Strategic Plan
Women's and Gender Studies
Fall 2010

Introduction:

"Radicalism means the well-known counter-ideologies of modern Western political and economic philosophy. Radicalism means . . . feminism." (Donna Gabaccia)

Feminism, the most central and significant intellectual movement of the second half of the twentieth century, transformed the study of many disciplines, including critical theory, literature, history, and psychology, to name just a few. As one of the first interdisciplinary fields of study, Women's and Gender Studies has been central to the intellectual life of the university in the United States and worldwide for nearly 40 years. It has been on the forefront of important theoretical and methodological developments in the social sciences and humanities and has significantly influenced the sciences.

Women's Studies as an independent discipline and program creates a crucial space in the academy for critical thinking across disciplines about categories of gender, race, class, sexuality, nation, and disability. Women's Studies examines how these categories develop and operate across different cultures and historical periods, and how they shape social, political, economic, and institutional organization (s) as well as personal experience and perception. The Women's Studies classroom space reflects paradigmatic shifts in pedagogy regarding student learning and intellectual responsibility, creating a space for "conscientization" (in the words of Paolo Freire), where students learn critical thinking skills, and are encouraged to utilize such skills on behalf of personal transformation and social justice.

Women's Studies and Stony Brook University:

With its emphasis on interdisciplinary research and teaching methods, and its wide network of affiliations and collaborations across and beyond the university, Women's and Gender Studies at Stony Brook has become a key player in a more integrated approach to scholarship. Below see listed the vital spaces created for and in our program:

1. **A theoretical and methodological space for the creation of new approaches to research.**

Innovative research and the creation of new topics of study constitute the emergence and creation of Women's Studies as field of scholarship unto itself. In order for Women's Studies to grow and expand in the 21st century, it needs to continue to develop ways of knowing and doing, enhancing and strengthening its theoretical and methodological inquiries and strategies.

2. **A material space for men and women doing research on gender and sexuality.**

Unlike traditional disciplines (and departments) in which the study of gender and sexuality is still marginalized or treated suspiciously or as less important, Women's Studies is committed to placing these categories at the center of intellectual inquiry. When

such categories are placed at the center of the historical/social stage, they reshape other categories, inclusive of class, work, home, community, and place.

3. **A symbolic space for women faculty**.

"Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other." (Yi-Fu Tuan)

The state of a Women's and Gender Studies Program (or department) at a university is often an indication of that institution's commitment to bettering the academic future for women, and of its support of women faculty and students. Contrary to the assumptions of some, the issue for women in the academy is not only salary equity (yet to be achieved). A future for women in the academy is also about support for research and the hiring and mentoring of women faculty: goals which require re-thinking the shape of an academic career, a process ideally suited to the goals and focus of Women's Studies.

Affiliated Faculty: Women's and Gender Studies at Stony Brook has always attracted a large number of affiliated faculty from all across campus. These professors are some of the most productive scholars and active participants in the intellectual life of the university. Our affiliates are distinguished research, teaching, and service professors, and they serve in leadership positions on key university committees. Many newly appointed faculty are keen to affiliate with our program, and seek us out to cross-list courses with us. In light of our desire to develop a fully autonomous Ph.D. program, such reinforcement through faculty support across the campus serves auspiciously as we move toward our programmatic future.

Strategic Plan in Light of Women's Studies at Stony Brook:

BA/MA 5-year program

The Women's and Gender Studies program at Stony Brook is currently certified to offer a BA degree and Graduate Certificate for students enrolled in other degree-granting departments. Women's and Gender Studies has already established 5-year BA/MA Program in Women's and Gender Studies and Public Health. This is an 18-credit track specialization in the Women's Studies Major, particularly likely to appeal to students planning careers in the health professions. Thus we are already implementing a plan for expanding the graduate program, emphasizing our links to the other side of campus. Furthermore, in a two-step process, we imagine expanding our free-standing graduate certificate program and plan a 5-year BA/MA program in Women's and Gender Studies. This proposal emerges from the existing structure for the graduate certificate program.

The Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies has met with enormous success and well over 100 graduate students have completed the program. We would like to maintain the option of graduate students from other disciplines to complete a graduate

certificate should they desire to do so, but recognize that the time is ripe for expansion. In light of the recent focus on interdisciplinarity, graduate students understand that a certificate in Women's and Gender Studies will give them theoretical and methodological tools beyond what they receive in individual disciplines. They realize that completing the certificate program offers them the research training and pedagogical expertise that maximizes their potential on the academic job market. Indeed, recent academic placements of graduate certificate students bear this out.

Currently we have 51 active graduate certificate students. These students organized the first annual Graduate conference in Women's Studies in 2008 and 2009 and attracted graduate students from across disciplines and interdisciplinary programs/departments and from numerous universities. Based on these obvious successes and the increasing interest from graduate students from several departments (English, Philosophy, Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, Hispanic Languages and Literatures, Sociology, History, Art History, Fine Arts, Psychology, Public Health, and Social Welfare, e.g.), we are in a good position to implement a BA/MA program.

Plan of implementation: accept 3-5 free-standing students into our current Graduate Certificate Program. Currently, the certificate requires 3 core seminars (WST 601; 600; 699) and 2 electives taken in other departments and with approval by the Director of Graduate Studies for a total of 18 graduate-level credits.

Ph.D. Program

Along with the core courses in feminist theories, interdisciplinary histories and methods, and critical pedagogies, we already have the foundations to develop a PhD program in two key, and interrelated, areas: 1. gender, sexuality, and public health and 2. transnational feminist social movements and activism.

Women's and Gender Studies faculty have discussed the strong possibility of developing an autonomous Ph.D. program and have already taught three such courses successfully. Three of the core graduate-level classes comprise: Feminist Theories, Feminist Histories and Methods, and the Teaching Practicum. Below are descriptions of the three 600-level courses currently taught and special topics courses currently taught or in preparation to be taught by the WaGs faculty.

<u>Feminist Interdisciplinary Histories and Methods (WST 600)</u>

Rather than begin with an exploration of "the" feminist methodology in Women's and Gender Studies, or an account of "the" history of feminism, this course will explore what counts as "history," as "method," and as "evidence" in feminist scholarship. Since its emergence as a distinct knowledge project within the academy, feminism has raised questions about how we know what we know, who gets to speak and for whom, and what are legitimate fields of inquiry. Our goal will not be to seek answers to these (and other) questions, but to trace some of the ways in which feminist scholars have sought to intervene in debates about disciplinary as opposed to interdisciplinary forms of

knowledge, objective as opposed to "situated" knowledge, evidence versus experience, history versus fiction, etc. A central part of the feminist project for many scholars has been an engagement in self-reflexive questioning of the status, history, methods and goals of feminist scholarship. This course will attempt to continue that practice. To that end, students are encouraged to engage with the material with their own projects in mind, and to use the course in order to be self-reflexive about the methods and theories they intend to use for their graduate work.

Feminist Theories (WST601)

This course is designed as an examination of the relationship between feminist knowledge, language and aesthetics. Arguably, every project (discipline, field of inquiry, or individual inquiry) begins with both a base of received knowledge and a set of questions about that knowledge. This examination is particularly true for feminist inquiries. An important foundation for such examination is provided by feminist epistemologists who question the very formation of knowledge, of truth claims, and of validation of knowledge. As some have argued, language is central to the questions of epistemology and knowledge. Further, both epistemological claims and language are crucial to aesthetic judgments. While aesthetic judgment is sometimes focused upon literary or artistic production, here we will also consider the ways in which social understandings of gender and gender roles are affected by knowledge, language, and aesthetic judgment.

Practicing Women's Studies (WST 699)

The teaching practicum is designed for women's studies certificate students who anticipate teaching classes outside, or in addition to, their disciplinary home. We will focus our attention primarily on the construction of an Introduction to Women's Studies course syllabus. In addition, we will engage in three interrelated discussions: what has women's studies been; what kinds of interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity are possible in women's studies; and finally, what might women's studies become? Questions concerning the politics and economics of academia; the practices and objects of feminist scholarship; and the politics and methods of knowledge production will all feature in these discussions.

Special Topics Courses:

Feminist Discourse and 19th/20th Century Literature (WST 602)

This course is designed to introduce graduate students to the wide range of discourse in feminist studies and its impact on criticism and literature. We will read a number of feminist thinkers and consider their theories about women, gender, masculinity, and patriarchy in relation to language, culture, and such forms of social inequality as race, class, nation, and sexual orientation. We will discuss how to use these theories in analyzing other areas of scholarship and teaching, our disciplines, and our own lives.

We will take a historical approach to the evaluation of feminist theory and its relation to literary works and intellectual practice.

Gender and Psychopathology (WST 603)

This course will investigate the role of gender in the prevalence, diagnosis, and treatment of mental illness. We will examine disorders disproportionately diagnosed for women such as depression and eating disorders, and those disproportionately diagnosed for men such as autism and alcoholism. The psychological, biological, and social variables that contribute to the disproportionate diagnosis of these disorders will be explored and methodological issues in psychopathology research will be reviewed. The course will also focus on gender differences in treatment modalities used (particularly in the prescription of psychotropic drugs).

Feminist Theory and Practice in Latin America (WST 604)

This course will provide a basic overview of the historical development of modern feminist thought and women's political action in Latin America, with an emphasis on recent debates in gender studies and feminist theory and practice. One goal of the course is to critically analyze the complex relationship between the intellectual production of Latin American women and Latin American discourses about the feminine subject, and theoretical trends from the United States and Europe. A second objective is to explore the gendered nature of specific social issues, events, and processes that have shaped women's experience and feminist debates in the region, including shifting state and economic structures, race and ethnicity, revolutionary/social movements, democratization, struggles for indigenous rights and autonomy, for land and resources, and neoliberal globalization. Throughout the course, we will consider changing forms of women's activism in Latin America, including new forms of political participation across borders, the concept of human rights and its relationship to movements for women's rights, and intersections with US Latina theory.

Feminist Ethnography (WST 605)

This graduate seminar will focus on ethnography as a qualitative research methodology within Women's and Gender Studies, as well as the social sciences more broadly. We will read and discuss a wide range of feminist ethnographies, as well as critical contemporary assessments of feminist scholarship and methods. Participants in this course will take part in ongoing theoretical debates around the questions of interdisciplinarity and the ethics of field research, the feminist politics of ethnographic representation (by the researcher depicting the researched) and of positionality (of the researcher in relation to the researched). The course will also consider the relationship of other genres of writing (diary, autobiography, memoir, life history, biography, novel) to feminist ethnography. Seminar participants will be expected to undertake their own feminist ethnographic writing, which will be shared with others in the course as a way to refine analytical and writing skills.

Feminist Theories/Queer Theories (WST 606)

In their 2005 appraisal of the current state of Queer Studies, David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz ask the question, "what's queer about queer studies now?" and not surprisingly answer, "A lot." In this seminar we will ask a different but related question: how does contemporary queer theory in the U.S. operate in relation to, and against, a history of feminist thought and politics? Understanding against as at once "contrary" but also "close to" or "drawing towards" each other, we will explore some of the disarticulations, transmissions, intersections, and transferences between feminist and queer theory in the predominantly Anglo-American context. Beginning with position papers from the gay and women's liberation movements from 1969-1972, the seminar will move forwards and backwards: to (for example) Monique Wittig, Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, Gloria Anzaldúa, José Muñoz, and Jasbir Puar in the post seventies era, to (for example) Edward Carpenter, Havelock Ellis, Krafft-Ebing, and Radclyffe Hall in the pre-world war two era. By moving back and forth in time we can trace some of the echoes—conceptual and political—between the pathologization of homosexuality by the early twentieth century sexologists, and post- Stonewall reconfigurations of queer as "a political metaphor without a referent," as Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz present it. Moving back and forth between two distinct eras will also allow us to trace some of the historical faultlines, as well as convergences, between feminist and queer as they have been produced, articulated, and defined in relation to each other.

Cultural Memories of U.S. Feminisms (WST 607)

Is feminism dead? Recently, some commentators have declared that feminism is now irrelevant, and that we live in a "postfeminist" age. Others have mourned its passing as a vibrant social movement, while some younger feminists have defined their era as the "third wave" distinct from, if not unrelated to, the "second wave." If feminism is dead, or more particularly, if the so-called second wave is now in the past, how does it continue to effect the present? In this course we will examine how the second wave women's movement has been constructed as cultural memory in the United States. Drawing upon work in history, queer studies, gender studies, and literature, we will chart some of the ways in which the second wave, and feminism more broadly, has been remembered and forgotten in contemporary popular American culture. Understanding "cultural memory" as "a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history," and "technologies of memory" as the "objects, images, and representations" (including literary narratives, photographs, film, and television) through which those stories are constructed, the questions we will ask are: what stories about feminism and feminists are being told in American culture today? What is being forgotten? Are counter-memories of the recent feminist past being produced that bring into question those stories, and if so, what are the counter-memories telling us? We will attempt to answer these and other questions by looking at a number of contemporary and near contemporary novels, films, theoretical essays, and historical studies of the second wave era.

Race, Class, Gender and Inequalities in Health in the United States (WST 608)

While technology and research in the medical field are growing, people of color, (especially African Americans), and the poor remain plagued with excessive morbidity and mortality rates. This graduate course offers an introduction to recent scholarship on race, class, gender and inequalities in health. One goal is to introduce students to topics, current research and policy in health disparities. A second goal is to use the study of inequalities in health to explore the impact of women's movements (breast cancer, AIDS, violence, mental hygiene, and disability) on public policies and programs designed to address the specific needs of people of color and poor communities. Finally, we will examine questions of evidence, approach and method in studying race, class, gender and inequalities in health.