

# Highlighting Women's Issues

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Mansfield University's Women's Studies Newsletter

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## Da Svydanya Ann



*For what is it to die, but to stand in the sun  
and melt into the wind? And when the Earth  
has claimed our limbs, then we shall truly  
dance. -- Kahlil Gibran*

*By Emilee Danielson*

On Thursday February, 19 the Mansfield University community suffered a tragic loss with the death of Dr Ann Mabe, Professor of Anthropology and a member of the Social Work, Anthropology, and Sociology Department at Mansfield. After fighting a brave battle with cancer, she passed away at Soldiers and Sailors hospital in Wellsboro.

Ann Mabe began her teaching career at Mansfield in 1980, shortly after completing her Ph.D. in Anthropology at the University of Virginia. Dr. Mabe was an accomplished scholar holding a BS in Social Welfare, an MS in Sociology, and an MA in Anthropology in addition to her Ph.D. At MU, Dr Mabe taught many different classes including Anthropology of Gender, Cultural Anthropology, World Cultures, and Archaeology.

During her time at Mansfield, Dr Mabe was an active member of the academic community. She served as chair of her department, organized several archaeological digs in Russia for Mansfield students, worked with both the Honors program and the Women's Studies Program, and also served as the Advisor for the Anthropology Club.

However, beyond her professional accomplishments Dr Mabe will certainly be remembered as a professor who was inspirational to her students. Dr. Mabe was very popular among students both in and out of her department and her passion for what she did was obvious. According to Dr. Nancy Seidel, chair of the Social Work, Anthropology, and Sociology Department, Dr. Mabe's enthusiasm will be one of the things that is missed the most about her. "She really cared so very passionately about anthropology, said Dr. Seidel, "there is no other way to describe it...her passion."

Among the student population at Mansfield Dr. Mabe was seen as a challenging professor who believed that her students would rise to face the challenges presented to them. Arrangements for the continuation of Anthropology classes for the upcoming

semesters are still being made and the family has yet to release any information about donations or condolences. Many suggestions have been made concerning ways to honor Dr. Mabe and that information will be made public as soon as it is available. However, one thing is certain, as MU's only Anthropology Professor, Dr. Mabe's death has certainly left more than an empty office in Pinecrest, it has left an empty place in all of our hearts.

[*Editors note: "Ancient Egyptians believed that upon death they would be asked two questions and their answers would determine whether they could continue their journey in the afterlife. The first question was, "Did you bring joy?" The second was, "Did you find joy?" (Leo Buscaglia). We believe Ann Mabe did both.*]

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### **A Needle in a Haystack: One Man in a Women's Studies Course**

*by Christopher Shadle*

As I headed across campus, on that cold, January afternoon, one thought kept racing through my mind, "Dear God, please do not let me be the only man in this course." My anticipation for a class, which many men would probably not even think of taking, had grown stronger over the Christmas break, and as I headed into the classroom I was reassured to find 3 other men ready and willing. All in all, five of us (not including women) would embark upon this journey into women's studies, which as I have been told are more men than usually take this course at our small university, located in the beautiful mountains of north central, Pennsylvania.

I had taken an English composition class with our professor before, and knew what to expect of this brilliant and gifted middle-aged feminist. However, the expression on many of

the other students' faces resembled more of a deer-in-the-headlight's look. This was in a way calming as I'm sure they saw the same expression on my face.

According to our syllabus we "are responsible for creating a lively, committed community in which all opinions are welcome and treated respectfully as long as they are supported by evidence." I never imagined in my wildest dreams that I would ever be engaged in discussions on such a wide array of issues. You see, this is the brilliance of the course; of parallel importance in women's studies is the focus on the stumbling blocks to equity and equality for women in all aspects of society. But contrary to popular opinion, women in women's studies courses are not man-haters, which I believe is the sole reason so many men are afraid to take a course in women's studies. While it may be true that there are a few man-haters out there, there are an even greater number of men who advocate and/or contribute (whether known to them or not) to women's inequality. Feminism, by definition calls for equal rights for women and justice for all people, regardless of gender. Imagine how shocked I was to discover that men could be feminists! This of course is one of the many wonderful surprises I have come to discover in the course of my studies, and I am now proud to call myself a feminist.

By the second week of class, my male faithful had declined from five to three. In a women's studies course, it is not unusual to begin with several men and end up with only one or two. I must confess I was still a bit worried, but did not give it much thought. Eventually, there would be two of us left. However, my other male counterpart would petition successfully to the provost to get out of the class, leaving me the sole man in a women's studies course! What traitors they all are! Being a man in a women's studies course had scared all but one of us away, which

makes one question the old adage of who really is the weaker sex? Personally I must say it is quite a breath of fresh air to know that I represent my entire gender. Anytime issues dealing with men come up, and I see thirty or so eyes cast upon me for my opinion, it is nice to be a minority (man) in a room full of interested women.

It is impossible to put into words how much fun this course has been for me. A good example of the shock value (which is a positive thing) of a women's studies course is the many discussions we have. The first day of class our professor told us to put all of our desks into a circle; as we were told this makes for a better environment conducive to good dialogue, in which we can all see each other's faces. Almost every subject matter was open to discussion, and in one particular lecture on gender stereotyping our professor was left speechless. As we learned, there are over 220 derogatory epithets for women in the English language including slut, whore, tramp, hooker, and hootch to name a few. There are a meager 22 for men, and almost all of them have a double meaning.

For instance, being called a slut is one of the more demeaning epithets and form of verbal subjugation a woman can endure. However the similar epithets for men, such as player or pimp have become more positive thereby reinforcing the male machismo; and in turn the double standard. Our discussion then snowballed into friendly banter over the various words for female and male genitalia, and when one of the students informed the class that her mother referred to female genitalia as "stinky," the class and professor was left flabbergasted. Many would interpret this revelation as a bad thing. However, the shock-value of her statement taught us that we have all had different upbringings, and in many cases even those whom we hold near and dear to our heart contribute to the negative

gender stereotyping and misogyny of women.

As the last man standing in a women's studies course, I have come to learn a great deal about our society, our culture, and surprisingly, myself. Once upon a time, I viewed oppression of women in terms of physical violence, such as the abuse that the women living under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan suffered. It was difficult for me to believe that modern American women are oppressed. However, as a result of my studies, I now am aware that oppression comes in several forms, including physical, and societal. Social oppression is perhaps the worst form because it provides our society with a blinding vision that lures us into believing that our society is not patriarchal but indeed equal in all aspects. Luckily for our society, we have had women and men in the feminist movement, which began in 1848 as "first wave feminism", who fought to change a system that had trampled on the rights of women for too long. The second and third wave feminists have built upon the work of their predecessors, and great progress has been made.

This is not to say that the movement is over. Just because women were granted the right to vote in 1920 does not mean that the movement is dead. Indeed, challenges still exist in modern America, and in order for there to be equal rights and justice for all people regardless of race, class, sex, or sexual orientation we need to work to destroy those obstacles. One step in the right direction is to convince men that it is acceptable to be a feminist, and more importantly, empower all to work for the goals of the women's movement. I began this course unsure of where it would take me, and although the future is uncertain I can say without a doubt that I could never put a price tag on the benefits of my experiences with these wonderful women.

Being the only man in a women's studies course has been an exhilarating experience, and my only wish is that in the future more men will realize the importance of, and take courses such as this. So, to my professor, and fellow students and to all those women and men out there who proudly wear the feminist tattoo, I say thank-you, and keep up the good work. I think it is fitting to end with a quote from Susan B. Anthony, a brave woman and feminist who helped provide the impetus behind the first women's rights movement begun in the mid-19th century. "The day will come when men will recognize woman as his peer, not only at the fireside, but in councils of the nation. Then, and not until then, will there be the perfect comradeship, the ideal union between the sexes that shall result in the highest development of the race."

### **Another Male Point of View**

*By Pat Radice*

When I first walked into ENG 3327: Influence of the Slave Narrative, I noticed that I was the only guy in the class. At first I thought other guys were just late in getting there; then class started and still I was the only guy. When the professor went over roll, I thought that I would hear a Peter or a Michael or some other apostle in the class with me. As it turned out I was the only guy in the class, and it took me a while to get used to that fact. I had a hard time speaking up in class because it was the first time I was the only guy in a class full of women. It is a strange feeling to not have a "familiar face" of another male around. It actually threw me for a loop and I did feel out of place. Sometimes I would feel like I was in a box and just wanted everyone to forget that I was in the class. The only time I did talk was when the professor would call on me to answer a question to make sure I was paying attention. I did enjoy the class, though; it was

interesting and frustrating to learn about the slaves and their treatment. To read the stories from the slaves' own writings was great, but it always stuck in the back of my mind that the occurrences really happened. I just wish that I took more advantage of the class discussions rather than just sit there hoping I would not say anything stupid.

I am taking another women's studies course this semester, ENG 3320 Women of Mystery. I knew this was a women's studies course ahead of time this time around. When talking to a guy about our classes, I told him about Women of Mystery and his response to me was "Whoa, that is a total getting laid class." For some reason I did not expect that. It felt like slow motion: realizing what he just said, wanting to yell at him, and wanting to tell him how stupid, one-track-minded, and sexist his comment was. All I could say was "I'll talk to you later" and walk away. This class is way different from Influence of the Slave Narrative in that it deals exclusively with women's literature and it has more discussion about women's issues about how women are treated and how they are looked at. I think the discussions in class are excellent, but again I feel like I can not say anything in class when the women bring up personal stories and I can not relate to them and I would feel like a moron saying anything after them. If I did try, I wonder if it would come out right.

Recently I actually did speak up in class. A woman was talking about men in a general way and I thought it was out of line, so I made the point that not all men are like that and you could say the same thing about women. When I made this point I realized that I actually talked and made a good point. It was easy and fun even. This class is super cool because I have learned some history of women and the treatment they have gotten and what the thought process was going into it. As a male it makes me angry to understand this and still see how it goes on today and know that I am part of the problem. There is a part of me

that wishes that all students had to take a course of Women's Studies to learn some of these things, get background and learn things that they might have not thought of before.

*(Editors note: Dear Pat-We wish all students were required to take Women's Studies courses too!)*

### **"Right is of no Sex - Truth is of no Color": Frederick Douglass as Early Feminist**

*By Lynn Pifer*

Most people are familiar with Frederick Douglass: the slave who successfully made his way north and gained his freedom, the eloquent abolitionist who published *The North Star*, an anti-slavery newspaper. His 1845 autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave: Written by Himself*, still provides us with one of the clearest pictures we have of what life as an American slave was like in the nineteenth century.

But many of us are not aware that this human rights advocate also supported women's rights. At a time when men who supported women's rights were called "hermaphrodites" and "Aunt Nancy Men," Frederick Douglass spoke out for equal rights for women (Foner 3). He attended the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 and signed the Declaration of Sentiments, which asserted that all men *and women* are created equal.

Douglass was the sole male supporter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's women's suffrage resolution, speaking in favor of a woman's right to vote and helping the resolution pass. Historian William Freely notes, "it was only, Stanton reported, 'with the help of Frederick Douglass' – the lone male in favor – that after 'heated discussion' her suffrage resolution passed 'by a small majority'" (156). When Douglass wrote an article for *The North Star* describing the Seneca Falls Convention, he

noted: "We are free to say that in respect to political rights, we hold woman to be justly entitled to all we claim for man" (Freely 156). Douglass's newspaper also featured a masthead that read, "Right is of no Sex - Truth is of no Color" (American Visionaries).

This year Mansfield University joins Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education's Frederick Douglass Collaborative, which is dedicated to using Douglass's life as an inspirational example to promote diversity and equality at all universities in the State System. The Collaborative began at West Chester University, which established the first Douglass Institute after a student doing archival research discovered that Douglass gave his last public lecture at West Chester in 1895. West Chester's Institute promotes scholarship and research on Douglass's life, outreach to public and non-public school teachers at all levels, multicultural exhibits and forums, and "functions as an agency to encourage interdisciplinary study of race, gender, and ethnicity and to deepen the value of diversity in our society" (Douglass Institute). The Douglass Collaborative's mission states, "In pursuit of Frederick Douglass' commitment to American democratic ideals and educational excellence, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education's Frederick Douglass Institute will serve as a catalyst for participating universities to enhance their curricula and enrich their campus climate" (Mission Statement).

Currently, Mansfield University is working on several initiatives, including creating new Douglass Fellows scholarships for undergraduate students, and creating a new "Douglass Series" to bring programs, such as a lecture by Civil Rights Activist, Julian Bond, to the university in the fall of 2004. The Institute also promotes the study of Frederick Douglass as an historical figure we can still learn from today, and his 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass An American*

*Slave: Written by Himself* has been chosen as the 2004 freshman book.

For more information, see the Frederick Douglass Institute home page: <http://www.wcupa.edu/academics/fdouglass/index.html>, or contact the Director of Mansfield's Frederick Douglass Institute, Lynn Pifer.

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## ***Just Imagine!***

*By Cheryl A. Wilbur*

If a scholarship does not indicate a monetary award, but an investment of time, opening your mind, and breaking barriers, would you still apply? Attending college is an investment for your future, while providing opportunities for you to explore. A non-monetary award can be an opening to a future you never contemplated. The Women's Consortium of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education is devoted to identifying and serving the needs of women. The knowledge I gained from this event begins with Mansfield

University's motto: Where Learning Imagines You!

The theme of the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Institute, *Leadership: Let the Journey Begin*, was a week-long passage of opening my mind to learning more about myself, learning more about making a difference, and learning more about women in leadership roles. The peaceful atmosphere at the McKeever Institute, located near Pittsburgh, was an excellent location to embrace information, share experiences with 30 women from Pennsylvania State Colleges, and reflect on strengths and weaknesses. Speakers shared their challenges, addressed gender barriers, and provided statistics on women in leadership positions.

Dr. Margaret Launius, Department of Psychology at MU, began the lecture series with *Women and Power: Leading in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Leaders, regardless of their gender, must be effective. To be an effective leader, you must know yourself, know your patterns of behavior, know your strengths and weaknesses, and know your environment. Leaders learn from adversity, while appreciating and balancing tradition with change. Myra Sadker is an excellent representative of leadership, even after her death in 1995. Sadker was a leading advocate for equal educational opportunities; she documented research on gender biases in schools and demonstrated how sexism not only harms girls, but affects boys as well. Girls are frequently short-changed by low expectations, while boys are frequently surrounded by violence that dampens their future as leaders.

Remember the Barbie Song that had girls of all ages singing along and dancing to the beat? The song is still a heated topic, with Mattel taking the matter all the way to the Supreme Court. The justices refused to hear a complaint from the maker of the doll, claiming lyrics in a

pop song hurt Barbie's image and the marketing of what the company calls "one of the most successful brands in history."

Aqua stormed the charts with the song, in which a female singer portraying Barbie croons;

**I'm a Barbie Girl.  
In my Barbie World.  
Life in plastic.  
It feels fantastic.  
You can brush my hair.  
Undress me anywhere.  
Imagination.  
Life is your creation.  
Come on Barbie let's go party.**

Denise Chaytor, East Stroudsburg University, enlightened us with the history of the Barbie world. Chaytor displayed an endless collection of Barbie dolls and addressed the negative image impact on all genders including the expectations of what girls thought they should be and what boys thought girls should represent. This topic then led to a discussion about women taking care of themselves. Women's health issues including cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, violence against women and eating disorders were reviewed. It is vital women have knowledge regarding these issues.

The afternoons of the leadership conference always provided a couple of hours to reflect on all the discussions. There were nature trails, a large pond, and secluded places to document or comprehend the topic for the day. The evenings were also exciting! We experienced a Japanese Viewing Ceremony, drumming sessions, and entertainment by the women attending the institute. The fireside reflections were a wonderful way to open the heart and mind to others opinions and overcome barriers and biases. The Women's Consortium Leadership Scholarship offered me an opportunity to reflect on what is important in life. Living is giving of yourself to others,

sharing your gifts, and making a difference for all genders in the world!

*Editors Note-if you are interested in applying for the 2004 Leadership Conference, please contact Margaret Launius at; [mLaunius@mnsfld.edu](mailto:mLaunius@mnsfld.edu)*

\*\*\*\*\***Celebrations**\*\*\*\*\*

Congrats to Lynn Pifer for being named Director of the new Frederick Douglas Institute at Mansfield!!!!!!

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**A List of Favorites (Some of our favorite films, books, etc.)**

Films:  
Calendar Girls  
Whale Rider  
Lost in Translation

Books:  
*Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver  
*Woman* by Natalie Angier  
*The Woman's Bible* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton  
*Who Cooked the Last Supper? The Women's History of the World* by Rosalind Miles

\*\*\*\*\***Coming Attractions**\*\*\*\*\*

**Please mark your calendars for the visits of our many speakers and events in honor of Women's History Month!**

**March 16th**-Sandra Kohler-feminist poet and award winning author of *The Ceremonies of Longing*, reading from her work, 4pm, North Hall, Traditional Reading Room. Refreshments served.

**March 18th**-Ann Crittenden-Author of *The Price of Motherhood: Why the most important*

*job in the world is still the least valued.* 4pm, Alumni Hall Rm. 307. Refreshments served.

**March 18th**-Simple Gifts-a trio of women who play ethnic folk music on 12 different instruments! Steadman Theater, 8pm.

**March 22nd**, The images of women as portrayed by Disney, sponsored by the History Club with Shawn Holderby and Teri Doerkse, 2-4pm, Alumni Hall, 307, punch and cookies after.

**March 25th**-Frida Berrigan-Senior Researcher at the World Policy Institute and well known peace activist, 4pm, Alumni Hall, 307, Refreshments served.

**March 30th**, 7pm-Open Mike night for poetry readings by students, faculty and community members. Women's Center. Refreshments served. Poetry will also be on display.

### **SIGN UP for Summer and Fall Women's Studies Courses!**

#### **Summer 2004**

Hist 3295-History of American Women Through Television (online)-Holderby

This course will explore the history of women in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and will review how history has been reflected and shaped by television.

Com 3334 -Gender & Communication-Young.

This course is designed to introduce students to the concepts of gender and how those concepts relate to communication. The course introduces students to important gender communication concepts such as gendered verbal and non-verbal communications, the social shaping of gender, gendered power and violence, sexual harassment and gendered communication in educational, organizational, media and relationship settings.

#### **Fall 2004**

ANH 2250 Anthropology of Gender-Professor-TBA An introduction to the cultural diversity of gender roles with emphasis on the roles of women, gender bias and cultural definitions of men and women. Contemporary gender issues are studied within a variety of cultural contexts.

Music 2205-Women in Music-Professor-Boston- The study of women composers and performers through readings and recordings, including western and non-western music traditions.

WS 1100-02 Intro to Women's Studies-Professor-Holderby

Although most American women believe in their right to equality, a basic definition of feminism, many of them do not define themselves as feminists. In this course, we'll consider the relevance of feminism for women today by examining connections and differences between women as well as feminist approaches to work, families, race, class, and sexuality. We will focus on the significant impact of the feminist movement on American life particularly in the past 40 years.

WS 1100-01 Intro to Women's Studies-Professor-Sornberger (description as above)

Eng 2220-Women's Literature-Professor-Harris

This course brings together poetry and fiction by contemporary American women such as Sylvia Plath, Dorothy Allison, Sandra Cisneros, and Toni Morrison. We'll read these texts from a feminist perspective, asking questions such as: How do gender norms pose obstacles as women attempt to forge identities? How does women's writing challenge the literary status quo? We will examine issues central to women's literature such as identity, the body, and women's "place" in society and will pay careful attention to cultural differences between women including race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity. The course will teach students to read closely and analytically and to relate their experiences to the reading.