



Women's Studies Program

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Boston University
Women's Studies Program

704 Commonwealth Ave., Suite 101
Boston, MA 02215

Phone (617) 358-2370
Fax (617) 358-2369



Shahla Haeri, Director

As I returned from my sabbatical year in Iran (2008-2009) I was not sure whether to be happy or sad. My ten months sojourn in Iran was nostalgic, exciting, productive, and at times heartbreaking. While continuing with my ongoing research on Iranian women's political mobilization for democratic change, I was fortunate to spend quality time with my family, particularly with my mother. Sadly, she left us in this world and continued on her journey to the other world just a day before the Persian New Year (Nowruz).

The months leading to the Iranian presidential election of June 12 were perilously exhilarating. Discourse of democracy, reform and change filled the daily newspapers, and popular expectation for an orderly transfer of government was palpable. The prospect of a democratic election galvanized the activists and professional women to put aside their minor and major differences and to form a coalition, irrespective of the degree of their religiosity or political leanings, to draft a statement of their demands. Women's issues are not limited to head scarf and hijab. They demand fundamental and structural change, gender equality in all aspects of life, and major reform in an antiquated family law that allows men unilateral right in plural marriages and divorce. Joining forces with women activists were daughters, wives, and sisters of prominent men, some of whom had tested the political waters once, only to be disqualified to run for office again. Collectively, Iranian women have become a force to be reckoned with, and the government is well aware of it. For that matter the state brooks no expression of autonomy and freedom from them.

The world witnessed the determination and activism of Iranian women protesters. Sporting green head scarves, shirts, and hand bands, hundreds of thousands of women of all ages, classes, backgrounds, and religious beliefs participated in the demonstrations before and after the election. The demonstrators did not just include the modernized, the "secular," or those middle and upper middle class women from north Tehran. The remarkable diversity of the crowd challenges the stale stereotypes of the presumably "westernized" Iranians who demand democratic change. Some women attended the rallies covered in their all-enveloping black chadors.

I also had the chance to travel within the country. Walking through the ancient sites and cities, I marveled at the magnificent historical monuments, the perfectly formed sky blue domes, the famed celestial Persian gardens, and yet felt deeply saddened by the disappearing of the unique Iranian vernacular architecture. Along the way, I started noticing an odd phenomenon: veiled, shapely female mannequins with fake blue eyes and red plump lips! Regardless of the style of the advertised dress on their lifeless bodies, they all had their fake hair covered with a head scarf! They were all veiled! That has inspired me to write a paper tentatively titled, "Veiling Mannequins: Modesty Meets Market in Iran."

Resuming my duties as the director of the Women's Studies Program, I was delighted to reconnect with my colleagues and friends, and fell right back into my former academic and administrative routines – as if I had never left.

As I leave the WSP after nine wonderfully productive years in my capacity as the director, I feel happy and sad at the same time. I am happy that we have realized, to a great extent, the Program's broader goal of creating a collegial and scholarly atmosphere that has not only made the emerging WSP the hub of activities of Women's Studies students, but also a much sought after Program by other departments and colleges for collaborative events. Our mission in the Women's Studies Program has been to introduce students to scholarship centered on women's and gender issues in diverse fields, and to enhance their understanding of women's intellectual contributions worldwide throughout history. The WSP faculty encourages, supports, and teaches the skills that young women - and men - need in order to become productive and active members of their communities. Collectively, we have strived to offer our students well rounded and worldly knowledge, integrating formal education with actual life experiences. I am also pleased that at the WSP we have created and sustained a genuinely supportive community for our faculty and a welcoming center for our students who find us attentive and most responsive to their personal and academic needs (see student's comments on page 7).

I am happy that Professor Deborah Belle will be taking over as the next director of the WSP. Having had the pleasure of working with Deborah for the past few years, I am confident that she will be an excellent director and that under her leadership the WSP will continue to grow. I am sad to leave my colleagues with whose active cooperation and involvement we have created a unique academic community that is intellectually enriching and emotionally supportive.



Photo by Kate Steger

Barbara Gottfried



Professor Barbara Gottfried interviewed by Jon Keller 'Keller at Larger' 'Miss USA Pageant Photos or Soft Porn,' May 11, 2010. <http://wbztv.com/video>

Diane Balser

Dr. Diane Balser, (R) was invited to Chair the '*Current feminist movements in the United States and in the EU*' panel at the Gender Equality Conference, October 1, 2009. The Event was sponsored by Gender, Politics, and Society Study Group and The Future of the European Union Study Group. On October 27, Professor Balser also joined a panel with esteemed colleagues, including Dean Virginia Sapiro '*Gender Equality: Dimensions of Women's Equal Citizenship*.' Sponsored by the Women's Studies Program, BU Law and BU Women's Law



Professor **Barbara Gottfried** (above) created and designed two new courses for the WSP this past year. The first, "Women and Comedy," was offered as part of the WSP's on-going "Critical Issues in Women's Studies." The course suggested that comedy is marked by gender [and age, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, ability, body type, hair color and so on], that women's relation to, production of, implication in, and reception of humor is different from men's, and that comedy allows women to defy the expectations of femininity and transmute aggression and constraint into humor. The course began by looking at the films of Mae West and 1930s screwball comedienne, then moved on to look at classic TV comedienne from Lucille Ball to Roseanne, contemporary sitcom humor, and female stand-up comedy from Moms Mabley to Kate Clinton and Ellen.

Two special events added to the fun. First, students created comedy blogs / commentaries, I selected the seven best commentaries, students voted, and the person whose commentary won went with me to see Joan Rivers at the comedy connection. Second, we invited stand-up comic Erin Judge to campus, and she was both hilarious and feminist. The class culminated with student presentations on contemporary stand-up comedians, and the number and variety of comedians presented was truly impressive—so many incredibly funny women most of us had never heard of! Everyone agreed it was a great topic for a course.

The second course, "American Masculinities" for which Professor Gottfried won a Summer Session curriculum development grant and which could be taken for Women's Studies minor and/or Sociology major/minor credit, explored the biological bases and social organization of masculinity, the ways in which culture reproduces and articulates masculinities amid the contexts of race, class, and ethnicity, men's privilege and power and "masculinity in crisis," female masculinity [detaching gender performance from biological sex], feminism and masculinities studies, and the importance of the media to our ideas about masculinities. In addition to the course readings we watched *Dirty Harry*, *Billy Elliot*, *Field of Dreams*, *Smoke Signals*, and *Swingers*, and took a "class trip" to Porter Square Books to hear Professor Cynthia Enloe, author of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link*, and her latest book, *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War* speak about militarism and masculinity. Students made great blogs about masculinities, were very enthusiastic about the course, and expressed the desire that the course be made a permanent part of the B.U. curriculum.



Professors Gottfried & Cynthia Enloe (2nd & 3rd from L) and students from American Masculinities summer course



Roberta Micallef

Dr. Roberta Micallef (L) travelled to Austin, Texas in January 2010 to participate in the first meeting of an international research network examining Women's Autobiographies in Islamic Societies. Also Dr. Micallef received a very competitive federal **STARTALK** grant to direct a Turkish Teacher Training Program. The program will be held at Boston University August 13-15, 2010.



Photo credit: Kassia Karr

Brenda Gael McSweeney

Brenda Gael McSweeney, (L) Professor of Gender and International Development, had another exciting year combining teaching at BU and Brandeis and conducting research in Africa. This year, her spring seminar WS348 entitled "Gender and International Development"

attracted a remarkable group, ranging from freshmen to graduate students. Most brought with them experience from BU programs abroad in every corner of the globe, while others contributed fascinating insights from social activist work in disadvantaged corners of the US. Brenda's field research focused on women of vision in Burkina Faso (see equalityburkina.blogspot.com). This experience at the ground level feeds into debates in her classes. The Burkina initiatives represented Brenda's work on women of vision in a Boston neighborhood going global. Stories of 'Women of Vision' in a Boston community, written up by members of the Women's History Group of the Brighton Allston Historical Society (BAHS) that Brenda chairs, were published on the UNESCO website. According to UNESCO, Paris:

"The goal of these twin publications, 'Women's History Initiatives' and 'Women of Vision: Brighton Allston Women's Heritage Trail Guide,' is to showcase the significant and compelling contributions that women have made to this New England community over the past three centuries... This body of work has also served as a catalyst for similar initiatives underway around the globe, in Burkina Faso in West Africa, and in India."

In fall 2010, Brenda plans a return visit to Kolkata, New Delhi, and Patiala, Punjab, for research and work related to the UNESCO UNITWIN Network on Gender, Culture, and People-Centered Development that she initiated and co-anchors. The highlight of spring 2011 will be her WSP class with BU students!

Deborah Swedberg (R) participated in two Symposia in October 2009, the first at the Goethe Institute on a panel celebrating the work of the avant-garde German filmmaker Ulrike Ottinger. The second, "Honoring Eve," took place at Boston University and celebrated the life and work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, with whom Deborah founded the feminist reading and writing collective ID 450 in 1982. Sponsored by the Women's Studies Program and many other departments. (See pg 5). More information about the Sedgwick Symposium, including videos of the whole day's events, is available at www.bu.edu/honoringeve.

Deborah Swedberg



Soheila Gohardanei



Photo credit: Sanjay

Dr. Soheila Alirezanejad Gohardanei (R) is the WSP's new Visiting Researcher. She is an Assistant Professor of sociology at Islamic Azad University, Garmsar Branch, Iran. She teaches courses on method and sociology of women and gender. Dr. Alirezanejad was expected to arrive in January of 2010 for the Spring Semester. But due to frequent delays in obtaining her visa her arrival was postponed till mid April. But then she confronted a temperamental nature and was forced to stay in London for a whole week before she was finally able to arrive in Boston on April 21! She has since been working feverishly to make up for the lost time. On May 28, she participated in a workshop on microfinancing at the University of California in Santa Barbara. She gave a power point presentation on her ongoing project, "Association of Women Beekeepers in Rameh: A Case Study in Microfinance," sponsored by "The Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies." Her presentation and paper will be part of a collected volume edited by Professor Biduyt Mohanty and will be published in-house by the Orfalea Center. This article is part of her larger book project in which the WSP director, Shahla Haeri is a collaborator. Dr. Alirezanejad is also working on another article, tentatively entitled, "Money, Women, and Public Domain in a Rural Community in Central Iran."



President Robert A. Brown (L)
Dr. Beverly Brown (R)

Three Perspectives on Technology and Childbirth in America

Childbirth is the most common reason for hospitalization in the United States, and cesarean section is the most common form of major surgery. Yet childbirth also has significance for women's sense of identity and our understanding of the meaning of family. Held on September 3, this panel offered a historical overview of the economic implications of

technologically assisted birth, a discourse analysis of women's birth narratives, and a public health perspective on birth practices and outcomes. Panelists: **Claudia Olivetti**, Economics, BU (top R) **Christina Michaud**, Writing Program, BU (lower R) **Eugene Declercq**, Asst Dean For Doctoral Education, School of Public Health, BU (ctr R) elaborated on these points.



2009 Iranian election demonstration

Launching CAS Café for the "First Year Experience," **Dean Virginia Sapiro**, (far R) invited **Shahla Haeri**, WSP Director, (R) to give a power point presentation for the incoming freshmen of the events leading to the disputed presidential election of 2009. (October 7.)



Students in front of Tehran University after the disputed Iranian election

CAS Café

The Women's Studies Program held a round table discussion, followed by a question and answer session with **Amina Mamadou Kaza**, Niger Faculty, and **Brenda McSweeney**, WSP Faculty on October 14. Dr. Kaza is an activist in the field of girls' education and is on a national committee in Niger overseeing educational reform at the primary level. Dr. McSweeney is a decorated former United Nations Development Programme Officer.



On October 19, Dr. **Evelyn Murphy**, President of the WAGE Project, Inc. and former Lt. Governor of Massachusetts (L) discussed the issue of gender and salary disparity. Co-sponsored by the College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.



Girls' Education in Niger
(L to R) Brenda McSweeney, Elizabeth Goldsmith, Amina Kaza, Shahla Haeri

Girls' Education in Niger



In October, students in **Professor Carrie Preston's (R)** class launched **Genderfest '09** in collaboration with the Women's Resource Center and other campus groups. Students organized diverse events from a student art exhibit to an academic conference and published a magazine. Here (L) students participate in "Chalk the Sidewalk" to increase awareness of gender equality and encourage donations to the Boston area organization "Our Bodies Ourselves."

Photo credit: Valerie Sarron



Professor Preston performs
Noh Classical Japanese Theatre, Japan

Honoring Eve: A Symposium Celebrating the Work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

Faculty, staff, and students from around Boston University gathered for a day of rich intellectual exchange celebrating the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a former member of the Boston University English Department and one of the most important theorists working in gender and queer studies on October 31. The symposium was organized by the Junior Faculty Gender and Sexuality Studies Group, led by Erin Murphy (from English) and Keith Vincent (Modern Languages and Comparative Literature), and co-sponsored by the Women's Studies Program, the Department of English, the Psychology Department, and the Boston University Humanities Foundation. Among the 220 attendees were scholars hailing from around the world, including Spain, Israel, and California, and a number of independent artists, musicians, and writers. "Honoring Eve" began with the moving opening remarks of Sedgwick's husband Hal, who remembered being at Boston University with Eve in the early 1980s as she was writing her seminal book, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990).

The panels were organized around specific texts, and addressed topics representing four important areas of Sedgwick's thought: "Feminism and Queer Theory," moderated by Erin Murphy, included Carolyn Williams, Lee Edelman, and Siobhan Somerville addressing selections from *Epistemology of the Closet*. Suzanne O'Brien



designed by Anthony Lee

ERIN JUDGE



from Comedy Central's *Live at Gotham*

moderated "Writing and Illness," a panel on *A Dialogue on Love* (1999) that included Ed Cohen, Michael Moon, and Cindy Patton. "Affect and Reparative Reading," organized by Keith Vincent, took up *Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading* (2003), with discussions by Jonathan Flatley, Heather Love, and Tavia Nyong'o. Leland Monk (English) moderated "Reading Proust," and panelists Bill Goldstein, Joseph Litvak, Katy Hawkings, and Jonathan Goldberg discussed "Proust and the Spectacle of the Closet" from *Epistemology* and "The Weather in Proust," an unpublished talk.

The symposium closed with "Writing the Plural," a performance organized by Deborah Swedberg (Women's Studies) and featuring writing by members of the BU ID 450 Collective, an innovative feminist writing/reading/research group that Sedgwick co-founded while she was at BU. <http://www.bu.edu/honoringeve/>

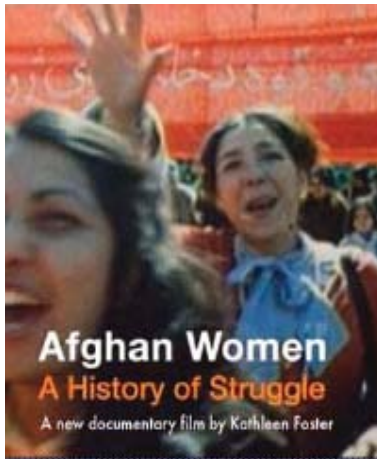
Carrie Preston

Erin Judge's (L) bold, fierce comedy pokes fun at sexuality, politics, pop culture and anything else the universe throws at her! She demonstrated that to the Boston University Community on October 23. Check her out at jokes.com Sponsored by the Women's Studies Program and Genderfest.

Darwin and the Ascent of Emotionally Modern Man: How humans became such hypersocial apes

Sarah Blaffer Hrdy

On November 19, faculty and students came to hear Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, (R) Anthropology at the University of California, Davis. She spoke on **'Darwin and the Ascent of Emotionally Modern Man: How humans became such hypersocial apes'** Co-sponsored with the Departments of Psychology, Anthropology, and Biology and the Darwin Bicentennial.



A Film Screening of **Afghan Women: A History of Struggle** was held February 25. A question and answer period with the Independent Film Maker and Director, Kathleen Foster followed. Co-sponsored by Boston University American Civil Liberties Union student organization.



BU Authors and Professors **Cindy Christiansen** and **Ann Hendricks** read and discussed their essays in the collected volume, *The Narrative Compass*, on March 24. "Each of us has a story, a narrative compass, that lead us through our life work."

Carnal Knowledge: Sexuality in Religion, History, and Culture

How much do we really know about sex? Why are some forms of sexuality valued and others reviled? How are sex and the meanings attached to sexuality shaped and contested by religion, popular culture, and historical context? These answers and more were discussed by three panels on April 12, (bu.edu/carnalknowledge) This conference was co-sponsored by a Humanities Foundation Grant, the American and New England Studies Program, the Department of English and School of Theology, Boston University



History Panelist: L – R Gillian Mason, Aaron Lecklider, Jessica Sewall



Pop Culture Panelist: L – R Ashley Mears, Keith Vincent, Leland Monk



Dean Virginia Sapiro,
College of Arts and Sciences



Religion Panelist: L – R Ann Pelligrini, Kecia Ali, Jennifer Wright Knust



Director James Winn,
Humanities Foundation

Events Exclusively for the Women's Studies Minors

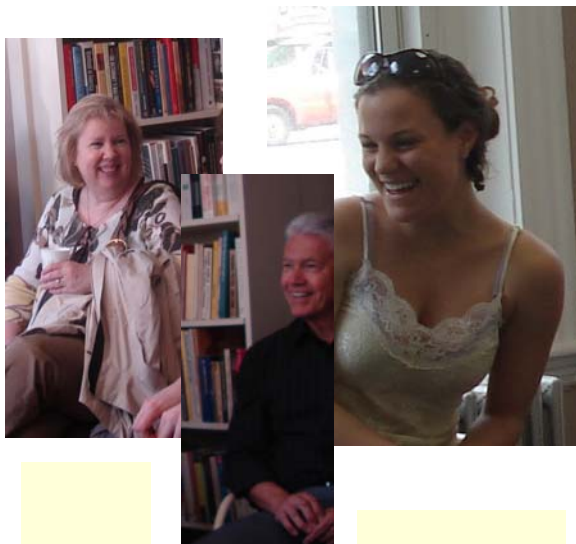


Susan Faludi, (pictured at L on R and below L) Pulitzer Prize winning Author, graciously joined the Women's Studies Minors, faculty and friends for a brunch on Sunday, November 8. Ms. Faludi is the author of *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, and *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America*. In part, she discussed the book about the American women's movement that she is currently writing.



Sarah Joanne Davis Recipients and Finalists: (L to R) Marisa Proto, Lolly Spindler, Jackie Catcher & Karen Choucraallah, not pictured Brianna Reed.

Annually, the WSP gives two awards for best paper or project drawn from a one time gift bequeathed by the late Sarah Joanne Davis. This year we organized a party for our 5 finalists and invited Ms. Lana Forecast, the late Sarah Joanne Davis' sister (below 2nd from right). Ms. Forecast brought her daughter and a friend along and said a few words about her late sister. The two winners were: Lolly Spindler whose paper explained initiating and creating a comprehensive library for the Boston University Women's Resource Center, and Jackie Catcher, whose paper reviewed her accomplishments as an Editorial Assistant and Editorial Mentoring for Teen Voices Magazine. The three runner ups for the SJD Award included: Marisa Proto, Karen Choucraallah, and Brianna Reed.



The Women's Studies Faculty celebrated the graduating Women's Studies Minors with their families during commencement weekend. Jessie Lathrop, IR, (L) shared some of her opinions about the Faculty and the Program: "The professors of Women's Studies ... approach students with a respect and an appreciation that promotes deep learning, understanding, loyalty, and friendship. They are witty, engaging, so fun to be around, and incredibly smart. They encourage full potential and a lasting connection with BU; the Women's Studies Program is an asset to this university."

2 Additional Events

On February 24, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth Lecturer, Dr. Karen Siegemund gave a talk on "Young Adult Literature: Empowering our Daughters?" Her topic was based on her 2007 dissertation, "At Least They Read: A Study of Contemporary Adolescent Literature." Co-Sponsored by the Institute for the Advancement of the Social Sciences.



Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies

During Spring semester Deborah Belle had the terrific experience of co-teaching a course through the Graduate Consortium on Women's Studies (GCWS), which currently is based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Consortium brings together faculty and students from all of the Boston-area universities and colleges who share an interest in women's, gender, and sexuality studies. Most Consortium courses involve a team of faculty who come from different institutions and from different disciplines. Deborah Belle, a professor of psychology, worked with Lisa Dodson, a sociologist at Boston College, and Randy Albelda, an economist at U. Mass. Boston, to teach a course on Gender and Poverty in the United States. Students also came from many disciplines and from most of the universities which participate in the GCWS, including Harvard, MIT, Brandeis, Boston College, and Boston University. "It was exciting to work with faculty and students from such diverse backgrounds. I learned a great deal, and I look forward to bringing much of what I learned to my future teaching at Boston University," said Professor Belle. GCWS website: <http://web.mit.edu/gcws>



October 27, Dr. Elizabeth Reis, Women's and Gender Studies and History at Oregon University, discussed her new book, *"Bodies in Doubt: An American History of Intersex."* Dr. Reis put the intersex or a person having both male and female chromosome in a historical perspective. She shared a powerful powerpoint presentation. Co-sponsored by the American and New England Studies and the Anthropology Department



UNITWIN

The UNESCO initiative was launched in 1991. The Boston University's Women's Studies Program was awarded the UNESCO UNITWIN (University Twinning) Network on Gender, Culture, and People-Centered Development in 2007. Dr. Shahla Haeri and Dr. Brenda Gael McSweeney are the co-coordinators at BU of the Network that links with three prestigious universities and social activist non-governmental organizations in India. Network highlights of the academic year included the launching of a Women's Studies Centre at Visva Bharati University in Shantiniketan, West Bengal; research and publication by the Cultural Resource Conservation Initiative of a calendar showcasing heritage conservation and restoration in Punjab; and the preparation at Punjabi University at Patiala of a first Women of Vision - India essay featuring Dalip Kaur Tiwana, the leading Punjabi novelist and short story writer.

This year too, our UNITWIN's partnership with Burkina Faso evolved, mainly through the preparation of essays by a team at WSP/BU with a team in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on Women of Vision - Burkina. The Equality Burkina team also undertook compilation of substantive and activist work on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the country. Do visit equalityburkina.blogspot.com, which is a forum for the sharing of ideas, research, and action on these gender justice themes.

Brenda Gale McSweeney

Contact List

| | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| Shahla Haeri (Director '01 - Aug 10) | shaeri@bu.edu | 617-358-2371 |
| Deborah Belle (Incoming Director, Sept 10) | debbelle@bu.edu | 617-353-5455 |
| Diane Balser | dbalser@bu.edu | 617-358-2372 |
| Barbara Gottfried | gottfried@bu.edu | 617-358-2373 |
| Brenda McSweeney | bgm@bu.edu | 617-358-2374 |
| Roberta Micallef | micallef@bu.edu | 617-353-6208 |
| Carrie Preston | cjpresto@bu.edu | 617-353-2506 |
| Deborah Swedberg | debswed@bu.edu | 617-353-2505 |
| Carla Pack-Bailey (Office) | wsp@bu.edu | 617-358-2370 |

Women's Studies Program

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