Chair’s Message

Fall came and went so quickly. Happy Hanukkah! Merry Christmas! Happy Kwanzaa! Winter break is here!

For some, Christmas is the happiest time of the year. It is both a religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. While Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Jewish holiday Hanukkah is an eight-day festival commemorating a Jewish victory against religious assimilation. There is also Kwanzaa, an African-American cultural holiday which originated in 1966. This is a celebration of family, community and culture. It incorporates African traditions and symbols in a seven-day celebration which begins on December 26. Hanukkah and Christmas provoke many different responses among Jewish people. Some believe that Hanukkah provides counterbalance to Christmas, while others insist on the disassociation from "the Jewish Christmas" correlation. On the other hand, Christians who celebrate Kwanzaa may have the kinara, the special menorah, which holds the seven candles representative of the Kwanzaa principles. On each night of Kwanzaa more candles are lit. On the seventh night all candles blaze forth to symbolize the whole of Kwanzaa. Similarly, a candle is lit each of the eight days of Hanukkah. Both celebrations become “the festival of lights”.

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Also, I wish to invite you to read Women’s Studies Newsletter in which you will find stories and updates about our alumni’s success stories and accomplishments.
While at UCR I received a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry and a Bachelor of Arts in Women’s Studies. After graduating in 2009, I took a year off, but still kept active in my academic interest by being a lecturer/teaching assistant for general chemistry at UCR. Currently I am at the University of California, Davis in the doctoral program for chemistry, and my area of interest is analytical chemistry. I’m looking into finding a research group to join that deals with research based on studies of the environment or women’s health issues (i.e. breast cancer, ovarian cancer etc.). There were many challenges that I have faced before and while attending graduate school, stemming from the fact that I am a woman of color trying to achieve something only a handful have the opportunity to do both in my family and in my Nepalese community. The first challenge I experienced was when I was writing my personal statement during the application process. A family friend, whom I consider to be an uncle, mentioned that I should not attend graduate school for the reason that, at the age I would be finishing the program (28-29 years of age), I would be unmarriedable. This enraged me at the moment, but more than that it encouraged me to write a very “personal” personal statement. The second challenge was the bitter welcome I received upon arriving in Davis with my family. I was speaking to this older white male who was helping his son settle in. He was curious to know what I was doing in Davis. I told him, “I’m here for graduate school, for chemistry.” After I left, he and my father exchanged some words, and he said to my father that, “It’s so surprising that a minority woman like your daughter is in a graduate program and chemistry of all subjects.” My father mentioned to me that the tone of his message seemed rude and demeaning. I was upset to think that this grown adult who barely knew me thought that my getting into a graduate school seemed to just happen by chance and was not the result of my academic background. I had never dealt with this before throughout my entire academic career. Some of the hurdles that I had encountered were based on my gender but not my race, and never both at the same time. I have yet to encounter similar challenges at graduate school, and I have since found a strong support group. I have made friends with other women in chemistry and utilized the Women’s Resource and Research Center at UC Davis. I have also kept in touch with many of my professors both in Chemistry and Women’s Studies at UCR, who have given me great words of encouragement. I apply the many things I learned in Women’s Studies by seeking ways and places in which I can have an open dialogue with peers who are in similar situations. Also trying to understand the dynamics of why people say the things they do, as well as their true intent. My advice to undergraduate students in Women's Studies is that whichever subject you wish to pursue next, always take the tools and knowledge you have learned in Women’s Studies and from UCR and try to apply them in a way that gives you a greater perspective on any situation you may encounter, good or bad. Then from that make yourself stronger and fuel your ambitions by speaking about those situations and becoming more personal in the world of academia. In the next five years I plan to establish myself as an accomplished scientist in chemistry and most importantly as a female in science. I want to make a positive impact on the future of chemistry, but also be a role model for young women who come from similar backgrounds. In the next five years, I know graduate school will give me a deeper understanding of the skills to achieve my goals including analytical tools, communication skills, and integrative learning techniques that will allow me to synthesize complex problems and ideas.
After graduating from UCR with my BA in Women’s Studies in 2009, I chose to continue my education by enrolling in the Women’s Studies master’s program at San Diego State University. While graduate school has definitely been a challenge, the sheer number of opportunities I have had for both personal and professional development have been well worth the late nights of writing papers and reading.

During my first year in the program, my graduate assistantship assignment was with the Young Women’s Studies Club (YWSC), a collaborative project that allows SDSU undergraduates to mentor young men and women at a local, inner-city high school. At each weekly YWSC meeting, Dr. Susan Cayleff (my supervising professor) and I were able to introduce students to a number of women’s and social justice issues as they formed close bonds with their undergraduate mentors. My work with the club allowed me to put the feminist theory I learned at UCR into practice, and gave me a new appreciation for the difficulties of organizing community activism with limited resources and institutional support.

This year, I was chosen to be a graduate teaching associate, a position which has allowed me to teach my own Women’s Studies 101 class, Women: Self, Identity, and Society. From designing a syllabus to grading midterm papers, teaching has proved to be the most demanding and exhausting job I have ever had. However, it has also been a truly transformative experience that I am continually grateful for. In honing my pedagogy and spending time with my students, I have realized there is no more fulfilling or exciting endeavor than introducing students to a subject that allows them to articulate their experiences with privilege and oppression, often for the first time.

A great deal of my energy and time have also been devoted to pursuing publication and conference opportunities. I recently wrote three articles for The Encyclopedia of Women and American Popular Culture, was first author for an invited book review for the Journal of Homosexuality (recently submitted), and was third student-author for an article about the YWSC that is currently under consideration by The Journal of International Women’s Studies. Finally, in addition to presenting two individual papers at the 2010 National Women’s Studies Association conference in Denver, CO, I am conducting research for my master’s thesis, which uses qualitative interviews to explore women’s experiences in polyamorous (consensually multi-partner) relationships. Hopefully, these small achievements will aid me as I apply to Ph.D. programs this fall and continue to pursue my dream of being a professor.

Though I always knew I was passionate about Women’s Studies, my time as a master’s student has solidified my commitment to the field and shown me just how many opportunities there are for my generation of students and scholars. However, I never would have sought them out if it weren’t for the ubiquitous encouragement and support I received from my undergraduate professors at UCR, and from Dr. Jane Ward and Dr. Piya Chatterjee in particular. As I prepare for the next part of my journey in academia, I remain completely indebted to the department for introducing me to the bodies of feminist knowledge that continue to influence and inspire me today.

Sarah Wheeler
BA in Women’s Studies in 2009
Type of work or school: graduated from California State University, Los Angeles in June 2010 from a Master of Social Work program. Recently hired by Los Angeles County with the Department of Mental Health to work in a mental health setting in a clinic in Hollywood. Start date is still pending (should be in a month or so).

Advice:

- explore your options thoroughly. Ask for input from strategic people in your life.

- your present doesn’t necessarily dictate your future.

- listen to your ‘gut instinct’.

- uphold positive relationships, for it can be a small world out there.

- take care of yourself before trying to take care of others.

- challenges I am facing: I am eager to start my career as a Psychiatric Social Worker, but I am anxious about it too. Though I finished my graduate program, I still have much to learn. I must be open about asking for clarification from clients and my supervisors, for that is how I will understand, and in turn, learn. I must come to terms with the fact that I do not know all the answers to the questions and problems I will encounter, so I must learn where to ask the right questions and how to address whatever comes my way.

- Applying Women’s Studies knowledge: Absolutely! It has helped me understand and empathize with clients:

  - A person who utilizes sex to obtain money or other services is not a “prostitute”, but rather a “sex worker”.

- Family and kin extend far beyond blood.

- “Gender” and “sexual orientation” are not interchangeable terms, nor are they static.

Plans and goals: I hope to obtain my title of Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), and continue working for the County while having my own private practice on the side.
In June of 2010, I graduated with bachelor degrees in Women’s Studies and Political Science from UC Riverside. I interned with the Feminist Majority Foundation in the summer of 2009 then went on to charter and preside as president of a feminist club called the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance at UCR. Currently, I am working with the Feminist Majority, the political arm of the FMF, on an independent expenditure campaign called Pro-Choice Students for Boxer. This campaign seeks to educate college students throughout California on the importance of voting and to mobilize young adults to get involved in the November 2nd election. The FM advocates the re-election of Senator Barbara Boxer and has partnered with Planned Parenthood in their support to elect Democratic and feminist candidates. As a campaign organizer I have traveled to different college campuses throughout Southern California and met a barrage of students in support, apathetic and opposed to our efforts.

I feel so gratified to utilize both my women’s studies and political science degrees in a campaign that I truly feel passionate about. My age group, 18-24 years old, is the most underrepresented, especially women and women of color. Students often believe their vote does not count and I frequently hear “I stay out of politics.” My rebuttal to the latter is whether we cast our vote or not legislation persists and it will completely dictate our lives. As a woman of color who is pro-choice, pro-education, pro-environment, pro-marriage equality and pro-immigrant rights I want my voice and those who share my feminist ideals to be heard. I want to elect candidates and pass propositions that support women; in addition, I want to educate students especially women about the importance of educating ourselves and voting for what we advocate.

“What can you do with a Women’s Studies degree?” One of the most commonly asked questions as an undergraduate. To be honest, I was not sure what I could or would specifically do with a Women’s Studies degree but I knew I loved building my feminist knowledge. While in school I felt like there was a disconnection between my two majors and was unsure of how to create a symbiotic relationship that was sustainable in the “real world.” This campaign has given me the opportunity to find feminism in politics; there is a relationship the classroom cannot afford, a previously undiscovered conjunction that can only be found through experience. It is too easy not to critically link the knowledge gained from one subject to another. Deciding to take time off before dedicating myself to graduate school has been the best decision I could have made. Though I love school and plan on returning, this break has allowed me to research graduate programs, discover new avenues of feminist study and gain a different type of knowledge at my own pace.

In the next five years, I plan on attending graduate school but for now I am still discovering my passion and figuring out what graduate program interests me most before I make the commitment. I have tried not to put too much pressure on myself when it comes to finding a job because I never want to settle on just finding a job; I want all of my experiences to supplement what I have learned in the classroom. After the election and my work with the Feminist Majority I hope to find a job in Washington D.C. before graduate school in an effort to continue implementing my feminist knowledge and advocating my feminist ideals.

Sarah Godoy
Campaign Organizer
Feminist Majority
Jennifer Macias  
BA Women’s Studies and Sociology, December 2009

I work for Jamboree-Housing with HEART. The goal is to create living environments that foster learning, healthy living, resident involvement, and community empowerment. It amounts to providing resident services along with housing. Some of the services are for specific populations like those with special needs, seniors, and the chronically homeless. The majority of units at the properties are allocated to low-income individuals and families. The property that I run is for low income families in Fontana, CA. Being the Resident Service Coordinator means I do just about anything to help the community. I help residents with job applications, creating resumes and school work or tutoring. I also provide information and workshops on different topics like building healthy families, computer skills, and gang awareness.

Each day, I provide a place where everyone in the community can get together, use the computer lab, do homework, or play games. I like knowing that the impact I have on the community is dependent on what I am willing and able to bring to the table. I try my best to provide a high level of assistance with everything they could possibly need to improve their lives.

I see myself applying what I learned as part of the women’s studies major every day at work. Most of the residents are single mothers and minorities with their own stories of struggle, abuse, and discrimination. My experiences and my women’s studies education has prepared me to be able to not just understand, but also offer any help and information that I can. I have the chance to encourage the men and boys to be respectful to women. I get to talk to the teen girls about possibilities beyond becoming teen mothers. And I encourage them to understand the inequalities they see and the productive ways that they all can make a change for the better.

I plan on going to graduate school for a three year Masters in Social Work program. Hopefully it all works out and I get into a program. I love being in social services and the best way to move up and continue this work is to get a MSW. In this economic climate, I need to be as qualified as I can be. After graduate school, I think with my BAs and a MSW I’ll be able to get a promotion or find a position where I can continue working directly with people. My interests are all over, but I’ll be happy as long as I am involved with social service and activism.

With my current employer, the biggest problem I face is funding. There is not enough funding for me to be at the property full time. Yet, the residents require my assistance for at least that often. Each day I go in early and leave late because there is such high need, but also because I love this job. Another problem is just gaining the trust of the community. I come from a background very similar to most of the people I get to work with here so I think that works to my advantage. It also strengthens my interest in continuing this work.

To the women’s studies majors/minors, I hope you enjoy the women’s studies department while you can. There’s a real opportunity for networking and building friendships that are unique to that experience. Connect with your peers, faculty, and staff because everyone there is a great help. I regret not taking advantage of more office hours. Plus, even after you leave you are still going to need help with things like letters of recommendation and editing. I also recommend working hard on your internships too. I maintained my internships after graduation. And I think I landed the job that I wanted because I gained enough experience while I was still in school.
Andrews, Julie

I graduated in 2007 from LLU receiving my Masters in Social Work. After internships with Department of Public Social Services, Indian Health Services and Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center I am currently employed with Indian Health Services as a therapist. I also enjoy working in the community on issues important to women and their families. Most recently the Intertribal Alliance with Riverside County and their Domestic Violence sub committee; where we hope to increase awareness, identify community need and coordinate culturally appropriate services to women in the Native American community.

Arana, Claudia (now Chickaway)

Received a Masters of Social Work from CSULA. Worked as a mental health therapist at The Gudiance Center, Long Beach, CA. Currently employed by AltaMed Health Services Corp. Preparing to take the Board of Behavioral Science's state exam to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Lives in Bellflower, CA with husband of 5 years.

Barnes, Donald

Has worked in a California State office since 12/2006. Is now married and has a beautiful 7 month old son.

Card, Amanda (now Smith)

I currently work for Loma Linda Behavioral as a social worker for adolescents. I am in the process of studying for my clinical license. I also continue to look for opportunities in the field that empower girls and women.

Gonzalez, Elizabeth

I am currently employed at Enriched Learning Services Inc., which is an agency that helps children with developmental delays. It is a very rewarding job as you are a part of a child's progress and life.

Macias, Jennifer

I am currently working for a low income housing organization called Jamboree-Housing with Heart. I run a local community center where I provide residents with resources to improve their lives. And I am planning to go to grad school by next fall.

Macias, Jessica

I have been fortunate to continue volunteer work at community centers and public libraries where I focus on creative writing and literacy skills of children and adults. I am currently completing my first semester of grad school at San Jose State University for a Master of Library and Information Science. I am also the Circulation Supervisor at the Art Institute of California where I help manage a gorgeous art library.

Madrigal, Carla

Recently graduated from UC, Davis School of Law. Currently volunteering with Public Counsel in Los Angeles while waiting for bar results.

Romero, Cynthia

After graduating from UCR I was in Argentina a few years studying and working as an English Teacher. I moved back to California 3 years ago and currently work in child care agency which provides subsidies to low income working/student parents. I am also enrolled full time in a Master of Arts in Teaching program in USC. On a personal note, I got married this past August 2010 to my boyfriend of two years Johan.

Tinga, Arlene-Jane

Arlene-Jane Tinga is currently working as a behavioral therapist for children with Autism. She received her MA of Education with specialization in guidance and counseling at Cal Poly Slo and is currently in the process of applying for another MA at SFSU in Human Sexuality.
Participate!! in the Undergraduate Research Symposium

Women's Studies students interested in giving a presentation at the UCR Annual Symposium for Undergraduate Research in May 2011 attended an orientation meeting organized by undergraduate advisers Professor Chikako Takeshita and Mike Atienza on November 27th. The Undergraduate Research Symposium is a great opportunity for UCR undergraduates to present faculty-mentored projects to an audience of peers, faculty, and administration. The meeting provided an overview of what students need to consider and do if they want to participate in the Symposium. Women's Studies students who presented at the Symposium last year commented on their positive experience. Additional meetings will be held throughout the academic year on topics such as the human research review board requirement, writing an abstract for submission, and preparing a presentation.

For more information, contact Professor Takeshita (chikako.takeshita@ucr.edu) or Mike Atienza, Academic Advisor. (mike.atienza@ucr.edu)
Forthcoming Events for 2011
Co-Sponsored by the Center for Ideas and Society

January 10, 12-2 – Lecture by Rebecca Jordan-Young

Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences

In her forthcoming book, Rebecca Jordan-Young looks at the evidence that sex differences are “hardwired” into the brain. Analyzing virtually all of the published human research that purportedly supports “brain organization theory,” Jordan-Young reveals that much of it fails the standards of science – and the rest of it just doesn’t fit together.

Rebecca Jordan-Young is a sociomedical scientist whose research includes social epidemiology studies of HIV/AIDS, and evaluation of biological work on sex, gender and sexuality. Prior to joining the faculty at Barnard College, she was a Principal Investigator and Deputy Director of the Social Theory Core at the Center for Drug Use and HIV Research of the National Development and Research Institutes, Inc., and has been a Health Disparities Scholar sponsored by the National Institutes of Health.

March 8, International Women’s Day 2010: Film Screening and Discussion

Autumn Gem: A Documentary on Modern China’s First Feminist by Rae Chang

The documentary is narrated in English and contains scholar commentary and dialogue in Chinese with English subtitles.

The documentary brings the story of Qiu Jin to the screen in the form of a 56-minute biographical documentary produced in HD video. The format consists of interviews with scholars, archival materials, and dramatic recreations based on Qiu Jin’s original writings. Qiu Jin left behind a large body of literary work, including nearly two hundred poems, essays, speeches, letters to family and friends, and a semi-autobiographical novel. These works serve as the foundation for dramatic readings that create a more intimate portrait of the subject and provide deeper insight into her personal life.

Rae Chang (writer, director, producer, editor) is an artist and graphic designer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has worked in a variety of mediums including drawing, sculpture, performance, and video. Her work has been presented at SOM Arts Cultural Center, San Francisco Chinese Culture Center, Pacific Film Archive, Pacific Asia Museum, and Tribeca Film Center. Trained in Chinese martial arts (wushu), she performs with the dance company Facing East Dance and Music, which focuses on exploring the Asian female experience through modern dance. Rae graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1994 with degrees in Art and Anthropology. Prior to filmmaking, she worked as a graphic designer at various Internet and advertising companies including Design Reactor, Rotten Tomatoes, A.K.A. Euro RSCG, and Quinstreet.

April 25, 2010, 12-2 – Workshop with Mireille Miller-Young

Mireille Miller-Young is Assistant Professor of Feminist Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Earning her Ph.D. in History from New York University, she was a winner of the Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Grant in Women’s Studies and the University of California President’s Postdoctoral Fellowship. She is currently a Research Scholar and co-convenor with the Black Sexual Economies Project at the Center for the Study of Work and Social Capital at Washington University School of Law. She re-searches and teaches about race, gender and sexuality in media and sex economies in the U.S. Professor Miller-Young is at work on a manuscript titled A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women, Sex Work, and Pornography, which examines African American women’s representations, performances and labors in the adult entertainment industry. Professor Miller-Young has published in Sexualities, Meridians: Feminism, Race and Transnationalism, Blackness and Sexualities, Pornification: Sex and Sexuality in Media Culture, and C’Lick Me: A Netporn Studies Reader. In addition, she has written essays for Feminist Theory, Ms., Colorlines, Cut-Up.com, Republic.com, Spread and is collaborating with Tristan Taormino, Constance Penley, and Celine Parrenas Shmizu on the anthology Feminist Porn Studies: Writing By Academics and Sex Industry Workers.

A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women, Sex Work, and Pornography investigates how pornography has historically intervened in the prevailing representation of black women’s bodies in visual and media cultures, and the ways in which black women’s images are sutured to changing social discourses about racialized sexuality in the U.S. Drawing upon feminist and queer theory, visual and film studies, cultural studies, critical race theory, social history, and feminist ethnographic interview research, this study interrogates how black female adult performers experience pornography as work, and imagine themselves not simply as objects of the gaze or victims of pornography’s exploitations, but, more complexly, as image producers and strategic erotic actors.