

Women's studies major proposal passed

WILLIAM VAN CLEAVE
Editor-in-chief

A major in women's studies was approved by a faculty vote of 83 to 16 with one abstention at the February faculty meeting.

The proposal was created by the Women's Studies Curriculum Committee, chaired by Joanne Frye, and presented to the faculty by Glenn Bucher, Dean of Faculty. Bucher brought the proposal from EPC (Educational Policy Committee), where it had been approved as well.

The 14 course regular major, to be put into effect next year, will include WS 120, Introduction to Women's Studies, WS 310, Seminar in Women's Studies, WS 320, Special Topics in Women's Studies, 7 cross-listed women's studies courses, a three semester junior and senior independent study project, and one course in a traditional discipline which includes "some discussion of methodological questions." The W.S. major will also take a women's studies course in this traditional discipline as well, and WS 391, a women's studies practicum or field experience, is strongly recommended.

The rationale within the proposal mentions the women's studies symposium last April which "honor[s] the growth of women's studies both locally and nationally." It also mentions the many avenues of scholarly research being currently pursued in the field, and the expansion of women's studies programs across the nation.

The proposal also addresses the

38 students who have graduated with a minor in women's studies, and the four who have graduated with a Special major.

Moreover, it draws readers' attention to the fact that currently the program has 9 declared minors and 7 students who have declared individualized majors.

Bucher says that he gave a "short emphatic statement" on the floor of the faculty meeting in February in support of the proposal for a major, because, "as women's studies as a program has developed, it has taken on attributes that were ordinarily associated with disciplines, including theories, methods, recognized scholarship, literature, and journals." Thus, in Bucher's opinion, "it merits the designation given it."

Bucher also argues that the "women's studies program is one of the most creative, exciting things in the curriculum, [and that] it doesn't give up anything on the side of integrity and academic rigor."

The majority of women's studies faculty are very positive about the recent decision for a "real" major. Karen Taylor, who teaches history and women's studies, says that the passing of the proposal "legitimizes women's studies, and recognizes what a tremendous scholarly impact it has had."

Carolyn Durham, professor of French and women's studies, says that it is basically a "recognition of what has already happened," since there have already been stu-

Ms. Conceptions

A WOMEN'S ISSUES BLOCK

Feminism

Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not? On the first day of an Introduction to Women's Studies class, students are often asked to respond to this question. Some of us are hesitant to answer yes, because we fear that the negative connotations associated with the term will outweigh the positive ones, and that we will be burdened with a label with which we aren't quite comfortable. For the most part, labels are ambiguous things and can be extremely problematic. "Feminism" is no exception.

The objective of this article, then, is to point out that feminism means different things to different people, and to explore the ramifications of this fact.

For some of us, the word "feminism" conjures up images of radical lesbian separatists, man-haters, Communists or agitators.

The fact is that the term "feminist" is embraced by women and men of all sorts. "Feminism" cannot be accurately defined by any one person, group, text or dictionary. It is an individual ideology whose only definitive characteristic is a concern for the inequality faced by women in our society and the resulting inequality faced by men.

Those who jump quickly to harsh judgments of self-proclaimed feminists, based on preconceived notions about what the label implies, are in danger of judging unjustly. They may only succeed in alienating themselves from positive and enlightening influence. Similarly, feminists should not be quick to judge those who reject the label in fear of its pejorative connotations. Feminism needs, above all, to be inclusive, and this inclusiveness *must* not apply only to those who accept the label.

Attention: Seniors Only

I.S. Celebratory Procession
Monday, Mar. 20, 4 p.m., Kauke Arch
Watch for details when you return.

Women's Studies from page 1

dents who declare special major in women's studies going through the program. Barb Burnell, of Economics and women's studies, con-

Women's studies has an "internal integrity, especially with the upcoming practicum component."

**Deb Hilty
Women's Studies Program**

curs, saying that "it means that the institution is recognizing the importance of something already in place." Durham adds that it will "facilitate the process by which students can declare major" in women's studies.

Deb Hilty, secretary of the College and professor of English and women's studies, goes even further, saying that it was ready to be a major due to the "depth and cohesiveness of the courses within" women's studies, and the program's "internal integrity, especially with the upcoming practicum component."

Hilty is also quick to mention that the passing of the proposal is

"strong testimony to the efforts of Joanne Frye and faculty in the program who have developed it from a handful of courses to powerful program."

Sharon Coursey, a current major in the program, feels that it "probably lends more credibility to the program." Frye, chair of the program and professor of English and women's studies, feels that it "gives the stamp of institutional approval to a contemporary intellectual enterprise."

Maggie Redic, another current major in the program, says that it "takes some pressure off the majors to be 'legitimate'" and also,

The passing of the major "gives the stamp of institutional approval to a contemporary intellectual enterprise."

**Joanne Frye (Chair)
Women's Studies Program**

that the passing of the proposal "validates it as a necessary and important field of study." Coursey also thinks that it "makes students more aware of the program's exis-

SGA from page 1

where this additional money is being channeled and how financial aid and scholarships will be adjusted," Belmont said.

Belmont is also concerned with Student Health Services. Some students do not like to go to Hygeia even when they are sick, according to Belmont. Belmont said that SGA will send all students a survey at the end of this semester to learn what changes need to be made at Hygeia.

For a year and a half, Belmont has been researching an alternative meal plan for students who don't eat 21 meals a week. She said that this research will continue when she is president.

Belmont will meet bi-weekly with Dean Ken Plusquellec and said that the incoming cabinet will be working closely with the administration.

"We're definitely hoping to work with the administration," said Belmont. "But more importantly, we'd like to try to encourage more student input."

Amy Dana, the new Vice-President for Academic Affairs, agreed. "The new cabinet should be better able to address the concerns of the students," Dana said. She added that the SGA needs to try to eliminate the somewhat self-serving image that it tends to have.

tence."

There were some concerns, however, among students and faculty

The passing of the proposal for a major in women's studies "validates it as a necessary and important field of study."

**Sharon Coursey
Women's Studies Major**

in the women's studies program about whether the major would be passed. Redic believed that the "academy wouldn't be willing to support something that has such obvious political implications." Karen Taylor had similar concerns, saying that she thought "it might be perceived as an attempt to teach a political philosophy rather than new scholarship."

Susan Figge, professor of German and women's studies, and next year's women's studies program chair, "expected that it would pass...because it was a program that a wide variety of departments and faculty have contributed to for over ten years." Durham said it had been her view that it would



Dan Stefaniuk

Jennifer Belmont stresses the need for SGA to act upon student concerns with Health Services and Food Service during her campaign speech for SGA president

SGA will increase its publicity, according to Belmont and Dana, and "there will be more contact with students and student groups than presently," the new President said.

Dana, a first-year student from

Norton, Ohio, said that the SGA will try to be a bridge between the students and the administration. Sometimes, however, there is little SGA can do for students, be-

see SGA: page 5

pass relatively easily because faculty would find it difficult to openly oppose because of politics among the faculty, but she was "pleased that people could and did express concerns, so that they could be addressed."

Two members of the faculty specifically raised questions on the floor of the faculty about the major proposal for women's studies. Professor Mark Wilson of Geology, one of the two, chose not to comment. Eugene Heath, professor of philosophy, however, says that he has two major problems

"I was pleased that people could and did express concerns [at the faculty meeting], so that they could be addressed."

**Carolyn Durham
Women's Studies Program**

with the proposal for a major in women's studies. First, "the women's studies major, as it will be written in the catalogue, requires that faculty teach from a feminist perspective."

Heath also feels that it is a

"politicization of the curriculum," quoting Alison Jaggar, feminist and recent forum speaker at the

A women's studies major is a "politicization of the curriculum"

**Eugene Heath
Philosophy Department**

College, who says that "feminism is a political commitment to ending the subordination of women. Feminist academics are the intellectual arm of the Women's Movement. If we're not, we've betrayed our trust" (Carol Sternhell, "Questions of Difference: Three Challenges to Women's Studies," *Ms* (October 1985), 83).

Heath also had "trouble understanding the rationale as it was printed and distributed in the agenda." Heath went on to state that he thinks there is "nothing wrong with being a feminist," but questions whether "we want to beg controversial questions." Heath, in closing, said that there is a difference between disciplinary and ideological assumptions.

Michael Kern, another professor against the proposal for major in

women's studies, says that he is opposed to it "because [he] doesn't think that it stands on a par with other majors." He feels that one can "concentrate on women's issues" within the other disciplines, and moreover, that it is "a subject that other majors have dealt with."

Kern, a professor of biology, also said that he does "not like women's studies courses, per se, because they're, by their very nature, exclusionary. Equal time should be given to men and women in courses, rather than focusing in on one at the exclusion of the other."

"I don't think that it stands on a par with other majors."

Michael Kern
Biology Department

Burnell, who teaches in the program, said she thought "objections wouldn't be serious enough, [and she was] fairly confident that it would pass, since most faculty who have thought about women's studies see that some important work is going on there."

Mandy Langley, a major in the

program, says that it "would have been so outrageous if it hadn't passed," and that she "couldn't even conceive of it not happening."

"It would have been... outrageous if it hadn't passed."

Mandy Langley
Women's Studies Major

Faye Miller, a senior women's studies major, expressed a quite different concern that this might give disciplines a message that says "well you've got women covered there, so we don't have to do anything about women here." Miller hopes that this concern will be addressed in the years to come.

Frye feels that "it [women's studies] challenges students to difficult critical thinking and encourages them to make connections between academic work and their own lives," and moreover, that it encourages them to "see the world around them as in process" and therefore "responsive to their own actions"

For faculty, Frye feels that it "stimulates and encourages further

research and their own critical thinking [and is also a] basis for interacting with students and each other in the process of developing knowledge."

Susie Newton, professor of Sociology and women's studies, feels that the women's studies program "increases the diversity of experience here, and provides an alternative framework for understanding human behavior."

Newton went on to say that "what we try to do in a liberal arts education is think critically" and

Women's studies gives students "a whole new framework inside of which to understand their own experiences."

Susan Figge
Women's Studies Program

that "women's studies is at the forefront of this...the cutting edge of a liberal arts education."

Newton recalls that "I had no training or experience in women's studies when I came to the College. What it's done for me is completely transform and broaden my work."

Hilty says that the course she teaches in women's studies, *Women's Studies*,

Women's studies is a "time to examine yourself and relationships with men and women which effect our everyday lives."

Rob Abernethy
Women's Studies Major

en In Poetry, "creates an incredible climate which compels them [students] to ask certain questions." These questions, Hilty adds are "not just a matter of curiosity, [but rather] most urgent and enormously honest."

Figge feels that women's studies gives students "a whole new framework inside of which to understand their own experiences." Moreover, it puts many of the "faculty at the forefront of knowledge in their respective disciplines."

Sharon Coursey believes that "before people get all up in arms or angry about the women's movement, they need to learn about it." Langley feels that it is a "place to share your experiences with other

women" and that you discover that "problems you thought were personal were shared by many other women."

Rob Abernethy, another major in the program, feels that women's studies is a "time to examine yourself and your relationships with men and women which effect our everyday lives." Abernethy also says that it "gives me a chance to examine traditional sex roles," roles which he says are "inevitably changing over time."

Redic believes that it "comes out of personal history and becomes

Women's studies "comes out of personal history and becomes passion."

Maggie Redic
Women's Studies Major

passion." Redic goes on to say that "W.S. is for me the only thing that forces me to challenge any assumptions I had ever had."

Miller feels that "you can't be a W.S. major and not think critically" and more importantly, that it "validates student experiences and makes them important."