

## Program in Women's Studies

MIT's Program in Women's Studies (WS) continues to build on its success as an interdisciplinary undergraduate program and provides a framework and community for scholarly inquiry focusing on women, gender, and sexuality. Exploring gender cross-culturally, historically, and artistically with respect to other identity categories such as race, nation, religion, and class, WS subjects strive to help MIT students better understand various constructions of knowledge and value and to realize the range of personal and intellectual discoveries made possible by using gender as a category of analysis. The program is also an important resource and support for faculty with an advanced knowledge of women's and gender studies within a particular discipline and an interest in learning more across disciplinary lines; moreover, it welcomes faculty who have an emerging interest in the field of women's studies.

Highlights from this year include the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Program in Women's Studies. In honor of the anniversary, WS hosted a daylong public symposium, *Challenges for Women's Studies: Power, Politics, and Gender*, which featured well-known contemporary women's studies scholars Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Patricia Williams, as well as MIT WS faculty of the past and present. Additionally, a panel presentation featured alumni of the program and focused on "Taking Women's Studies into the Real World."



*Before the symposium, MIT president Susan Hockfield, left, chats with Elizabeth Wood, current director of Women's Studies, center, and Ruth Perry, founding director of the program. Photo by Sarah Wright.*



*Women's Studies professor Sally Haslanger. Photo by Sarah Wright.*

In conjunction with its 20th anniversary, the MIT Program in Women's Studies held a historic one-day conference, "Women Scientists on Gender, Race and Nationality." The 14 speakers included women from a range of backgrounds (African American, Hispanic, first- and second-generation Chinese American, Vietnamese American, South Asian, and African) and from the disciplines of physics, engineering, biology, and women's studies. The conference underscored



*Participants in the Women Scientists on Gender, Race and Nationality conference at MIT, April 2005. See <http://web.mit.edu/womens-studies/www/womenscience.html>. Photo by Ahn Dao Kolbe.*

three pressing problems facing minority women in science: scientific isolation, underrecognition, and systemic problems in education.

Working with the Center for New Words, the MIT Program in Women's Studies also cohosted the second annual conference on Women and the Media: Taking Our Place in the Public Conversation (WAM!2005), at which progressive journalists, academics, authors, activists, and students met, shared skills, and strategized to increase women's influence in the media.

Faculty from the Program in Women's Studies collaborated with MIT to move the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies, which has been hosted by Radcliffe for 13 years, to MIT beginning in August 2005.

### **Program Administration**

During AY2005, associate professor Elizabeth Wood (History) directed the program. The WS Steering Committee consisted of lecturer Rebecca Faery (Writing and Humanistic Studies), professor Sally Haslanger (Philosophy), associate professor Diana Henderson (Literature), professor Jean Jackson (Anthropology), assistant professor Anthony Lioi, lecturer Abha Sur (WS), and Wood (chair). Ex officio members of the Steering Committee were associate head librarian and collections manager for women's studies Marlene Manoff (Humanities Library) and WS program coordinator Emily Meghan Morrow

Howe. The Curriculum Committee consisted of senior lecturer Wyn Kelley (Literature) and Professors Haslanger (chair) and Wood. The Programming Committee consisted of lecturer Faery (chair), associate professor Helen E. Lee (Writing and Humanistic Studies), and professors Lee, Lioi, and Wood.

The Advisory Committee consisted of Lotte Bailyn, the T. Wilson '53 professor of management (Sloan); Class of 1949 professor Ellen Harris (Music); professor Mary C. Potter (Brain and Cognitive Sciences); Ford International professor Bishwapriya Sanyal (Urban Studies and Planning); dean of science and Class of 1942 professor Robert Silbey (Chemistry); and Kathryn Willmore, MIT vice president and secretary of the Corporation.

### Curriculum and Faculty Development

The Program in Women's Studies offers an undergraduate curriculum consisting of core classes and cross-listed subjects from approximately 10 departments and sections. Students may concentrate, minor, and petition for a major departure in women's studies. During AY2005, WS offered 30 subjects with approximately 300 students enrolled. In response to student demand, WS offered two full sections of Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, which allowed approximately 40 students to explore the field of women's studies at the introductory level. Also, in keeping with its interdisciplinary and cutting-edge nature, WS offered several new or newly revived courses in diverse areas: SP420J American Women's History (lecturer Nancy Baker, WS), SP484J Anthropology of Computing (associate professor Stephan Helmreich, Anthropology), SP493 Media in Cultural Context: Gendered Genres—Horror and Maternal Melodramas (lecturer Harmony Wu, Comparative Media Studies), and three new classes by assistant professor Erica James (Anthropology): SP621J Violence, Human Rights, and Justice; SP620J Medicine, Religion, and Politics in Africa and African Diaspora; and SP622J Dilemmas in Bio-Medical Ethics: Playing God or Doing Good?

The WS Faculty Intellectual Forum continued this year with new and tenured faculty sharing their current work with other WS faculty members and MIT faculty from other disciplines. Three WS-affiliated faculty members presented their work: Professor Lee, reading from her novel-in-progress, "Life Without"; professor Rae Langton (Linguistics and Philosophy), *Speaker's Freedom and Maker's Knowledge*; and associate professor Caroline Jones (Architecture), *Helen Frankenthaler and Clement Greenberg: The Painter, the Critic, Her Pictures, His Words*.

The Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies (GCWS) offered three graduate-level courses on Women and Film; Women's Activism: Education, Art, Literature; and Feminist Inquiry: Strategies of Effective Scholarship, as well as a workshop for dissertation writers. Associate professor Anne McCants (History) was the senior cochair of the GCWS and worked with MIT faculty members and GCWS faculty from the member schools to move the GCWS to MIT in July 2005.

Through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP), associate professor Margery Resnick (Foreign Languages and Literatures) continued her successful and ongoing project collecting the oral histories of MIT women graduates.

The work has focused on international as well as American women graduates of MIT, and the project completed two additional histories this year. In addition, Professor Wood supervised two UROP students engaged in service learning: Julie Goss and Yelena Yasinnik. Both worked with Nancy Ryan of the Cambridge Women's Commission to analyze girls' physical and mental health as presented in several large data sets and to convert the data to bar graphs for easier presentation.

### Programming Highlights

WS programming continually reflects the wide spectrum of academic disciplines and gender issues related to the field of women's studies. Especially given the absence of an Institute-wide women's center, many groups and programs also seek our administrative and financial cosponsorship of programming. In keeping with the interdisciplinary and holistic educational focus of our field, WS was pleased to sponsor the following events this year:

The Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Lectures on Women in the Developing World

- "Through the Eyes of Young, Arab, French Women," Nacira Guénif-Souilamas
- "Women and Human Rights in Iran Since the 1997 Reform," Mehrangiz Kar

Women in Science, Engineering, and Technology

- "A Feminist Toolkit for Thinking Re-productively," Claudia Castaneda, PhD, lecturer on studies of women, gender, and sexuality, Harvard University (cosponsored with the MIT Program in Science, Technology, and Society)
- "Democracy, Expertise, and Trustworthiness: Neglected Connections between Institutional Practices and Scientific Validity," Naomi Scheman, professor of philosophy, University of Minnesota

Political Science, Philosophy, and Women's Studies

- "Queer Theory and the Philosophical 'We'" (series on the intersections of women's studies and philosophy), Naomi Scheman, professor of philosophy, University of Minnesota
- "The Metaphysics of Sex and Gender" (series on the intersections of women's studies and philosophy), Linda Martín Alcoff, director of women's studies and professor of philosophy, Syracuse University
- "Queer Forgetting," Judith Halberstam, associate professor of literature, University of California–San Diego
- "Everyday Feminism: A New Theory of Social Movements," Jane Mansbridge, professor of political science, Harvard University
- "Gender Nonconformity, Race, and Sexuality: Charting the Connections," Toni Lester, associate professor of law, Babson College
- "Gender, Race and Spirituality in the Present Moment," African-Cuban Zen priest, Hilda (Ryumon) Gutierrez-Baldoquin

Women's Studies Films

- Chicks Make Flicks screening and discussion
  - Michelle Nicholasen's film *Girl at Risk*

- Jane Grey's film *Playing House*
- Lisa Seidenberg's *Pledge of Allegiance Blues*
- Lorna Lowe's *Streeter's Shelter*
- Julie Mallozzi's *Monkey Dance*
- Cynthia McKeown's *One in Eight: Janice's Journey*
- Julie Akeret's *Someone Sang to Me* and *Tomboys*
- Marilyn Levine's *Life, Death and Baseball*
- Stephanie Higgins's *The Gay Marriage Thing*
- *Meet the Braz Family: A Documentary Film from Brazil* (screening and discussion with Brazilian journalist and film director Dorrit Harazim)

#### Global Women's Issues

- "Gender and Transition in Post-War Yugoslavia," Dubravka Ugresic, professor of Russian literature and cultural critic (cohosted with Foreign Languages and Literatures, in collaboration with the Center for Bilingual and Bicultural Studies)

#### Women's Studies Performances, Theater Arts, and Music

- "Black Folks Guide to Black Folks: A Lecture/Performance," Hanifah Walidah, poet, musician, and actress
- "Unbinding Our Lives: Chinese Women in America (1850–1935)," a one-woman show, Christina R. Chan, actor, activist, and playwright
- "Tapping Women's History in Performance: Lady Di," a performance and interview lecture by artist-in-residence Dianne Walker (cosponsored with Music and Theater Arts)

### Research, Publications, and Service

The WS faculty continued their active contributions to their individual fields. Most of their accomplishments are listed in the reports of their home departments, so special attention is given here to achievements relating to work on gender.

Associate professor Thomas DeFrantz (Music and Theater Arts) published the article "African American Dance: Philosophy, Aesthetics, and 'Beauty'" in *TOPOI* (January 2005). He received a National Performance Network Creation Grant for new musical theater for his work "Queer Theory," which will premiere at the BCA as part of the Theatre Offensive's Festival in November 2005 and at MIT in March 2006. Professor DeFrantz performed as well in "Diasporic Encounters," a duet program with Ananya Chatterjea, as part of a Global Feminisms performance series at Hamilton College, Clinton, NY, March 2005. He hosted the artistic residency of Dianne Walker, a joint venture of WS and Music and Theater Arts, and brought Toni Lester to campus for a lecture on "Gender Nonconformity, Race, and Sexuality: Charting the Connections." He also served on the Women's Studies 20th Anniversary Celebration Planning Committee.

Lecturer Mindy Fried served as a panelist on "Working through Gender and Race in the Workplace" (MIT Graduate Student Forum, December 2004).

Professor Haslanger published *Adoption Matters: Philosophical and Feminist Essays*, Sally Haslanger and Charlotte Witt, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

Professor Lioi published an article entitled “The Great Work Begins: Theater as Theurgy in ANGELS IN AMERICA” in *Crosscurrents*, fall 2004. At the MIT4 Conference, he spoke on environmental apocalyptic thinking in American mass media, utilizing an analysis of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* and “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” (MIT, 2005). He lectured on Leslie Marmon Silko at the American Literature Association Conference (Boston, May 2005). He was awarded a Coolidge Fellowship by the Association for Religion in Intellectual Life to pursue the writing of his book manuscript with chapters on Alice Walker, Donna Haraway, and Leslie Marmon Silko.

Marlene Manoff, longtime ex officio member of the WS Steering Committee, continues as an editor of WSSLinks, a comprehensive women’s studies web site sponsored by the Association of College and Research Libraries Women’s Studies Section. She maintains the Women and Science page (<http://libraries.mit.edu/humanities/WomensStudies/Tech2.html>) and the Women and Culture page (<http://libraries.mit.edu/humanities/WomensStudies/Culture2.html>).

Lecturer Heather Paxson published “Slow Food in a Fat Society: Satisfying Ethical Appetites” in *Gastronomica* 5(1) (2005): 14–18; “Family Planning, Human Nature, and the Ethical Subject of Sex in Greece” in *Sex in Development: Science, Sexuality, and Morality in Global Perspective*, Vincanne Adams and Stacy Leigh Figg, eds. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 95–124; “Underfertility’s Challenge to Family and Gender Relations in Urban Greece” in *Barren States: The Population “Implosion” in Europe*, Carrie B. Douglass, ed. (Oxford: Berg Press, 2005), pp. 137–157; “Sex on the Brain: A Natural History of Rape and the Dubious Doctrines of Evolutionary Psychology,” with Stefan Helmreich, in *Why America’s Top Pundits Are Wrong about the World*, Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 180–205; and “Abortion/Anti-Abortion Conflict,” in *Science, Technology, and Society*, Sal Restivo, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp 1–2.

Professor Resnick spoke on “Women in Science, Then, Now and How” for the MIT Association of Women Students, MIT, February 2005. Professor Resnick also presented on “Roofwalkers: The Early MIT Women” at the Burchard Scholars Series, MIT, April 2005, and at the MIT Women’s Leadership Conference, also in April 2005. At the International Institute in Spain, Professor Resnick served as organizer and speaker on “Constitutions and Marriage: Gay Marriage in Spain and the U.S.,” June 2005.

Professor Teng’s article, “An Island of Women: The Discourse of Gender in Qing Travel Accounts of Taiwan,” *International History Review* 20.2 (June 1998): 353–370, was reprinted as a chapter in *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History*, Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne, eds. (Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 38–53. She created a multimedia project, Eurasian History and Memory Visual Archive (EVA), which serves as a prototype for eventual use in Metamedia (cost-effective and user-friendly web and software products and services).

Professor Wood published *Performing Justice* (Cornell University Press, June 2005). She served as editorial collective member for *Gender and History*, writing a critical review of “The Emancipation of Varvara Dyakova: Hegel, Sex, and the Call to Actuality in Russian

Social Thought, 1835–1855” (ms.), October 2004. She commented on the panel “Soviet State Intervention in Private Life in the 1920s and 1930s” (American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, December 5, 2004).

### **Affirmative Action Goals and Successes**

The Women's Studies Program remains committed to affirmative action in all that we do. We had no long-term staff or faculty appointments and no tenure-track faculty hires this year. The student work study team continues to be a diverse group of MIT students.

In terms of diversity in the curriculum, each WS class takes into account racial diversity as a key factor in looking at gender. In academic year 2005, a number of our classes addressed the issue of race directly: SP.547J Contemporary US Women of Color: Reading and Writing the Short Story; SP.576 Advanced Essay Workshop: “Negotiating Identities”; SP.640J The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender; SP.650J The Psychology of Race and Gender; SP.603J Race and Gender in Asian America; SP. 575J Writing about Race and Gender; SP.660 Race, Work, and Public Policy.

In our programming we continue to pay close attention to a variety of forms of diversity, prioritizing a rich schedule of multiracial speakers and events that address women's studies issues at the intersections of race, class, nation, sexuality, and gender expression.

### **Future Plans**

Professor Wood will serve as the director through AY2006. She is interested in working to widen faculty participation in the program across the Institute and to strengthen the sense of intellectual community within WS on campus. The program will continue to pay special attention to the international, comparative study of gender and to the roles of women in science and technology as areas particularly appropriate to WS at MIT. The program will be hosting two speakers' series this year, the first organized by WS faculty from the History Section (fall 2005) and the second by faculty in the Writing and Humanistic Studies Section (spring 2006).

**Elizabeth Wood**

**Director**

**Associate Professor of History**

*More information about this program can be found online at <http://web.mit.edu/womens-studies/www/>.*