah Prak (Communication Studies); Dr. Adam Roth (Communication Studies); and Alice Odhiambo (Communication Studies Masters Degree Program).

BIAS AND BOARDER MENTALITY IN UNIVERSITY STRUCTURES BY EMILY MORROCCO

In her September 24, 2011, talk, “Politics of Data: Gender Bias and Border Mentality in the EEOC Job Category Compliance Chart and Best Practices for Change,” Gender and Women’s Studies Program Director, Dr. Jody Lisberger, addressed the inequalities that exist between men and women in the workplace, specifically in the realm of academia. She looked specifically at how the measuring sticks a university uses to measure its progress might themselves perpetuate bias.

Lisberger investigated two central questions. First, what happens when the measuring sticks are shaped by antiquated norms—norms that are gendered, racially biased and constricted, and perpetuating class advantages and disadvantages? And second, if measuring sticks and structures stay the same, how can we change the systems they reflect, valorize, and regulate?

Lisberger began her talk by introducing the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Job Category Compliance Chart. She explained that the function of this chart is to “condens[e] into one schema an institution’s workplace composition,” so that one may refer to the chart to “quickly assess an institution’s annual hiring practices and trends.”

However, Lisberger pointed out, this chart also contains fundamental elements of hierarchy and compartmentalizing that obscure the gendered division of labor it both conceals and perpetuates. These fundamental problems include the chart’s built-in oversights and oversimplifications, all of which enable it to present data in deceiving and unclear ways.

Thus despite the chart’s good intentions, it serves to further the very problems it seeks to remedy by “reflect[ing] and perpetuat[ing] gender and race bias in higher education.”

Although Lisberger spoke of the 2009 EEOC chart as it has been applied at URI, she made it very clear that her intention was not, by any means, to attack URI for reflecting gender trends that are sadly prevalent across the country and world. Rather, she sought to reveal the imbedded problems that exist within the chart itself, to show that gender divides are still shockingly prevalent in this country, and at this school, despite what some people, or some charts, or some statistics, would have us believe.

It is important to understand exactly how the EEOC chart is so misleading. One of the ways, as Lisberger revealed, is through its separation into categories or tiers. For instance, while the chart includes a “Professional Non-Faculty” tier, which in the case of URI reflects the seemingly refreshing news that women here outnumber men by 112 faculty members, it fails to consider the wage condition under which these “Professional Non-Faculty” persons work.

Lisberger provided the example of individuals holding Ph.D.’s in psychology, some of whom work as faculty in the Psychology Department, and some of whom work in the university’s counseling center. The difference in salaries of these two positions is significant, especially when one considers that in 2009 the majority of URI’s counseling psychologists were women.

Despite the chart’s seeming simplicity, it can often be terribly misleading, especially when it comes to differences in pay and power. For instance, in the top category or tier of “Executive/Administrative, the 2009 chart lists the total males to be 83 and the total females to be 68.

But this distribution, which, all considered, looks as if URI is favorably addressing gender inequity, does not show that most of the executives at URI are male, and most of the “administrators” are female, the former with signatory budgetary power, the latter without.

“Once we recognize this gendered relation of power, it becomes clear that a binary gendered system is simply unacceptable.”

Continued on p. 12

WMS 150 TA'S



Each fall, the Gender and Women's Studies Program selects qualified undergraduates for the Teaching Assistant program to run recitation groups for WMS 150.

Front row: Zuleika Toribio, senior; Jillian Rounds, senior.

Back row: Rebecca Roque, senior; Anna Vaccaro, senior; Prof. Jenn Brandt; Gail Harvey, junior; Matthew Guertin, senior.

Gail Harvey: I was born and raised in New York City, spent 30 years living in Brooklyn where my husband and I raised our twin daughters, then moved to RI ten years ago. After being a stay-at-home mother for ten years, I reentered the workplace in 1983, working a major magazine and book publishing firm in Human Resources then in marketing. In 2006, attending the URI Honors Colloquium (Songs of Social Protest) inspired me to quit my part-time job at an engineering firm to finally earn my undergraduate degree through CCE Providence. I am a double major in History and Gender and Women's Studies. The highlight of my college career has been serving as a TA for WMS150 with Professor Jennifer Brandt and the other five TAs.

Matt Guertin: I will be graduating URI in the spring of 2012 with a degree in both mathematics and secondary education. I was chosen to speak at "Out of Diversity We Speak" during Diversity Week in the Fall of 2011 on behalf of the Gender and Women's Studies Program. My interest in Gender and Women's Studies is the intersection of gender, race, and class, and I use this theory in the context of urban education. In my free time I enjoy composing music, studying algebraic structures, photographing waterfalls, and being a cinematographer.

Jill Rounds: I hail all the way from West Greenwich, RI. I am Super Senior, so this 5th year is my victory lap. I'll be graduating in May and going to Graduate School for Higher Education at the University of South Carolina. I am a Resident Advisor in Bressler Hall, and I love it. I loved being a TA as well. I am a Political Science and Gender and Women's Studies double major with a concentration in International Victimization.

Anna Vaccaro: I am senior double majoring in Gender and Women's Studies and Communication Studies. I'm a native Rhode Islander and a single mom to an adorable 2-year-old, Eli. After graduation in May, I'm planning to pursue graduate studies; I hope to eventually work in resource and recovery programs for victims of sex trafficking in America.

Rebecca Roque: I am a recent transfer student to URI and a graduating Gender and Women's Studies major. I feel the transformative and confidence-building program at URI is targeted to provide students with relevant and skill-building opportunities.

Continued on p. 11

MISS REPRESENTATION: A MUST SEE!

BY JESS BRIGGS

Regardless of your age, sex, gender, ethnicity, skin color, sexuality, political views, level of education, or anything else that you feel would get in the way of your viewing experience, this film is a must see for all.

It is important to understand that the media, and its representation of women, is central to the way women perceive ourselves. *Miss Representation* is all about this understanding.

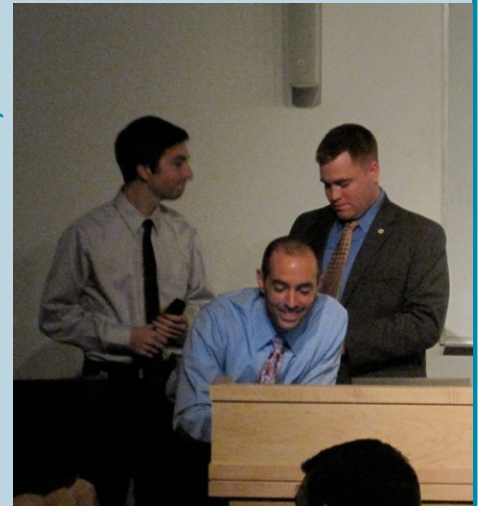
Thanks to Professors Jeff Bachman (WMS/PSC) and Jenn Brandt (WMS), URI students had a chance on November 3, just in time for elections, to screen the film.

Bachman said, "I think one of the most important contributions of the film is that it encourages its viewers to consciously think about things that, for a lack of a better description, are almost subliminal. Individuals are bombarded with images and representations of a socially constructed reality on a daily basis, which can lead to the internalization of this construction."

Though the film mainly focuses on how the media more often than not misrepresents people, mainly women but also men, a major theme of the film is to take into consideration just how the news, or that popular reality T.V. show everybody loves, is telling us how to think, how to act, and how to perceive the world and each other.

One of the examples the film uses is *Toddlers and Tiaras*. On the surface, such a show may seem harmless. Personally, I find it eerie that after all the girls' makeup is applied and their hair is curled and styled, so the girls often look like dolls.

But if you look past the innocent nature of the show, and the eeriness, you begin to see the troubling nature of the message it's sending out: to be worthy of approval, a girl has to wear copious amounts of makeup and glitzy dresses, know how to dance, and look good in a bathing suit. And a mother is supposed to contribute in making her this way.



Professor Jeff Bachman (center) and two Political Science majors.

MISS REPRESENTATION
a documentary film by Jennifer Siebel Newsom

You can't be what you can't see.

Thursday, November 3rd
Swan Auditorium
7:00pm

A documentary on women's negative portrayals in the media and its impact on society.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION WITH OUR STUDENT PANELISTS FOLLOWING THE SCREENING.

Search: "Miss Representation URI"

THINK BIG WE DO

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

SPONSORED BY WOMEN'S STUDIES & POLITICAL SCIENCE

"This internalization of gender roles, as well as ideas about masculinity and femininity, may also have an effect on how we approach public policy issues and their potential solutions," Bachman said.

Miss Representation doesn't only focus on popular television shows, however. It delves into areas such as our government. While 51% of the U.S. population is female, only 17% of Congress is female. That's a problem, as far as representation goes.

"I don't think most people are aware of some of the more insidious language that was used to describe Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin during the 2008 presidential election cycle," Bachman continued.

"One only needs to look around at the current crop of candidates and GOP hopefuls--and their troubling take on women's issues and their reluctance to reauthorize legislation such as the Violence Against Women Act-- to see why a film like *Miss Representation* is so important," said Brandt.

"You can't be what you can't see" is the heart of the film. And it's true. If women and men are misrepresented in the media, how can we know how to be otherwise? Watching this documentary is a start. By the end of it, you'll realize that you can help be what others need to see. I promise.

FEMALE (HOMO)SEXUALITY IN GREECE

BY EMILY MORROCCO



Emily Morrocco looks at Greece through her own lens.

While I studied abroad in Greece this semester, one of the culture differences I was repeatedly struck by was the blatant gender divide that existed in virtually all areas of life. Men are expected to preside over all areas of life, with the exception of the home

In rural Greece, particularly, women are expected to devote their attention solely to their homes and deny themselves everything else, from jobs, to physical fulfillment, to interest in themselves.

What originally struck me was the sexual dynamic in heterosexual couples, where it is the man's prerogative to decide when he and his wife will have sex. However, since I had recently fallen in love with a woman and come out to my family and friends, I was hyperaware of the experiences of gay women in Greece.

Studying gender roles in heterosexual relationships led me to realize that the sex and power discrepancies between men and women are directly related to the treatment of lesbians in Greece. This was a topic to which we returned repeatedly in my Greek Culture class last semester.

The professor, a native Greek, was able to attest to this discrepancy, and it was something that both the American students and the Greek students (who lived mainly in the city, where the ways of life are vastly different from those in the country), had a hard time accepting.

"Gender, Sexuality, and the Person in Greek Culture," an article by Peter Loizos and Evthymios Papataxiarchis, discusses how gender roles impact sexual experiences in Greece. They argue that male dominance calls for female passivity.

In my Greek Culture course, I studied the connection of the role of the female in a heterosexual relationship to the cultural conception of the lesbian experience. In Greece, I found that female sexuality is solely based on procreation, and therefore all sexual experiences are not controlled around pleasure, but reproduction.

When forced into this reproductive role, women cease to be thought of as human beings and instead become machines assumed to be incapable of feeling or desire, whose lives are centered solely around procreation. Because women are thought of as incapable of desire or sex outside of reproduction, the lesbian experience is thought of as ridiculous and impossible, and therefore completely disregarded and shut out.

As a homosexual woman, I am familiar with the feeling of being shut out: shut out of marriage, shut out of respect, and shut out of public acceptance. In the United States, we are shut out for similar reasons. Women are dehumanized and thought of as sex objects, which reduces the lesbian experience to male pleasure. However, two women who choose to devote their lives to each other face discrimination. This false acceptance may be even more hurtful and harmful than the outright rejection of our lifestyle.

Just as women in rural Greece are limited to the role of the baby-maker, women in the U.S. are limited to the role of the sex object, and thought to be incapable of intimate relationships without men, which discredits the lesbian experience based on female gender roles.

The disregard of female homosexuality that is so prevalent in rural Greece indicates a larger problem that exists not only in Greece, but also in a large portion of the world. Too often, femininity is linked with passivity, and women are stripped of their rights as people, denied even the capability of feeling basic emotions, simply because they, as women, are expected always to follow and never lead. This prescription is something that we as women must remain aware of and take it upon ourselves to prove false.

"When forced into this reproductive role, women cease to be thought of as human beings and instead become machines assumed to be incapable of feeling or desire."

Gender and Women's Studies Becomes a Reality cont. from p. 1

research of Dr. Alana Bibeau (Ph.D. Sociology, U. Va.) focuses on issues of mothering and reproduction. Her Master's thesis, "Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity," and her dissertation, "Cultural Conceptions: Pregnancy and Birth Among the U.S. in Three States." Her knowledge considerably expands our curriculum. Bibeau is also a Certified Labor Doula (CLD) through Childbirth International and serves on the Board of Trustees for the Rhode Island Birth Network.

Jeff Bachman, a joint lecturer in WMS and Political Science, specializes in legal and political frameworks for the prevention of genocide. His Master's thesis on "Media Rhetoric After 9/11" and his work as Advocacy Director for Europe and Eurasia for Amnesty International also enrich our Program in our collaboration with Political Science. Bachman's teaching has a strong gender emphasis in his courses, "Genocide," "Enforcing Human Rights," "Gender, Politics, and Media," and the "Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies."

Our one setback this year was being asked to withdraw our application to become the "Department of Gender and Women's Studies." Though we function fully already as a Department and would have liked the status and recognition afforded "Departments," this setback will not keep us from being a significant contributor to URI.

TA's cont. from p. 8

I created and enacted my own internships, teaching media literacy, self-esteem, and eating disorder workshops at high schools throughout RI, and also interned for the President of Leading Women, planning and helping to run their annual Aspiring Women Entrepreneurs Conference last June. These experiences, coupled with excellent faculty-student collaboration through the undergraduate Teaching Assistant opportunity, have prepared me as a fierce competitor in my desired field: Education, Women's Rights, and Immigration.

Old Friends cont. from p. 4

Danielle: My experience with WMS was invaluable - I would not be here without the guidance and continued support of Jody Lisberger, Karen Stein, and every professor with whom I had the pleasure of working. The WMS capstone class was a great introduction to graduate-level work and topics. I double majored in WMS and English; both departments are full to the brim with the best professors URI has to offer. URI prepared me to be unapologetic about my academic pursuits, to follow my genuine interests, to engage with people on multiple levels. My experience as an undergraduate TA for WMS made me a highly sought-after candidate when I was applying to graduate programs, and really helped foster my desire to teach.

Summer 2012 Courses

WMS 150* Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies
WMS 301* Women's Professional Development and Leadership
WMS 315** Introduction to Feminist Theories and Methodologies
WMS 320** Feminist Thought into Action
WMS 325** International Women's Issues
WMS 350** Women and Aging
WMS 350** Popular Culture and Postfeminism
WMS 350** Women and Sci Fi
WMS 360** Men and Masculinities
WMS 365** Sexual Victimization
WMS 370** Sex Trafficking

* **also** available online ** **only** available online

Bias and Border Mentality cont. from p. 7

Beyond investigating how profoundly the structures inherent in this measuring stick speak to why institutions of higher education have not been able to achieve gender and race equity, Lisberger in turn discussed how deeply the border mentality underlying the Chart reinforces what Melissa Wright (2006) has called “the myth of the disposable woman.”

It is here, perhaps, that the young women of URI should pay particular attention. Here, Lisberger discussed the dangers of a “binary gendered system” and the way it both “reflects and shapes the power structure.” Consider, for instance, that whatever lofty positions men find themselves in often exist only because of women. (For instance, in order for men to exist in a position of power, they need women to work below them.)

Once we recognize this gendered relation of power, it becomes clear that a “binary gendered system” is simply unacceptable; if professionally, women and men rely on each other so that they may each exist, it no longer seems logical for women to compare themselves only to women (which Lisberger cites as a common hindrance to female mobility, since women are so prone to judge themselves in relation to only other women, who are equally slighted).

Lisberger went on to explore the three-tiered hierarchy Wright described for the *maquiladoras*—women “sitting” and doing their work, Mexican men standing behind them and supervising, but not reaching to touch their work for fear of crossing the line into feminized labor, and higher supervisors (white men) looking down onto the floor in a panopticon of privilege—as very suggestive of URI’s power structure.

Most interesting, Lisberger noted, may be the extent to which the *maquiladora* hierarchy depends on people of color and lower class being closely tied not to the white supervisors but to “the disposable women,” their spread to her audience in September. She went on to examine global gender mainstreaming practices to see what strategies have worked to create gender equity.

Most surprising was researchers’ discovery that the amount of money available or allocated to government resources or agencies did not have a significant bearing on successful gender mainstreaming initiatives. Least surprising was the finding that the proportion of women as government ministers, as opposed to parliamentarians, mattered more than any other factor. In other words, where institutions truly wish to create gender equity, they must expeditiously increase the number of women at the top.

Of course, there is no simple solution for the crisis of gender inequality as it exists in this world or even at this school, but at least we can be mindful of it. Further, we can learn from Lisberger’s deconstruction of the EEOC chart that everything is layered and everything is complicated; when it comes to gender equality, closer inspection is always necessary.

Although Lisberger’s lecture was geared specifically to women currently employed in academia, she made a number of points that can be applied to women universally, in both social and professional realms.

Gender inequality within and outside of the workplace is a reality that each of us is certain to encounter at various points in our lives, and it is important for all women to be aware of the goings-on around them, to prepare themselves for the harsh realities they will face, and to plan courses of action and ways to bring change.