

10-17-2012

## Works-In-Progress Conference 2012

Women's Studies Department  
*Old Dominion University*

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Works-in-Progress Conference  
Wednesday, 17 Oct. 2012, 2:00-5:00 pm  
The Potomac and York River Rooms, Webb Center

Sponsored by the Women's Studies Department

Celebrate activism, art, pedagogy, and scholarship focusing on women and gender!

Here is your opportunity to meet the presenters and read their abstracts.

### Activism

Renee Olander, Assistant Vice President, Regional Higher Education Center  
"Negotiating Literary Representations of *The Men Who Hate Women*"

Literary and popular culture representations of gender-based violence, sexual violence, and violence against women and girls – especially rape and incest – are neither new nor rare. Their prevalence reflects the routine occurrences of these crimes in many societies and countries and on every populated continent on Earth. Even so, as an American with a bit of Swedish heritage who carried the naïve notion Swedish culture was somehow less riddled with misogyny than is ours, I was shocked to encounter Stieg Larsson's first book, *THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO*, originally titled *MEN WHO HATE WOMEN*, which features epigraph statistics about pervasive gender-based violence in Sweden prefacing chapter sections fleshed out by the unrelenting narratives and editorial analyses that follow. This presentation will discuss the relative anomaly of a self-identified male feminist making a life's work of systematically studying and writing about the myriad men who hate, rape, and abuse women and girls and the institutional powers that enable such widespread misogyny and crime, as well as popular and critical responses to the work. In the U.S., where the FBI routinely reports numbers per capita of rape, incest, and domestic violence victims, the lack of information about the other half of the picture is striking: Who and how many are the male assailants? Where and how do they live, work, and get away with it? Larsson presents some powerfully graphic, albeit fictional, answers to these questions. Indeed, I had initially avoided the Swedish and American film adaptations due to the graphic representations which I had heard and read about and could see in trailers; however, Larsson's work is culturally and critically important. For example, in 2010 the RAINN organization (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, [www.rainn.org/get-involved/dragon-tattoo](http://www.rainn.org/get-involved/dragon-tattoo)) developed an educational program to prevent sexual violence based on the novels and film adaptations now known as the Millennium Trilogy, and in 2012 Vanderbilt University Press released *MEN WHO HATE WOMEN AND WOMEN WHO KICK THEIR ASSES – STIEG LARSSONS MILLENIUM TRILOGY IN FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE*, a compelling collection of critical essays. In this context, one objective of this *Work in Progress* is to develop a Women's History Month 2013 co-curricular and community-engagement program in collaboration with the ODU Women's Center and also the YWCA of Southampton Roads ([www.ywca-shr.org](http://www.ywca-shr.org)), an organization that provides services for victims and survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse including the regional RESPONSE hotline and several domestic abuse shelters<sup>1</sup>. The 2013 program may include a moderated book group, film screening, a panel discussion and/or writing workshop at multiple university locations; I may solicit anonymous surveys in addition to general audience feedback during the session.

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<sup>1</sup> I serve on the Board of Directors of YWCA-SHR.

Wendi White and Veness Hall, The Women's Center  
"Engaging Men as Allies in Preventing Violence Against Women"

A great deal of research shows that the more equitable a society is, the lower its incidence of sexual and relationship violence will be. In our society, which is ordered by gendered, racial, and classist hierarchies, nearly one in five women (18.3%) is the victim of attempted or completed sexual assault in her lifetime (2010 CDC Survey). This means that every one of us, men and women alike, know or love someone who has been victimized. Preventing gender based violence is not a woman's issue. It is everyone's issue. It is a problem embedded in our culture that requires a cultural shift in attitudes, behavior and knowledge on the part of both men and women. With this in mind, the Women's Center has worked to engage men as allies in primary prevention of gender based violence over the past year. This presentation will share the lessons learned to date about how to best engage men: the language that invites them into the struggle for gender justice, how discussions of healthy masculinity can be empowering, and what individual men can do to foster a culture of respect and caring that does not tolerate violence against women.

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Tancy Vandecar-Burdin and Morel Fry, The Women's Caucus  
"Room for Nursing Mothers: Creating Lactation Space at ODU"

Morel Fry and I will discuss what the Caucus has been working on regarding lactation support.

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Joann Bautti & Elizabeth Warren, The Women's Center  
"ODU V-Day: The Power Of Voice"

After a seven year hiatus, the Women's Center brought The Vagina Monologues back to ODU in the spring of 2012. V-Day is a global activist movement to end violence against women and girls. It is a catalyst that promotes creative events to increase awareness, raise money, and revitalize the spirit of existing anti-violence organizations. V-Day generates broader attention for the fight to stop violence against women and girls, including rape, battery, incest, female genital mutilation (FGM), and sex slavery. ODU V-Day 2012 was a celebration of women's strength, resilience, and courage. Using the power of voice, students and faculty involved in the production became local activist leaders in the global movement to end violence against women and girls. This presentation will outline the process of bringing this production to life – including creating an internship, selecting the cast, rehearsing, and performing – and the way it transformed the lives of the women involved. The undergraduate intern who co-directed the production, Elizabeth Warren, will join the talk to share her personal experience of leading the ODU V-Day 2012 movement.

## **The Arts**

Remica L. Bingham-Risher, Director of Writing and Faculty Development (QEP Director) and Assistant Professor of English  
"What We Ask of Flesh"

In his book *Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope*, Martin Beck Matustik discusses the phenomena of excessive violence in our culture: "Kant coined the term 'radical evil'...But in our times we know that even human-all-too-human acts of cruelty can exceed the bounds of reason in ways Kant thought could

never happen.” And yet we are left to question how we—as mere flesh and blood with all our imperfections—will be able to surmount the evils we encounter in our everyday lives. *What We Ask of Flesh* grapples with violence (physical and psychological) as well as flesh and its desecration. There are several overarching themes found in my work, but I am most intrigued by the way we (as humans and, especially, women but, even more especially, women of color) are asked to maneuver in such narrowly carved spaces. I often use personal experience as a springboard for contextualizing how one small spark can create enough force to alter our lives. My reverence for spirit and the knowledge that we are all built with a longing for connection to something larger and greater than our possibilities, and our inherent need to question, leads me to interrogate interactions in our ever-changing, ever-strange and difficult world. I turn to poetry for some of these answers, in the same way that I turn to prayer. *What We Ask of Flesh* grapples with violence (physical and psychological), spirit and flesh, its desecration and resilience. Through biblical re-tellings, personal narratives and lyric poems, this work negotiates some of the frightening occurrences of the past and present and how these dictate what we, as humans, ‘ask of flesh’ each day.

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Ramona Austin, Curator, The Baron and Ellin Gordon Art Galleries  
*On Mother, Maiden, Courtesan: Woman and Her Image in Art*

This talk is a short, illustrated overview of the exhibition, *Mother, Maiden, Courtesan: Woman and Her Image in Art*, on view at the Baron and Ellin Gordon Art Galleries from September 15, 2012 through February 10, 2013. Composed of the university’s gift from Baron and Ellin Gordon of self-taught art and other works from collections in Virginia, Ohio and Colorado, the show examines how self-taught art exemplifies profound narratives about women in art and culture from historical and contemporary perspectives.

### **Pedagogy**

Cathleen Rhodes, Women’s Studies Dept  
“Creating Identity-Based Assignments Without Creating a Confessional”

Rebecca Lauren Gidgunis, Eastern University, “Creating Identity-Based Assignments Without Creating a Confessional”

Our joint presentation will cover complementary topics. We structure our introductory courses with identity questions at the forefront but help students see their experiences from a distance in order to meet our larger pedagogical goals.

Cathleen: In my Foundations of Queer Studies course I have found it necessary to adopt strategies that address students’ tendency toward the sensational (“What do gay people do?” “What does a transgendered woman’s genitals look like?” “Have you heard about the pregnant man?”) and the sentimental (“I think gay people are just as good as straight people.” “I feel bad for gay college students who are probably afraid to come out.”). Students pose these questions because they have found few other outlets for such topics, and while they are valid for a certain amount of discussion, spending too much time on them makes it difficult to meet the course’s academic goals. Similarly, I feel a responsibility to negotiate a space (currently the *only* dedicated academic space at Old Dominion University) for queer students to inhabit their queer voices without the class focusing exclusively on individual coming out stories or tokenizing queer students. In both cases I encourage students to inhabit

their individual voices but in a way that acknowledges, and perhaps interrogates, more general concepts in Queer Studies. I will present strategies that have worked for me and which I find also applicable to other general education courses.

Rebecca: At a faith-based institution, identity-formation involves questions about religious belief. The problem occurs when students find themselves primed to tell one story about their evangelical identity and tell it in roughly the same manner. During my first years of teaching at Eastern, I was reticent to assign a narrative essay for fear of these confession narratives, littered with what I affectionately call “Christian clichés” (think “walk with Christ,” “saved by the blood”). I needed an assignment that allowed non-Christian students to feel included, and that allowed faith-based students to explore new (and more meaningful) ways of communicating religious identity. Particularly in this charged political climate, where thoughtful religious dialogue is almost non-existent, students need to learn how to discuss belief systems in non-polemic, dialogic ways. Thus, I instituted the spiritual geography essay, inspired by Kathleen Norris’ *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, an assignment where students write about their spiritual journey with a public audience in mind. (For many of my students, “public” equals “atheist.”) Through this shift in rhetorical situations, I ask students to delve deeper, beyond the didactic, and articulate a still-forming identity in meaningful ways. I will explain strategies of shifting expected rhetorical situations in the composition classroom, with a focus on religious identity in first-year college students.

We will conclude by commenting on one another’s topics and encouraging audience feedback on the following:

- How to work with religious students’ identity formation in Queer Studies or Intro to Women’s Studies courses
- How to work with queer students’ identity formation in introductory courses at a religious institution

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Elizabeth Jackson Vincelette, English Dept.,  
“The ‘I’ and the Archive: Archival Research in the Composition Classroom.”

Using the archive in the classroom can encourage students to reconsider of what they know or expect about gender, identity, class, history, culture, and the canon. Archives can move us beyond anthologies as a site for textual selection for our classrooms and shape our pedagogy. In a review of anthologies of women writers in 2009, Karen Kilcup noted that anthologies “represent a form of what we might call embodied pedagogy, enabling and engendering certain kinds of teaching via their shape, content, and apparatus” (7). The archive affords students the opportunity to question power and choices—not only in what gets into the archive, but also through what students select and represent from the archive. It can fill in some gaps, populate some spaces, provide possibilities, confront norms, and bring us beyond the standard of “read a book, write a paper” in our classes. Even so, working with the archive always involves a negotiation of assumptions and tensions. In this talk, I’ll address three tensions that emerged when students worked with an archive in one of my classes.

## **Scholarship**

### Session 1

Megan Mize, Doctoral Student, English Dept.  
“Constructing an Early Modern Queen: Rhetoric, Performance, and Shared Dialectical Strategies”

The start of the Early Modern era gave rise to several powerful female figures, among which Elizabeth Tudor projected a remarkable public identity. As a woman in a position of authority during a period of religious and ideological transitions, she carefully navigated traditional views of gender and power while ruling nations in the midst of strong political tensions. By examining contemporary discussions regarding rhetoric, gender, and identity and various aspects of Elizabeth's self representation, such as: portraiture, dress, letters, public speeches, and art patronage through the filter of modern theories regarding identity construction, this study seeks to discover the impact of Elizabeth's rhetoric and performances of self. Elizabeth employed a dialectical strategy, using rhetorical ostentation and the strategy of self-effacement to project masculine authority and rescript her female reality.

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Elizabeth Zanoni, Assistant Professor of History

“A Wife in Waiting”: Women and the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act in *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*”

This presentation examines two advice columns in *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, the most prominent Italian-language newspaper, to explore the gendered implications of post WWII immigration policy on the Italian-American community. I argue that the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, which allowed, for the first time, citizen wives to bring their alien husbands to the U.S. outside of the country's strict immigration quota, presented new possibilities for immigrant women in their personal lives, and a new controversial presence in the larger Italian-American community as generators of immigration. During the 1950s, legal changes turned *Il Progresso* advice columns about women and immigration into platforms for both exalting and policing Italian women's roles in creating and sustaining post-WWII migrations, marriages, and families.

Immigration historians have yet to explore extensively the gender-blind family reunification provisions in the Immigration and Nationality Act, selecting instead to focus on the law as both an extension of Cold War foreign and domestic policy, and as a method for maintaining the quota system based on national origins. However, ignoring family reunification policies that gave women more authority in the post-WWII decades to ignite the migration of their husbands and family in Italy perpetuates the stereotype of the leading husband and trailing wife. By looking at exchanges about law and women in *Il Progresso* advice columns during the 1950s, I describe women using the 1952 Act to participate in Italian migration as instigators, rather than as followers, issuing, rather than receiving the “atto di richiamo” —the call notice or sponsorship required to request a family member's visa. While such legal changes opened up opportunities and choices for Italian-American and Italian immigrant women in the U.S., most exchanges between letter writers and advice givers employed these legal changes to try and reinforce and often times strengthen images of women whose legal, moral, and ethnic identities remained inextricably subsumed within the family.

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Vittorio Colaizzi, Assistant Professor of Art History

“Subversive Artists: Judy Ledgerwood, Wendy White, and Keltie Ferris”

Numerous women artists, such as Georgia O'Keeffe and Eva Hesse, have challenged stylistic orthodoxies. Today, a common trope in abstract painting is the ironic representation of its once-earnest aims of material immediacy and quasi-spiritual transcendence. Techniques such as stenciling, printing, and imitation or appropriation are common ways to announce painting as an inherited and culturally conditioned language. Three artists: Judy Ledgerwood, Wendy White, and Keltie Ferris have complicated

this tendency, neither returning to a nostalgic expressionism, nor endlessly picturing painting. Instead they re-appropriate and hijack the very formal methods by which cultural mediation is announced, using them to propose other kinds of experiences that welcome association and acknowledge subjectivity. If selected to speak, I would briefly discuss the ways in which these three artists are fruitfully subversive.

## Session 2

Janet Bing, Full Professor, English Dept.

“Gotcha! How Effective is Pranking as Social Protest?”

Why are there so few feminist pranksters? Because feminists are often stereotyped as angry and humorless, they may be dismissed as extremists and thus have difficulty getting their messages heard. Humor would seem to be one way to avoid these stereotypes and send messages about sexism to those who might not otherwise be open to them. For example, the Guerilla Girls have successfully raised the issue of sexism in the art world, and the Barbie Liberation Front was able to gain national attention about the sexism of children’s toys by switching the voice boxes on Teen Talk Barbie and Hasbro, Inc.’s G.I. Joe and then sneaking them into stores for sale. Other groups such as The Yes Men and INFKT Truth have used pranks to protest and publicize social issues nationally, but most of these are primarily male groups. This paper examines the costs and benefits of social pranking and suggests that the absence of feminist pranksters is more than simply a matter of women being silenced in the public domain.

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Sarah Mosely, Doctoral Student, English Dept.

“Female Faces in ‘Masculine’ Spaces: Women’s Entrance into the Arnold Volunteer Fire Department”

The September 11 attack on the World Trade Center etched into cultural memory an image of the prototypical firefighter as brave, strong, tireless, and a “he,” not a “she.” Historically, firefighting has been perceived as a “masculine” occupation, a perception instantiated within the firehouse itself. This presentation examines the dynamics of space, gender, and power within an Annapolis, Maryland firehouse, tracing women’s entry into the male-dominated enclave. At its founding in 1943, the bylaws of the Arnold Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD) specified that all members must be white men. Women, however, entered and participated in the firehouse through the Ladies Auxiliary (LA), also formed in 1943 and only open to family members of the AVFD. The LA became responsible for fundraising and publicity and remained the sole entrance point into the firehouse for women until 1982, when the first women joined the ranks of firefighters. Building upon work of scholars Jessica Enoch, Jordynn Jack, and Roxanne Mountford, this presentation examines rhetorics of gendered space within the AVFD firehouse to identify women’s circumvention of spatial obstacles and explore how the image of the prototypical firefighter was challenged through these circumventions.

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Sonia Yaco, Special Collections Librarian and University Archivist, Perry Library

“Archivists as Activists: A Survey”

Since the 1970s, archivists and historians have become increasingly interested in social justice. However there has been little research into what our professional lives gain -and what we lose-when we become activists. In 2010, we surveyed international historians (including educators) and archivists, who identified themselves as activists. The survey included questions on employment, activities, effects of

activism on work, and effects of work on activism. This presentation will focus on ninety-eight respondents who were active in gender equality issues. In the view of respondents, activism provides benefits to their professional lives, including getting new career insights, generating new ideas that improved their teaching and developing new professional contacts. While many activists receive recognition and other benefits from their employers for their activism, a minority suffers negative consequences including demotion and a substantial number feel inhibited from activism by their employers. The respondents believe their activism provides clear benefits to repositories, while activist groups also benefit from the professional work of their archivist members. The effects of activism for the different occupational groups are relatively similar but with some important differences. The results of this survey suggest that employees need to educate their employers about the benefits of activism. Employers may need to develop guidelines to support activism among their staff.

**Sonia Yaco** is the Special Collections Librarian and University Archivist at Perry Library at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. She is the founder and co-chair of the Desegregation of Virginia Education (DOVE) project. Previously, Ms. Yaco was a reference archivist at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison Wisconsin. She regularly writes on historical, archival, and technical issues. Her co-authored article "Historians, Archivists, and Social Activism: Benefits and Costs" appeared in *Archival Science*, 2012, DOI 10.1007/s10502-012-9187-0.

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