

anthropology of women developed as a feminist attack on the male bias of previous anthropology. From this grew the anthropology of gender, which was most immediately concerned with gathering new data on women and attempting to develop a series of concepts and hypotheses with which to talk about women cross-culturally. Professor Kettel described the anthropology of gender as a subdiscipline at the heart of contemporary anthropology, because it attempts to deal with two issues fundamental to the discipline.

These issues centre on the nature-nurture debate – that is, the impact of biology and culture on human behaviour. For feminist anthropologists, one question has been, what is it about women that

makes us alike: is it being biologically female or is it similarities of social, cultural and historical experience? Professor Kettel suggested that the issue can be posed as, who are our natural allies in social life – for example, do Canadian women have more in common with Canadian men or Zulu women? The answer raises issues not only of sex and gender, but of race, class and cultural heterogeneity and points to the issue underlying anthropology, that of universality versus cultural particularity. In attempting to deal with this question, the anthropology of gender is fundamental to the whole discipline.

Research in this area now encompasses a wide range of issues, including biosocial research focusing on primates, the impact of chromosomes on human behaviour

and the issue of gender in human evolution. Further areas include women's roles in production and reproduction, women as political actors, ritual, gender systems and sexuality. Professor Kettel pointed out that, in relation to the bibliography she circulated to participants, many of the books listed were originally considered groundbreaking, but that some are now seen to contain much that is problematic or simply wrong. As she noted, the initial wave of feminist anthropology produced a wealth of questions and suggested directions for future work, posing concepts and hypotheses for studying women cross-culturally. Now we need to develop new conceptual models for the burgeoning descriptive literature being produced.

PART TWO: POLITICAL SCIENCE

Anne Louise Currie

Barbara Cameron, professor of Political Science at York University, began the seminar by putting into perspective some of the problems that Women's Studies scholars face within the discipline of Political Science. Women's Studies has tended to focus on the private sphere of the political, while Political Science has traditionally focused almost exclusively on the public sphere. The questions that political scientists have asked in the past have generally ignored the family and gender dimensions of politics. She outlined two basic approaches to integrating women into Political Science at the University level. The first is to work within the framework of the discipline and to try to integrate women's issues into mainstream Political Science. The second, and according to Professor Cameron, the more appealing, is to redefine the traditional borders of the discipline to include the gender dimension, which is, for the most part, ignored.

The seminar was then opened to discussion. We discussed ways of reconciling a professor's obligation to represent to her undergraduate students a wide variety of topics with the need to introduce non-traditional (i.e. feminist) perspectives into an often overcrowded syllabus. We discussed the difficulty of finding non-sexist texts and reading material. Professors are faced with problems of credibility and are put in a position of having to convince

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students – and other faculty – of the legitimacy of presenting a feminist viewpoint with very little source material to substantiate their claims. Further discussion revolved around a suggestion that it was useful to look at the Australian model, where Women's Studies is not offered at the undergraduate level; instead, students begin Women's Studies at the graduate level and are thus able to bring a disciplinary base to their studies.

Participants next debated whether a successful Women's Studies program should have as its goal the eventual abolition of Women's Studies, when women are completely integrated into main-

stream scholarship, or whether Women's Studies finds its justification for existence as a separate discipline from something other than the attempt to incorporate the study of women into various disciplines.

We discussed the problem of determining which central questions in the discipline of political science do not include, or ignore, women. The problem, it was suggested, centred on how debates are defined and articulated. This problem begins at the most basic level with the language used being male-oriented. At another level the problem is methodological: how significant is the gender division?

Should gender relations be discussed in conjunction with class and/or race relations? What about our biases? Can one, with any degree of credibility, write

from a middle class, Western, feminist perspective on the problems in the Third World? Seminar participants emphasized the necessity for feminists, while recogniz-

ing the bias inherent in traditional scholarship, to be aware of the limitations of our own premises and methodological approaches.

PART THREE: HISTORY

Patricia Froese

The history session was led by Virginia Hunter and Cynthia Dent, of York University. Both women spoke about their experiences in the history department and expressed their thoughts about women's history. A discussion period followed each talk.

Virginia Hunter talked about the influence of the Annales school on her approach to history. The Annales school enlarged her perspective by focussing on agriculture, land use, kinship, family, and housing – all of which enriched her understanding of the status of women in ancient societies.

She discussed the reaction of women students to her courses. Women entered the course hating history because they felt incapable of doing it well. By the end of the course, women were not only doing the best work, but also had realized that they loved social history. This led to a discussion of students in general, which – as a student – I found very interesting.

Participants compared their students to professors, reaching the general consensus that students were more receptive to women's history than their male colleagues. History departments, as well as history professors, were described as sexist, reactionary, and hostile to women's history. The few professors sympathetic to women's studies were generally to be found in social history, a discipline that is also sympathetic to women.

Cynthia Dent's talk focussed mainly on the theories of Peggy MacIntosh on the different phases of historical research. The first type is womanless or traditional history. Token women in history, the second phase, was discussed at length. Many of the books written on women fall into this category and they are terrible. The authors of these books have jumped on the women's studies bandwagon but, since the area is not their passion, they do not research their subjects well enough. Concerning the third phase – woman as anomaly, victim, problem, or absence –

Cynthia stated her belief that this was not a phase to outgrow: sometimes women *have* been victims, problems, or anomalies. She gave the example of the witchcraft trials in which women indeed had been the victims. Woman as history was the fourth type of history, wherein we refuse to see women as problems or victims. The final and highest stage is history reconstructed to include us all.

The history session was very interesting. I had not realized how many problems exist in the struggle to include women in history. The discussion pointed out just how difficult that struggle is. I had hoped to hear success stories from professors: perhaps those do not yet exist.

Jackie Crawford, Anne Louise Currie, and Patricia Froese are students at York University: Jackie Crawford is studying Women's Studies and Anthropology; Anne Louise Currie studies Political Science; and Patricia Froese (who is also a librarian at the Nellie Langford Rowell Women's Collection) is entering the post-graduate program in Environmental Studies.



'Faces at the Conference' – Daphne Read

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