

## **Program in Women's and Gender Studies**

The MIT Program in Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) continues to build on its success as an interdisciplinary undergraduate program and to provide a framework and community for scholarly inquiry focusing on women and gender. The faculty voted this year to update the name from the Program in Women's Studies to better reflect the breadth of all that we do in terms of gender. Exploring gender cross-culturally, historically, and artistically with respect to other identity categories such as race, nation, sexuality, religion, and class, WGS subjects are designed to help MIT students better understand various constructions of knowledge and value and realize the range of personal and intellectual discoveries made possible by using gender as a category of analysis. In addition, the program is an important resource and support for faculty who have an advanced knowledge of women's and gender studies within particular disciplines and who want to enrich their work by collaborating and studying across disciplinary lines. The program also welcomes faculty who have an emerging interest in the fields of women's and gender studies.

WGS hosted MIT's public March 8 Celebration of International Women's Day, which included a multilingual, international women's public poetry reading by MIT faculty, staff, and students from around the world in Lobby 13.

Working with the Center for New Words for the third consecutive year, WGS cohosted the cutting-edge public conference Women, Action, and the Media (WAM!2007), at which progressive journalists, academics, authors, activists, and students met, shared skills, and strategized to increase women's influence in the media. WGS and another community partner, Women in Film and Video New England, continued to cohost the Chicks Make Flicks series, a monthly screening and discussion with local female filmmakers.

As in the past, faculty from WGS collaborated with faculty, staff, and students from the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies (GCWS). Now in its second year at MIT, GCWS has settled into its new home and continues to add a richness to the already-strong women's and gender studies community on campus. One highlight was the second annual GCWS conference, *Beyond Revolution or Behind it? The Politics and Practice of Contemporary Feminism Across Academic and Activist Communities*, which provided a forum for graduate student work as well as a site for cutting-edge feminist discussion among faculty members.

### **Program Administration**

In the fall of 2006, Professor Elizabeth Wood (History) directed the program. Professor Sally Haslanger (Linguistics and Philosophy) served as acting director in the spring of 2007 while Professor Wood was on leave.

The WGS Steering Committee consisted of assistant professor Sandy Alexandre (Literature), lecturer Rebecca Faery (Writing and Humanistic Studies), Professor Thomas DeFrantz (Music and Theater Arts), Professor Haslanger, Professor Rae Langton (Linguistics and Philosophy), associate professor Christine Walley (Anthropology),

Professor Wood (fall 2006 chair), and lecturer Abha Sur (WGS). Ex-officio members of the Steering Committee were associate head librarian and collections manager for WGS Marlene Manoff (Humanities Library) and WGS program coordinator Emily Meghan Morrow Howe. The Curriculum Committee consisted of senior lecturer Wyn Kelley (Literature), assistant professor Alisa Braithwaite (Literature), and lecturer Sur. The Programming Committee members were associate professor Helen Lee (Writing and Humanistic Studies), lecturers Faery and Sur, and Professors DeFrantz and Wood.

### **Curriculum and Faculty Development**

WGS 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 (called a "major departure") in women's and gender studies. WGS offered 28 subjects during the 2006–2007 academic year. Approximately 300 students enrolled in women's and gender studies classes, the bulk of whom registered for core classes. In response to student demand, WGS offered two sections of Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, which allowed approximately 40 students to explore the field at the introductory level. In keeping with the cutting-edge nature of the field, this year WGS offered a new class: Girl Culture in Japan (taught by lecturer Sharon Kinsella, WGS and Foreign Languages and Literatures). Also, we were able to offer Sexual and Gender Identities (taught by lecturer Kim Surkan, WGS), for the second time. Keeping in line with our commitment to a globally oriented curriculum, we taught Psychology of Race and Gender with an international focus this spring and continued to offer Women and Global Activism in Art, Media, and Politics as well as five other classes with international themes.

The WGS Intellectual Forum continued this year with faculty sharing their current work with other MIT faculty members both in WGS and other disciplines. Professor Sarah Song spoke on "Justice, Gender, and the Politics of Multiculturalism." Also active in 2006–2007 was the Women's Studies Reading Group, which worked with Professor Anthony Lioi, reviewing and providing interdisciplinary commentary on a chapter of his upcoming book. WGS worked to bring the field of women's and gender studies to students with three new approaches: a film screening and discussion event on MIT's registration day for undergraduates; a series of lectures for MIT graduate students with an interest in feminism (gradfeminists@MIT); and a set of events with the MIT Race-Sexuality Task Force, a student-centered committee on race and sexuality issues.

GCWS continued to offer a host of graduate-level classes. Professor Walley, in her role as the MIT representative to GCWS, worked with MIT faculty members and the GCWS coordinator, Andrea Sutton, to put on lively course-development workshops.

WGS Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) projects continue to be rigorous, providing excellent research experiences for MIT students and collaboration opportunities for faculty and students alike. For example, associate professor Margery Resnick (Foreign Languages and Literatures) continued her successful and ongoing project, "Oral Histories of MIT Women Graduates." The project completed four additional histories this year. The work continues to focus on international as well as American women graduates of MIT.

## Programmatic Highlights

WGS programming continually reflects the wide spectrum of academic disciplines and gender issues related to the field of women's and gender studies. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field and our commitment to cross-cultural collaboration, Women's and Gender Studies naturally continues to initiate work with groups around the MIT campus and the Cambridge community. Many groups and programs also approach WGS, seeking our administrative and financial cosponsorship. A sample of the interdisciplinary programming that WGS brought to the MIT community in the past year includes:

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

- “Toward Freedom from Domestic Violence: The Neglected Obvious,” Bina Agarwal, professor of economics at the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi University
- “Making Women's Human Rights in the Vernacular: Violence against Women and Traveling Rights in India, China, and the USA,” Sally Merry, professor of women's studies at Wellesley College

### Women in Science, Technology, and Engineering

- “Women, Work, and Life,” a discussion with MIT faculty members who are balancing careers with life, hosted by lecturer Sur
- “Bringing Women into the Science and Engineering Curriculum: Working Across the Faculty and the Student Body,” Mary Wyer, professor of women's studies at North Carolina State University

### MIT-specific faculty development

- “Female Terrorists: What Difference Does Gender Make?” Marilyn Friedman, professor of philosophy at Washington University in St. Louis (workshop on gender and politics hosted by Professor Song)

### Global women's issues

- International Women's Day, a celebration and poetry reading by MIT faculty, staff, and students from around the world

Assorted lectures in women's and gender studies as related to political science, African American studies, media studies, literature, environmental studies, philosophy, sociology, art, and history

- *Beyond Beats and Rhymes: A Hip-Hop Head Weighs in on Manhood in Hip-Hop Culture*, a public film screening and student-centered discussion on race, gender, and identity
- WAMI2007—Women, Action, and the Media, an annual conference where progressive journalists, authors, activists, and students meet, share skills, and strategize to increase women's influence in the media; cosponsored by the Center for New Words, Cambridge

- *Queer Theory! An Academic Travesty*, a musical satire written and directed by Professor DeFrantz
- Chicks Make Flicks, film screenings and discussions with directors, including the popular event featuring short films by local filmmaker Carmen Oquendo Villar; cosponsored by Women in Film and Video New England and Comparative Media Studies
- "The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement," Winifred Breines, professor of sociology at Northeastern University

### **Research, Publications, and Service**

WGS faculty members continued to make active contributions to their individual fields as well as to the interdisciplinary field of women's and gender studies. Their accomplishments are listed in the reports of their home departments.

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

The Program in Women's and Gender Studies 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 staff continues to be a diverse group of MIT students.

In terms of the curriculum, each WGS class takes into account racial diversity as a key factor in looking at gender. In the 2006–2007 academic year, WGS offered a number of classes that directly addressed the issue of American racial politics: Contemporary US Women of Color: Reading and Writing the Short Story; The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender; Race and Identity in American Literature; Writing about Race; and The Psychology of Gender and Race.

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 and gender studies issues at the intersections of race, class, nation, sexuality, and gender expression.

### **Future Plans**

Professor DeFrantz will begin a two-year term as program director in August. He is interested in working to widen faculty participation in the program across the Institute, especially in the sciences and engineering fields, and will work to strengthen the sense of intellectual community within WGS on campus. The program will continue to pay special attention to the international, comparative study of gender and to the roles of women and minorities in science and technology, areas particularly appropriate to WGS at MIT.

Two Martin Luther King scholars, Brenda Dixon-Gottschild and Ana Castillo, will join the faculty as visiting scholars in February 2008 and AY2007–2008, respectively. A chief priority of WGS is to welcome and involve these dynamic women's studies scholars who will undoubtedly enrich the feminist academic community on campus. Also in

2007–2008, the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences dean's office plans to hire a new faculty member for the Geneviève McMillan–Reba Stewart women in the developing world professorship.

In order to better align its reputation with its mission (and in keeping with its new name), the Program in Women's and Gender Studies will roll out a new visual presence on the MIT campus, both on the web and in print.

Drawing on past successes, we will continue the Women's and Gender Studies Intellectual Forum faculty development series, the Geneviève McMillan–Reba Stewart Lectures on Women in the Developing World, the Chicks Make Flicks film screenings and discussions with local female filmmakers, and the WAM! conference.

**Emily Meghan Morrow Howe**  
**Program Coordinator**

*More information about the Program in Women's and Gender Studies can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/wgs/>.*