

NORTH SHORE VISIONS

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FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

Another academic year is coming to an end and with it much to celebrate. For instance, our LGBTQ minor, in which the first students are enrolled for fall 2016, as well as George Hoagland's semester leave during which she has been reworking a dissertation chapter in which she uses the concept of minority as a challenge to margin/center or major/minor politics. George has also been hard at work on a multimedia essay about some of the challenges that a class filled with predominantly white suburban/exurban students presents when teaching about identity, subjectivity, and agency. Furthermore, Beth Bartlett's book entitled *Making Waves: Forty Years of Feminist Organizing in the Northland: 1975-2015* is in its end stages and will be sent off to the publisher at the end of her 2014/2015 sabbatical. We are excited to soon read about the many feminist organizers in the Twin Ports, among them: PAVSA, Safe Haven, DAIP, Women's Studies and WRAC, The Women's Health Center, the North Country Women's Coffeehouse, CASDA, Women's Transitional Housing, Mending the Sacred Hoop, the Building for Women, AICHO, Praxis International, and Women in Construction. Beth has interviewed over one hundred people, who graciously gave their time. She thanks them all. Last, but not least, we celebrate our graduating seniors, of whom we are very proud! Please read about them and their accomplishments in this issue. We wish all of them well.

And while there are such great things about WGSS to report this past year, there are also some very sad news. As a 'fall-out' of prioritization at UMD, some teaching contracts are no longer renewed. One of those is in WGSS, and we are having to say 'goodbye' to one of our dear colleagues and teachers: Deborah Plechner. Deborah has been at UMD for thirteen years, the past eight in WGSS. She has not only taught an array of diverse courses, she has also worked tirelessly in the community and been a strong supporter of our students. Teaching has been her passion, and when you see what wonderful things WGSS students have to say about Deborah's knowledge and pedagogy, you know why. We will miss Deborah Plechner tremendously and wish her the best.

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THANK YOU TO DEBORAH PLECHNER!

May session 2015 is Deborah Plechner's last term at UMD. The department and students will dearly miss her and all she does for us. Deborah has taught and inspired thousands of students at UMD. Here are just a few of the things her students had to say:

I can thank Deborah for initially sparking my interest in the study of women and gender. She has taught me, and so many others, to critically examine our surroundings and all that happens around the world, which is a lesson I find invaluable. I wish her the best in the future and hope she continues to inspire others! - Tessa Hausler

I would like to say that Deborah has truly given me a voice. Not just as a woman, but as a person. Along with that, I've never had such a truly caring teacher/professor. Letting go one of the professors that honestly really cares about students' welfare and education is one of the saddest things ever. I'm heartbroken to know that I'll be unable to take another class with Deborah. She sincerely deserves the best. - Tasha Tart

**Thank you Deb for an awesome semester! I didn't know what I was getting myself into when I signed up to take women's studies, but I am so glad I had the chance to take it, especially because of you! You're such a nice human being and I was really intrigued by your sweet personality. Thank you for taking time to talk to me outside of class and getting to know me. I will miss you, and hope we meet again! Best of luck in your future
~Ellie Hendrix**

Thanks for helping me to broaden my perspective on the diversities in sexuality and identification! I am proud to call myself a feminist. -Eli Miller

Professor Plechner was one of the most unbiased, passionate, and understanding teachers that I have ever had. – Charlie O'Donnell



Deborah has made a huge difference in my education and I'm sure she has impacted hundreds of other students. She creates such a safe environment and challenges us to question everything. She has empowered me as a woman and wherever she goes in her future, I'm sure she will continue to make a huge difference and create more open minds! -Allyson Harris

- Professor Plechner created a open and warm environment.
- Deborah has been the best teacher I've had here at UMD. She treated us like adults and talked to us like equals.
- Professor Plechner is an amazing teacher and she has caused me to take more interest in Women's Studies.

Deborah was my very first Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies professor and her teaching is what inspired me to become a WGSS major! Had I not found WGSS and teachers like Deborah, I would never have been so motivated to be successful in college or as inspired to used my education to join the fight against race, class and gender oppression. Deborah's teaching helped me to believe in myself and trust that I had the power to make a difference with my life; before she introduced me to Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies I literally thought that I would have to become a wife and mother to survive in this world, but now I know that I can do anything and I feel braver than ever. Thanks so much to Deborah for her amazing teaching! She has truly changed my life and given me hope.- Geneva Wychor

Rarely are students lucky enough to have a professor who not only has a limitless wealth of knowledge on their topic but is also able to clearly communicate new information and concepts. When you add this to her compassion for students you have an unrivaled standard set in the classroom. Students who have studied with Deborah are truly lucky indeed. -Lee Hansen

A LETTER TO MY DAUGHTER

By: Sam Clark

Tineke Ritmeester's WS 1000 students are asked to write weekly letters to their daughters (be they real or not yet of this world) about the topics they are discussing that week. Below is one such letter that we thought was too lovely not to share (with Sam's permission of course!).

Dear Mataya,

I hope your mother is as in love with the name Mataya as I am or it won't actually be your name and these letters may be a little confusing. I don't know if I have ever told you this but the reason I love this name so much is due to my summer job that I've had for the last two years. There is a little girl who came to camp both years I worked there; she is 6 now and her name was Mataya. When she told me her name I thought it was the most beautiful name I've ever heard and I knew that I wanted to name my daughter Mataya.

It is also because of that summer camp that you are going to be reading these letters. If I hadn't worked there, I don't think I ever would have signed up for a women's studies class. There was another boy who worked there named Connor; he was going to be a senior at Saint Johns. This past summer was my second year as a counselor and Connor's first. Although all of the leaders had the same job, it was clear that there were two types of leaders; leaders that really enforced rules and kept everything organized and leaders that were just crazy kids at heart and the kids connect with. I had developed into the second type of leader. Being the overly competitive person that I am, I tried to be the craziest and silliest leader there was, and the first year I worked there I was. But when Connor showed up it became clear that I was going to really have to work at it to stay as the most liked leader. For the first month of the three that we worked together there was an unspoken rivalry between Connor and I that led to a lot of fun competition between our two groups. As the summer went on I got to spend more time talking to Connor and my admiration and respect grew for him each day.

For the last month of the summer we had an overnight camp each week, the kids would go to bed around 10 and we leaders would sit by the fire and talk until the sun came up the next morning. One of the first nights the conversation kind of died down around 2am and someone asked Connor to give us his life story. He then talked for, and this is not an exaggeration, 2 hours and 30 minutes straight, with the occasional break for questions. If you were to tell me that I could listen to someone talk about themselves for two and a half hours and be interested by what they were saying for every second I wouldn't believe you, but Connor truly did it. The vast majority of his talk was about his three major relationships in his life with women, one in high school and two in his three years of college. He talked about everything from sex to meeting their parents for the first time. Listening to him talk I began to realize how much he really cared about those in his life.

Over the course of the next couple campouts he began to talk about women's studies classes that he had taken in school and began to relate what he learned to help and give a new perspective to other leaders with problems in their own lives. I don't know if he is majoring in woman's studies or just took a lot of classes about it but he really knew what he was talking about, and what stuck out to me most was that he also really cared about what he was talking about. He talked about gender and race issues in a way that made sense and I could really connect with for the first time. I think part of the reason what he was saying resonated with me so much is that it was coming from another man that I respected a great deal. When women talk about women's issues it is easy for a lot of men to just brush it off to women always complaining about something, which is how I had felt and I know a lot of my male friends feel today. But because it was coming from a male that I respected so much, what he said stuck with me. After the summer ended, I knew that Connor was someone that was important to keep in my life as a role model and a friend. It began the day after we all said goodbye; I wrote him a letter telling him the impact he had had on my life and the lives of all the other leaders and how he earned my respect like no one else had ever done. Then he wrote back, and we have become pen pals, each writing about a letter to each other every month or two.

It wasn't until late last fall when I was registering for classes and I saw an intro to women's studies class that I remembered I had told myself I wanted to take this class. If it wasn't for Connor I would have scrolled right past it and signed up for another business class. Throughout my life I have had coaches and teachers that I looked up to and respected. But when I think of Connor I think that the word respect doesn't do him justice; it is more than respect that I have for him—I have never seen someone take such a genuine interest of the wellbeing of those around him.

Continued on Page 6...

SENIOR SEMINAR STUDENTS



Kristin Hetrick

This short statement cannot adequately express how much Women's Studies means to me. It also cannot fully describe the contributions feminism has made in my life. Despite this, I can say wholeheartedly that Women's Studies has changed me more than anything else during my college years. I have become a more confident and independent woman, and I know this would not have been possible without the knowledge and guidance I received from my professors and classmates. I feel at home when I'm in Women's Studies classes, and I'm extremely thankful for what I have learned and what I have been exposed to. The subject matter has challenged me to understand myself and the world that I live in, and it has also helped me make important decisions in my life. Women's Studies is not only my major; it is my lifestyle and where my core sense of self was created.

Aprill Emig

Women's Studies has been a natural fit for me. It appeals to my analytical side, my curiosity, my need to constantly ask "why?" I've learned to take information with a grain of salt and that things are rarely - if ever - as simple as they seem and that it's okay to allow for nuance. This has been frustrating at times; there have been moments where I've wished I could go back to being ignorant, when things were "simple." But it's absolutely worth it and a process I think everyone should go through. I have not only grown intellectually as a person, but emotionally as well. I am better suited to form arguments, to find the overlooked or missing pieces of a situation, to not stay quiet when I know something is wrong. Though the material has been endlessly fascinating, it is these personal changes that have meant the most to me. I've learned to combat so much of the internalized sexism I've carried with me - particularly a lack of confidence in my own voice - and have come out as a more authentic, confident version of myself. I know that I will apply everything I've learned in



Women's Studies to any path I take in the future. It has made me a more critical and active citizen and even a better writer. I've already applied it to my role as a college journalist and I can only imagine the other possibilities.

SENIOR SEMINAR STUDENTS

Ashley Miller

I have learned more within the last two years in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies than I have anywhere else. I was hesitant at first about Transferring to UMD into Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, but I have no regrets. My only regret is not transferring here earlier so I could take more WGSS courses. For the first time in my college career I felt strongly connected with my classmates, finally there were others who shared my same passion for feminism. Women's Studies has taught me about the importance of resistance and to think critically about our society. The knowledge I have gained through WGSS classes has given me the courage to speak up and challenge the status quo. I will forever be grateful for my experience in Women's Studies and for the inspiration and empowerment I received through my professors and the new friendships I've made.



Gwen Austin

Being in the Women's Studies department for me was never so much about getting a degree, but fueling a passion. Since I first read *One Dimensional Woman* at the age of seventeen I've felt that feminist scholarship has been my way forward: as a student, as a musician, and as an activist. I've certainly had my fair share of burnouts, as I think we all do in this field, but I've never doubted that this was what I was meant to do. The sense of community I've gotten in the Women's Studies department has been the best learning tool I could ever receive and its what I'll miss most as I move on from here.

Chesna Matteson—WGSS Minor

The time I have spent in the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies department has been nothing short of amazing. My Women's Studies classes have been the most challenging classes in my college career, but they have also been the most inspiring and enjoyable. In WGSS, students are encouraged to create their own knowledge, and are challenged to step outside of their comfort zones and see the world from others' points of view. Taking courses in Women's Studies has truly helped me grow into a better person, and I will carry the things I learned far beyond my graduation day. Because of WGSS, I have the critical thinking skills to see what is wrong with the world today, and I also have the courage and tenacity to help change it.



Letter Continued from Page 3...

When I walked into my women's studies class on the first day and only saw one other guy with a female professor and a female TA I would be lying if I said I didn't have second thoughts about signing up for it, but as I thought about it more I thought about Connor and the impact that women's studies classes had on him. Now that I'm halfway through the semester, I know I made the right decision. I see real world examples of what we learn in the class every single day in my life. I have even tried to convince some of my friends to take this class if they have an opportunity. When it became time to study for the midterm, I started to get nervous because I asked myself what I have learned. And I didn't really know how to answer that. After meeting with my TA, Lexi, she helped put my mind at ease and I began to think about how I would answer the prompts. It was at that moment that I began to realize all that I had learned.

Unlike a traditional class, when you think of all that you have learned you don't think of hundreds of facts and graphs that you have memorized, you think about how your understanding of things has changed. One of the things I've learned about that has really stood with me the most is how young boys are conditioned to be masculine and why that is so. It's just another example of something that I would have never thought about if I didn't take this class. It makes me feel like I was so oblivious to so many things before I took this class. My professor said in the beginning of the semester that she feels every single student should have to take an intro to women's studies class and honestly, I thought that was a little crazy at the time. But now, and I really didn't think I would ever say this, I agree.

Love,
Dad

WGSS IN ITALY

In January 2015 Susan Meyers led a Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies study abroad trip: *Violence Against Women in Italy*. Susan is a WS Alumna, currently works as a graphics designer at UMD, and is the founder of the North Central Windows Program which provides art enrichment programs for survivors of violence in the Twin Ports region. Fifteen students went on the study abroad trip which was approximately three weeks long. The students visited Rome, Florence, Venice, and Verona where they toured shelters, an art school and a mental health facility in addition to some of the more traditional Italian sightseeing. Students studied the Italian history of the feminist movement, domestic violence shelters, and art enrichment for survivors of violence. They were asked to compare and contrast Italian women's experiences and histories with those of American women.

One of the biggest difference that students noted was the amount of time women were allowed to stay in domestic violence shelter housing. The average stay for women in Italy is five to seventh months, while women in most American shelters are limited to shorter amounts of time due to space and funding constraints. Another notable difference was the Italian shelter's use of terminology. Often in America shelters or advocacy centers refer to the people they are working with as "clients". Kristen Hetrik, one of the students on the trip, says in Italy they simply referred to one another as "the women" as in "women helping women". This creates a culture of support and empowerment for all the women. Needless to say, the students experienced and learned a lot about a different culture, about the history of feminism, and about themselves.



Left: Students abroad!

Below: Some of the student art projects inspired by their trip to Italy.



SOME SPRING WGSS EVENTS @ UMD



Spring Community Meeting @ UMD on March 11th. 13 community organizations and four UMD organizations were in attendance.



Women's History Month was in March and the Women's Resource & Action Center and WGSS hosted an amazing film series. Titles shown included *Iron Jawed Angels*, *She's Beautiful When She's Angry*, *Frida* and *Makers—Women Who Make America*. Many students, staff, faculty and community members attended the film series.



Adopt a Highway Clean Up Day on April 26th. Check out our signs on Highway 35 right outside of Hinckley, MN.

KPB

Tuesday, March 24th
KSC 268 | 1pm

Wednesday, March 25th
MonH 70 | 5:30pm

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL WHEN SHE'S ANGRY

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL WHEN SHE'S ANGRY.

“resurrects the buried history of the outrageous, often brilliant women who founded the modern women's movement from 1966 to 1971.”

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH FILM SERIES



Scholarship Opportunity:

The AAUW is offering a Post Baccalaureate scholarship open to all women who hold a BA/BS/BAS degree with a permanent address in Duluth, Two Harbors, Hermantown, Proctor, Cloquet, Superior and the immediate surrounding areas. Go to the WGSS webpage for a link to the scholarship application. Applications are due by June 15, 2015.



Deborah Plechner's Women and the Law Students participated in a skit created by the AAUW (American Association of University Women) in early April.

UMD DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN,
GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES



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