I have missed Heather Hewett who has been on leave this semester but I’ve enjoyed working with faculty and students on our many projects. The atmosphere on campus has been tense and apprehensive, however, as the college responds to the huge budget cuts resulting from the under-funding of SUNY. Recognizing that the quality of education is threatened by impending cuts, the campus chapter of the United University Professions has developed a comprehensive plan that involves short and long term actions to avoid further cuts to college programs.

To read the union statement go to http://www.uuphost.org/newpaltz/.
—Amy Kesselman

What does Green Feminism look like?
Women’s Studies plans its 29th conference

We in Women’s Studies have been busy planning a conference about women and the environment. Entitled “Green Feminisms: Women Sustainability and Environmental Justice,” the conference will be held on Saturday April 30th. We hope it will bring together scholars, activists and artists to consider ways that women have envisioned new approaches to living with the earth, and are engaging in struggles against the destruction of the environment.

Contact Amy Kesselman (kesselma@newpaltz.edu) or Claire Papell ((631) 804-6054 (cpapell26@newpaltz.edu) if you are interested in helping to plan the conference.

Revised Women’s Studies major inaugurated

The SUNY New Paltz Women’s Studies program has not been significantly revised since the 1970’s. In the ensuing decades the field of women’s studies has grown and changed in many ways, and new scholars have joined the women’s studies faculty with varied fields of expertise.

To reflect these developments, women’s studies faculty and students have worked for the past two years to revise the Women’s Studies major and minor. Karl Bryant, Women’s Studies and Sociology, was particularly instrumental in this effort. In the spring of 2010, the new major and minor were approved, and they went into effect at the beginning of the fall semester.

Several key features distinguish the new major and minor. Feminist theory is now a required course for both, bringing the required credit hours to 37 for the major and 19 for the minor. Students select courses from four new clusters: “Historical and Political Contexts,” “Culture and Representation,” “Race, Culture, Nation,” and “Gender, Sexuality and Queer Studies.” Majors take 12 credits in additional electives and minors take six. For more details see the Women’s Studies website.
—Amy Kesselman

Check out the library cases in March for “From the Revolution to Winning the Vote: Women Activists in the U.S.” prepared by Susan Lewis’ graduate class.
Women’s Empowerment in the Shadow of Mt. Kilimanjaro

On October 4 Bernadette Morris of the Department of Communication & Media and the Office of Records & Registration, described her work with Women’s Education and Economic Centre (WEECE), a grassroots women’s organization in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania. Founded in 1999, WEECE began as a micro-lending organization to help women begin small businesses.

Recognizing the need to address the interconnected problems of women’s poverty and deeply rooted patterns of gender discrimination, it has developed into a multifaceted organization that works to improve all aspects of women’s lives. In addition to providing small loans and training to women who want to start businesses, it has built clinics, organized an educational program for girls and provided legal advice and representation for women in need.

—Amy Kesselman

Dr. Marlene Kim on Poverty and Race

On November 5, Dr. Marlene Kim associate professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts / Boston came to campus to give two talks. The first was a lecture in the Women: Images & Realities class, in which she talked about how the reproduction of class takes place in the US. She mentioned the important role of education and the educational disparities caused by the tax system.

Her second lecture took place in the Honors Center and was open to all faculty and students. She surveyed the economic status of racial and ethnic minorities (African-American, Latino, Asian) regarding their income, wealth, occupations, earnings, unemployment rates, educational levels and poverty status. Teasing apart the intersecting factors of gender and race, she demonstrated that African-American women suffer a 15% loss of earnings because of their gender, 9% because of their race, and an additional 3% because of the intersection of these. Those interested in her work can read more in the volume she edited, Race and Economic Opportunity in the Twenty-First Century, a copy of which Dr. Kim kindly donated to the Sojourner Truth Library.

—Edith Kuiper

The Problem with “Pinking”

On October 28, sociologist Gayle Sulik, a research associate in the Women’s Studies Department at SUNY University at Albany, talked about the ways that “pink culture,” including breast cancer awareness “cause marketing,” has ultimately been detrimental to women’s health.

Based on her extensive research – including analysis of advertisements and breast cancer awareness campaigns, and hundreds of interviews with those affected by the disease – Dr. Sulik’s talk highlighted the hidden costs of the pink ribbon as an industry, one in which breast cancer has become merely a brand name with a pink logo. She argued that while survivors and supporters walk, run and purchase ribbons for a cure, cancer rates continue to rise, the cancer industry thrives, corporations are able to claim responsible citizenship while profiting from the disease, and breast cancer is stigmatized anew for those who reject the pink ribbon model.

She also discussed alternative organizations – and new agendas – that address breast cancer outside of a “cause marketing” model. Dr. Sulik is the author of Pink Ribbon Blues (2010, Oxford University Press).

—Karl Bryant
Student Group Spotlight: The Queer Action Coalition

Queer Action Coalition (QAC) is a student-run organization on campus which seeks to create a safe space for all students within the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/questioning) community. We do this by educating students about queer issues, and by sponsoring social and awareness-raising events.

Some of the things we have done this semester include queer bullying and harassment workshops, tabling for national coming out day and ally week, TransAction and Trans Day of Remembrance, and Queergiving (a queer-friendly Thanksgiving dinner). Throughout the year we also focus on World Aids Day with free testing, a Day of Silence, and a Drag Ball – a big bash to celebrate the queer community.

We welcome students of all sexual orientations, gender orientations and presentations. Queer Action Coalition meets on Thursdays at 7PM in Student Union 407 and has an office in SU 331. We can be reached at Newpaltzqac@gmail.com; our website is npqac.weebly.com.

—Joe Pine

Faculty-Student Research Collaboration:
Rethinking “the personal is political”

Women’s Studies faculty member Suzanne Kelly and major Claire Papell presented their project, “Where’s My Orgasm? Rethinking ‘The Personal is Political’ for the Women’s Studies Classroom,” at the Marist College Women & Society Conference this past October. Their presentation, which combined Kelly’s previous work with Papell’s analysis of survey results and interviews with SUNY New Paltz Women’s Studies students and alumni, explored the role of the feminist dictum “the personal is political” in discussions of sex in Women’s Studies classes.

Kelly and Papell have observed that in class discussions students often resist connecting their personal experiences to the realities of structural power, particularly on the topic of sex. However, interviews reveal that women’s studies students’ understanding of the connections between the personal and the political is more complex than class discussions would suggest. Interviewees believed that sharing personal stories helped to build community among the women in the room and to create some sort of collective consciousness, an important component of building a movement.

Papell and Kelly intend to continue this project for future publication. They hope that more interviews will help to shed light on how women’s studies students’ understanding of the relationship between the personal and the political has changed over time.

Spring 2011 Colloquium Series

Emerging Discourses of Transgender Childhood
Thursday February 17, 4:30-6:00pm, Honors Center
Karl Bryant, Ruth M. Lindner, and Claire Papell
Women’s Studies Program, SUNY New Paltz

Qualified Equality: Early Women of New Paltz
Monday March 14, 4:30-6:00pm, Honors Center
Richard Heyl de Ortiz
Director of Marketing, Development & Visitation, Historic Huguenot Street

Senior Projects
Thursday May 5, 4:30-7:00pm, Honors Center
Women’s Studies Senior Undergraduate Students
We're looking for you!

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e-mail chandlec@newpaltz.edu