A Letter from the Director

Hello everyone. I'm serving this year as Acting Director of the Center for Women's and Gender Studies, and I'm happy to be joined by Laura Engel, as the new Associate Director, and Margaret Hewitt (MA, History) as the new Graduate Assistant. We are working to continue the momentum developed over the last few years, and we thank all those faculty, students, administrators, and staff who have helped sustain and encourage the program. Please join us in congratulating Lanei Rodemeyer, who has been serving as program Director, on the birth of her son Kilian Steven. We want to recognize all of the work she has done, along with Laura Callanan, who has been the Assistant Director for the program.

The newsletter will alert you to some of the events and activities we have planned for the Spring 2011 semester. We are excited about the upcoming visit of Trinh Minh-Ha on April 1, and we hope to have a terrific turnout.

Please have a wonderful holiday and look for news about the program and its events in the Spring.

Linda Kinnahan

Upcoming Events

December 1
WSGS Fall Reception
4:30-6:30, College Hall 643

April 1
Keynote Speaker:
Trinh Minh-ha

If you are interested in joining Women’s and Gender Studies, please contact us!

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Dr. Linda Kinnahan
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Dr. Laura Engel
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Dr. Sarah Miller was hired as a full-time faculty member in the Classics Department in 2008. She earned her BA in Latin and Classical Civilizations at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After transferring to UNC Chapel Hill’s Comparative Literature department, Dr. Miller completed her Ph.D. in 2008 with a specialty in medieval literature and concentrations in Latin poetry and literary theory. For her dissertation, Dr. Miller focused on late-medieval accounts of female bodies whose anatomy and physiological processes marked them as unstable, permeable, and overflowing – features associated with monstrosity in the Middle Ages.

Dr. Miller regularly teaches Latin, Classical Archeology, and Classical Mythology. She also had the opportunity to develop a few new courses, both of which are cross-listed with Women’s and Gender Studies. This semester, Dr. Miller taught one of these courses, “Women, Sickness, and Sanctity in the Middle Ages,” helping students examine the complex relationship between holiness, sin, and illness in medieval texts written by and about women. In Spring 2011, Dr. Miller will offer “Love and Violence in Roman Poetry,” which will explore the intersection of erotic desire, physical violence, and power dynamics in Propertius, Catullus, Vergil, and Ovid.

Dr. Sarah Miller’s new book, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, was published by Routledge in 2010. It examines the relationship between medieval monstrosity and representations of female corporeality in a range of late-medieval discursive traditions: Ovidian poetry, medical treatises, and mystical literature. Dr. Miller argues that the female body in the Middle Ages existed in special relation to the medieval study of monstrosity because it resisted the customary marginalization that defined other monstrous groups: Muslims and Jews were excluded from the body of Christ, medieval maps located the monstrous races on the distant margins of the civilized world, but the monstrous female body took the form of mother, sister, wife, and daughter. As a result, medieval authors grappled with the troubling prospect of monstrous creatures also being objects of love and desire.
On Tuesday, October 12th Duquesne University hosted visiting writer Linda Hogan. Hogan read from poems, memoirs, and essays to a packed Power Center Ballroom crowd, and interspersed her readings with personal anecdotes and environmental concerns. Currently Writer in Residence for The Chickasaw Nation, Hogan has received a prestigious Lannan Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, a Guggenheim, and has received the Lifetime Achievement Award from both the Native Writers Circle of the Americas and Wordcraft Circle. She has also received the Mountains and Plains Lifetime Achievement award and has been inducted into the Chickasaw Hall of Fame. Called a “quintessential econovelist” by Dana Seaman, environmental issues are the major focus in all of Hogan’s work, writing, and teaching. While visiting a junior level memoir-writing course, Hogan spoke of an organic relationship to writing and to genre—emphasizing to students the importance of the work, of just getting words down on paper. Describing her as “luminous,” one student asked how she stays positive in the face of so much cultural and environmental tragedy—Hogan responded that it’s our job as individuals and writers to stay optimistic and hopeful.

Recent Student Presentations

A 2010 graduate of Duquesne University’s English and Women’s and Gender Studies departments, Brenden O’Donnell is currently pursuing a master’s in English at Brandeis University. Brenden is primarily studying literary theory and post-colonial fiction; in his literature courses he hopes to identify the political powers that narrative can use to disrupt dominant cultures. He is also completing a project in Women’s and Gender Studies that will consider the feminist linguists’ construction of identity through the lens of queer identity politics.

Brenden’s first exposure to Women’s and Gender Studies at Duquesne was feminist philosophy. Within that discourse, he learned how to express his own identity as a gay man and effectively disrupt sexism, racism, homophobia, and heteronormativity in both academia and everyday life.

Ultimately, Brenden says he would like to pursue a Ph.D. in English Literature. Although he has chosen English as his discipline, he would also like to teach classes on feminist and queer theory while incorporating women’s and gender studies into literature classes.

Upcoming Events

This year’s keynote speaker is Trinh Minh-ha, renowned filmmaker, feminist, post-colonial theorist, author, and professor of Gender and Women’s Studies at the University of California Berkeley. Dr. Trinh will speak on April 1, 2011, in the Power Center.

To celebrate both Black History Month and Women’s History Month, the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies is working with a variety of departments to plan events, including student presentations, a graduate student panel, and a presentation by Dr. Moni McIntyre. Be on the lookout for more information in the Spring 2011 semester!