The Art Crawl for Spring 2010 was themed “Love Your Body” where students were called to submit pieces of art in any medium that portrayed how they love their or other people’s bodies! We had submissions done in clay, photography, collages, acrylic paintings, and ceramic art. Quite the variety!

Yes, the Art Crawl was a lot of work! Our planned location had to be changed. So where could we host an Art Crawl at the last minute? The Women’s Studies department! So after this giant hurdle had passed, we started to really push for submissions. We also contacted different departments around campus for submissions, too. We could not just have Women’s Studies students participating! Why not everyone! So we had people from the Disabilities Services and from Sociology participate (to name a couple) - we even had students who do not live in Tampa submit! (The post office is a wonderful resource!) The food was taken care of by the wonderful Leisa Clark, B.B. Ellen’s Deli on Kennedy Blvd, the Feminist Student Alliance (FSA), and students from the Capstone class. We should have brought more food, but we did not expect over 400 students to walk the halls of our tiny Department of Women’s Studies! And these numbers deemed the Spring 2010 Art Crawl very successful!

Not one person really does the Art Crawl. It is a collaborative effect and its end results are very rewarding. It brings artists, on-lookers, students, and faculty together to enjoy art, food, and each other.

Art Crawl 2010 article by Morgan Eubank, Teaching Assistant for the Department of Women’s Studies

“A bit beyond perceptions reach I sometimes believe I see that life is two locked boxes each containing the other’s key” – Piet Hein

Dr. Marilyn Myerson’s Introductions:

The Department of Women’s Studies is delighted to announce that Dr. Jennifer Lewis, Associate Professor of Chemistry, will become the Interim Chair of the Department for the 2010-2011 academic year. Dr. Marilyn Myerson will then have the opportunity to really discover what retirement is all about! Jennifer is a member of the College of Arts and Sciences Dean’s Women’s Studies Futures Committee, and already an active member of our Women’s Studies community. And, she is eager to have this opportunity to lead the department as it builds toward the future and celebrates its continued strengths.

Also, the Department of Women’s Studies is in a period of rebuilding, capitalizing on our current strengths, and forecasting a research-active future. Our vision includes expansion of our flourishing graduate program, together with international outreach. This year we have been proud to welcome Faezeh Bahreini, a graduate student who has joined us from Iran; And, we envision extending and consolidating our position as a site for cross-departmental and cross-college gender- and sexuality-related research.

Faezeh Bahreini, Dr. Jennifer Lewis and Dr. Marilyn Myerson pictured in photo from left to right.
For the last few years I had wanted to have a more visible piece done, but I was waiting for the right time. Two semesters into my Master’s degree, I finally took the plunge.

Grad Students Bring Sexuality Education to the Campus

Grad student Jennifer Ellerman participated in Lambda Theta Phi’s Dating Etiquette 101 event in February. The event was geared to give students some helpful hints on making dating successful, fun and comfortable. Jennifer talked to attendees about the importance of communication in relationships, especially where issues of intimacy are concerned.

Women’s Studies Represented at The Candy Shop

Grad students Jennifer Ellerman, Morgan Eubank and Kelly Wagner represented the Women’s Studies Department in February at The Candy Shop, a safer sex promotion event held in the Marshall Center. More than 1500 students turned up for the event — a pretty clear indicator that USF students are actively seeking out information about safer sexual practices. Flyers were passed out to attendees to promote the Human Sexual Behavior class which explores the myriad aspects of human sexuality.

The Florida Consortium for Women and Gender Studies held its fourth annual conference on October 2-4th at the University of Tampa. This year’s theme, “Women Mobilizing for Change: Past, Present, and Future,” brought together a wealth of topics ranging from women’s health, women and mass media to ethnicity, class and age, as well as gender and education.

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As we move further into the 21st century, the issue of applying and utilizing new technologies in the classroom becomes more and more relevant. One of my areas of increased interest and research is in online pedagogy: specifically with moving traditional lecture classes into the virtual classroom environment without losing the spirit of the feminist classroom.

Although this is certainly a challenge, by developing new teaching techniques that embrace the technologies, I feel that it is possible to use engaged pedagogy online. In the past year, we have worked to transfer traditional Gen Ed classes from small lecture halls to large electronic courses. By focusing on large Gen Ed classes, we are fulfilling a couple of important niches: one is that students often seem to prefer “getting Gen Ed classes out of the way” by taking an online class and the other is that we can open up WST classes to many more students than was possible in a limited space classroom. Through these courses, students who may have graduated from USF without ever taking a WST class are introduced to the ideas, topics, and scholarship we embrace. By working to make these classes more than just the typical “read and take a multiple choice test” structure often found online, we can still maintain the integrity of the department, while becoming more and more accessible to a myriad of students.

It is my goal in the future to evaluate the online courses we offer, looking at the structures and the materials to see how we can work as a department to better utilize our resources to open the extant classes to more students and to develop new, specifically designed online courses as part of our core curriculum. This is the future of education and rather than resist it, I think universities will come to depend on online offerings. The trick is to use them as a tool to reinforce our departmental values and expose more students to what we love about WST!

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Current Graduate Students' Research Interests

Elaine Taylor is creating an interactive resource for women to discover who they are and what’s important to them. Her book is titled A Woman’s Interactive Guide to Self Discovery and this resource will be an opportunity for a woman to explore her mind, body and spirit in a personal, self directed way.

Faezeh Bahreini’s research is the social construction of the female-body in Islam-governed societies. This research is going to explain how notions of essential differences between male and female bodies and those internalized and embodied concepts of femininity and masculinity in Islam-governed societies operate as means for women’s subordination.

Heather Curry is currently teaching Transformations in Consciousness: Self in Community, a course designed to reveal the deeply transformative possibilities of community work. The sense of trust and community that are alive in the classroom has been humbling and awe-inspiring.

Meanwhile, she is continuing work on her thesis, which focuses on narrative healing and forgiveness in the aftermath of rape and sexual assault. She plans to graduate this summer.

Kelly Wagner is currently working on the Graduate Student Research Challenge Grant here at USF on a project about gender in children’s literature. Another area of interest, coming from my bachelor in fine arts, is focusing on a feminist perspective of art.

Glad to be back in Florida

The opportunities are endless and the job is fun here at USF in the Department of Women’s Studies. Lots and lots of training under blue skies and sunshine. What more could I ask for? Everyone in Women’s Studies that I have met, talked to, or worked with are great. I’m in a good place and it’s not snowing. Yes, I moved back to Florida on Labor Day 2009 to hot humid weather and sandy beaches. A far cry from the Alaska winters that I escaped to almost 20 years ago from Florida.

However, we felt it was time to be closer to family.

No regrets, Alaska is beautiful and the summers are comfortable. Although the winters are harsh, one learns how to cope and worship the sunshine. And, we just had to have more so here we are again. I’ve lived in Naples, West Palm and Tallahassee. However, Tampa is new to me so the adventure continues. We miss our Alaska friends but most of our extended family live in Florida too.

And, those who don’t allows for a good excuse to travel west. By the way, I make jewelry to wear, sell and give as gifts. And, most of these photos were taken by me or my soul mate and husband.

By Debbie Sierchio

Dr. Linda Lucas’ Research

Linda is submitting a full proposal, “Gender Norms, Social Location and Choice of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) College Majors”, to the NSF Division of Human Resources in March. The research is intended to expand our understanding of the underrepresentation of women and girls in the STEM pipeline.

The proposal uses data from a pilot study conducted last year at USF which asked students across the campus about factors which influenced their choice of major. The pilot results identified several variables related to social location of the student such as hours of work, location of high school graduation (e.g. Florida, out of state, out of country), attitudes toward motherhood roles as well as gender, race, ethnic group, and self-efficacy with respect to math ability as variables associated with STEM majors.

We found that women students in our sample worked twice the number of paid hours as men and that women students with more hours of paid work held perceptions that STEM courses were “too time consuming” and or “too difficult” and that graduation from a Florida high school indicated more agreement (at statistically significant levels) with statements of traditional gender roles such as “women need to be mothers in order to be fulfilled” or “When jobs are scarce, men deserve the work more than women”; and, students with low mother educational achievement were associated with more hours of work.

We also found statistically significant differences in responses to the gender role and STEM majors among women students within different racial and ethnic identity groups. For example, Asian American students agreed at statistically higher rates than white, Native American or Hispanic students that “when jobs are scarce, men deserve them more than women.”

By Dr. Linda Lucas
Mission of the Department

Women’s Studies is a discrete discipline that has its own herstory/history, bodies of knowledge, sets of theories, associated pedagogies, academic projects and curriculum challenges and strategies.

The Department offers a full range of interdisciplinary courses in Women’s Studies and specialized in women’s health and medicine, women’s science education and political economy; feminist theory/pedagogy/methodology, and feminist literary criticism. All of these areas are contextualized by global perspectives beyond gendered identities and womanhood in the United States. As such the Department takes a transnational/global approach to Women’s Studies. Our graduate and undergraduate students will be trained in signature areas qualifying them for competitive positions in the areas which require skills in critical thinking, inquiry and global perspectives: women’s health, science education, policy making and analysis in global issues, and advanced certificate training in women’s literature for high school teachers of literature.

Community Engagement/Service Learning

This semester we have two Community Engagement on-going projects. The students in the class "Transformations in Consciousness: Self in Community" have self-organized into two groups, one of which has joined Liz Gutierrez in her formative Women’s Alliance for Economic Justice (WAEJ), a grassroots organization committed to "moving women out of poverty" by activating and supporting increased political agency and personal connectivity; the second group will work with high school students at Hillsborough High and the broader Seminole Heights community to help organize a community-wide Art Crawl. Students are expected to complete 15 service learning hours each for the semester, and community partners participate in class discussions. This course seeks to create a learning community in which scholarship is informed by community efforts and community efforts are informed by scholarship. In "The Politics of Women’s Health" course, the students are engaged in community research through the development of a project with Hillsborough County Health and Human Services’ managed care county medical clinics. The goal of this project is to explore the perceptions of the clients and case managers concerning obstacles which stand in the way of the client’s 'self sufficiency'. The students met with county officials, toured clinical settings, developed research questions, engaged in implementing surveys to both clients and case managers, and will analyze the results which will be presented to the county at the end of the course.