Last semester I had the opportunity to travel to Tanzania, Africa to embark on a trip that would ultimately change my life. This opportunity came through Trinity Lutheran Church, located in my hometown of Stillwater, MN. The purpose of this trip was to place a water system in a remote village called Mwatasi. This was far more important to me than simply a water mission. I knew I would have the opportunity to immerse myself in a culture that I had never experienced before; I just wasn’t aware of how I would be impacted. I knew I would see many aspects of gender in a culture that is very different than mine; therefore the Women’s Studies department approved this trip as an independent study.

After three months of planning, various vaccinations, and forty-eight hours of travel time, I found myself welcomed into one of the friendliest environments I have ever encountered. I stayed in the home of a villager of Mwatasi, and I had no special amenities. I lived with the people as they lived. There was no water or electricity and I experienced a side of poverty that I would not have experienced otherwise. Despite this poverty, the people seemed generally happy and content. They hadn’t ever experienced anything other than what they were experiencing at the present time.

While there, I had the opportunity to talk to many women about their lives. In return, they asked many questions about my life here. Every woman who found out that I was a Women’s Studies student was shocked that there was a field where a focus was on women and their well being within society. I was asked to speak to a group of people my age about issues like teenage pregnancy, AIDS, and leaving home. I felt honored that the elders in the village thought what I had to say about those issues would have a deeper impact than their own.

In the end, it was a very emotional departure. The people I met with held a special goodbye ceremony for me. They dressed me in their traditional clothing and each gave me a small departing gift. It was a deeply emotional ceremony. I felt that after two weeks, I was just starting to enter into their culture, and was taken away from it before I was able to fully appreciate the people of Mwatasi. While some of the memories have already begun to fade, I will never forget the people I met in Tanzania.

Alyssa Bischoff is a Women's Studies major and plans to graduate this May.
Notes from the Chair
Susan Freeman

The sun is shining brightly and the snow is thawing as I write this note. The change in weather hints that spring is around the corner. There are plenty of signs of life in the department, as faculty and students continue their learning, research, and activist projects. I am pleased to have the opportunity this semester to serve as interim chair, while Maria Bevacqua is enjoying her sabbatical, working on a new research project about masculinity in television cooking shows. She’d love to talk to you about “manfoods” when she returns this summer from her much-deserved break from teaching and departmental obligations.

Meanwhile, Women’s Studies students are busy with their research projects, too. Undergraduates are preparing for the Undergraduate Research Conference (URC) coming up at the end of April. A number of our graduate students are drafting thesis and APP chapters in preparation for a defense and graduation in the upcoming months, as well as a few presentations at the National Women’s Studies Association annual meeting this summer. We look forward to seeing our students graduate and take their feminist perspectives and talents out into the world. Those seeking inspiration for what possibilities await our graduates should read about MS alumna Krista Jacob and others in this newsletter. And when you visit our webpage, be sure to check out the new page featuring former students.

Our undergraduate curriculum is in the process of change. Beginning next year our 100-, 200-, and 300-level courses will be offered for 4 instead of 3 credits. The extra hour of class will involve a “lab” outside the usual class meetings. In some cases, this will be community-based learning (a.k.a. service learning), which suits our emphasis on theory and practice in Women’s Studies. Other classes will have outside activities or online meetings, with many other possibilities to emerge as we convert our syllabi. In terms of calculating credits toward the major and minor, students will not have to take more coursework to earn their degrees. Rather, the balance will be weighted more toward core courses, with fewer elective credits to fill. Advisors will work closely with students to plan their upcoming schedules with the new credit hours in mind.

Other innovations to report in classes this semester include our first fully online course, being taught by our visiting instructor Christine Metzo. For the first time this semester we are offering Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies, a new course that I am currently teaching, which has been approved for general education credit and which we plan to offer annually. In Cheryl Radeloff’s Global Perspectives on Women and Change course, she’s collaborating with librarian Barb Bergmann to develop and evaluate a critical thinking project related to film; she’s also teaching a very popular undergraduate seminar focused on pornography. Jocelyn Stitt is guiding the students in Feminist Research and Action to present their work at the URC.

Having survived last year’s URC and graduated with a major in Women’s Studies and minor in Ethnic Studies, Christal Lustig joined our program as an MS student in January. We are grateful for her work as a GA in preparing the newsletter, and especially for efforts to highlight student activism. Our other GAs are busy communicating with prospective students, organizing graduate colloquia, creating an online glossary for use in introductory classes, conducting research for faculty, fundraising for student travel, and planning the banquet. In terms of all the work that goes into making our program run, we cannot give enough thanks to Cindy Veldhuisen, our office manager.

Please mark your calendar for this year’s annual banquet on April 27 at the United Church of Christ, 150 Stadium Ct., at 6 p.m. We will recognize new inductees into our undergraduate honor society, Triota, as well as celebrate the accomplishments of the year. Students are busy planning a program that promises to be entertaining, and we will have the usual prize drawings, delicious food, and wonderful company. And looking ahead to next fall: please note that author and poet Marge Piercy will be the keynote speaker at the annual Women and Spirituality conference. Although we haven’t yet confirmed the Carol Ortman Perkins lecturer for fall, it’s guaranteed to be another strong and visionary woman, much like Carol herself.
Opportunities for Activism

Women’s Studies Club
Jeni Kolstad

The Women’s Studies Club is an activist group that is open to anyone who is interested in working on women’s social issues. You do not need to be a Women’s Studies student to join. We have a goal to be aware of issues happening on campus so that we can proactively work towards social change. For the 2006-2007 school year we have done a Tamponation campaign where we set up tables to increase awareness on menstrual products. We are also planning on working on a pro-choice campaign. An important part of the Women’s Studies Club is to be able to be around like-minded people and build good friendships with one another. We are always open to new members! To be included on the email list, write to msuwostclub@yahoo.com.

NARAL
Angela Losasso

The mission of NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota is to develop and sustain a constituency that uses the political process to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices, including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing legal abortion. NARAL Pro-Choice America is looking for people who are interested in becoming involved with campus activities. Attending meetings, tabling, helping with Lobby Day, and clinic escorts are things that anyone involved would be able to help with. The time commitment is as much time as you would like to put into it and we would love to have as many people as we can recruit! For further information, please contact Angela Losasso at Angela.Losasso@mnsu.edu.

Feminism in Action
Katie Bowman and Kim Burrow

Our mission is to come together to promote feminism: To create an equal and safe space on campus and in the community, and to embrace social justice with informed consciousness of gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, ability, and other forms of marginalization. Our goals are to foster a multicultural community; transcend gender norms; challenge stereotypes; create a space for people to be who they are without judgment; employ activism within the campus and community; and to ultimately bring positive change to Mankato.

All Minnesota State Mankato undergraduate and graduate students from all academic and personal backgrounds interested in feminist activism are welcome to inquire about our group, attend our meetings, and/or participate in our activism. This Spring we plan to engage students and community members in a reproductive rights campaign, where we plan to initiate a visible pro-choice protest at an off-campus location in Mankato.

Our Spring 2007 meetings are Tuesdays at 6:00pm in the Women’s Center. All are welcome to attend! For information, please contact Katie at katherine.bowman@mnsu.edu or Kim at fireyfeminist@mac.com.
The Impact of ‘Coming of Age’
Stacy Huntington Scofield

The confusion and turmoil a female child endures while attempting to navigate her way through the “coming of age” process is, of course, as varied and diverse as each individual woman; yet, many important associations can be found while examining the unique experiences of each girl. During the fall semester of this year I was fortunate to have enrolled in Dr. Susan Freeman’s “Coming of Age: Gender and Culture” class. “Coming of Age” enabled me to closely scrutinize the social constructions under which I was indoctrinated into womanhood and resolve some of my own deeply buried issues regarding my coming of age experience. Coming of age experiences, the foundations upon which different rituals, habits, and practices are based and the ramifications of these socially constructed boundaries for proper female behavior expose a complex and often maddening web of oppression.

During the course of the class, approximately seven groups were formed. Each group chose a woman as the subject of a “Coming of Age” interview which was subsequently videotaped and is currently available for viewing on the following Web site: www.mnsu.edu/mngirls/. Both the unique diversity and overarching consistency of female experience resonates in these amazing narratives. I looked forward to each day, each week of “Coming of Age: Gender and Culture,” if not to reconcile my own resounding youthful difficulties, then to better understand and appreciate those of other women and girls. Years of therapy and thousands of dollars worth of Prozac was unable to accomplish what one semester studying the American “coming of age” process had. When asked to discuss my experience in this class I was so utterly overwhelmed; the initial rough draft spanned seven pages. To accurately explain my gratitude and enthusiasm for Women’s Studies is impossible. Weekly I urge someone I encounter to enroll in just one WOST class. Daily I thank that one lone soul who had the chutzpah to suggest that I double major in English Literature and Woman’s Studies. Nightly I dream that someday I will be able to make an impact, a change, a difference in not only the “coming of age” experience, but the life of just one sad, confused, overwhelmed girl.

Stacy Huntington Scofield is a Women’s Studies major.

“Got Porn? We Do”:
Collective Action, Fall 2006
Katie Bowman and Kim Burrow

For our Fall 2006 graduate class, Collective Action, taught by Maria Bevacqua, three graduate students confronted a decision-making process: what did we want to do for our Collective Action activist event? The three of us—Katie Bowman, Kim Burrow, and Cindy Mark—had one thing in common: we wanted to focus on reproductive and sexual choice. So, we narrowed down our options to a pro-choice march, a sexuality week, or a pornography analysis event.
January 31st, 2007 marked Minnesota State Mankato’s annual Career Day event. A number of Women’s Studies graduate and undergraduate students met to hear panelists share their Women’s Studies Career experiences and how a Women’s Studies education has assisted them in their occupations. Panelists included Lindsay Gullingsrud, Sexual Violence Education Program Coordinator in the Women’s Center; Deirdre Rosenfeld, Director of the Women’s Center; Jessica Giordani, Co-owner of the Smitten Kitten; and Carolyn Long, a hairstylist at East 42nd Street Salon.

Each panelist noted the benefits of having an education in Women’s Studies, mainly that Women’s Studies provides a flexible set of skills, which can then be applied to a plethora of job titles. Lindsay found that Women’s Studies equipped her with a foundation that helped her turn her career focus toward gendered violence, experiences with survivors, and voices that are often lost after trauma. Deirdre affirmed that she uses her Women’s Studies background every day in her interactions with students. Jessica explained the feminist intentions of the sextoy store she co-owns. She and her business partner waited three years to hire extra help so that they could ensure a full-time salaried position with benefits and opportunities for outreach and higher education. Carolyn agreed that Women’s Studies can be used in virtually any occupation and noted that she uses her degree skills every day with her clients to make them feel better about their choices and the way they look.

It was exciting to hear how these panelists have used their feminist education in such diverse occupations. I’d like to extend a thank you to all of the panelists and students present for the Women’s Studies Career Day Panel, especially organizer Saswati Sarkar.

Since pornography exemplifies so many issues related to sexuality and sexual sovereignty (and sometimes the lack thereof)—like portrayals of women’s bodies, women’s choices as sex workers, capitalizing on sex, and portrayals of gender, sexual orientation and ethnicities—we decided that we would focus on pornography for our Collective Action and examine the many complex patriarchal and feminist implications of it as an institution.

We co-sponsored a two-hour event entitled “Got Porn? We Do” on November 9, 2006, along with the activist group, Feminism in Action. About 75 students and faculty were in attendance. The three of us worked as facilitators, along with five other students and faculty members who contributed as panelists. We screened several pornography clips, interjecting panelist commentary and audience questions and conversation throughout, in order to better understand both the patriarchal problems that pornography can incite, as well as the empowering feminist options pornography can offer. The overall motivation for this event was not to arrive at a conclusion about pornography or the feminist “sex wars,” but rather to illustrate the complex relationship pornography has with feminism, patriarchy, capitalism, and choice.
I, like many of my classmates, was extremely concerned upon entrance to the Feminist Research and Action course this spring semester. The term “research” usually evokes the reaction of fear and quickening heartbeats. However, to my surprise and through faculty and student support, I was able to find and explore my own passions within the lines of feminist debate. In many ways, the beginning process of research is a time where the researcher has the freedom to investigate topics that were not able to be covered in as much depth and scrutiny in other courses. This freedom soon leads to excitement and motivation as strict theory turns into praxis as interviews, surveys, and various other projects begin. This year student’s research projects range across issues concerning women and aging, women’s history in athletics, transsexual women in the workplace, young women and their relation to voting, and women’s history in high school curriculum, just to name a few. All of these projects will be presented at the Undergraduate Research Conference (URC) in April here at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

The URC allows for Women’s Studies students to demonstrate their skills and feminist praxis abilities to their peers as well as the rest of the campus community. Many students taking this research course are seeing this as an opportunity not only to analyze aspects of our society, but also to give back to the larger community in numerous positive ways. Depending on the research method and process, students seem to be getting as much from the people, history, situations, or environment being studied as they are giving, because researcher-subject communication is made with a feminist perspective. Such communication improves the relation between campus research and the larger community, while also allowing the researcher a better understanding of the population at hand.

The term “research” begins to transform as I continue to take steps with my case studies. I begin to develop connections across boundaries that I had not previously understood or thought necessary. As I hope will be seen by the time I reach the URC at the end of the semester, research within Women’s Studies is more than just identifying significant realities and issues surrounding gender, it becomes about personal exploration and enhancement of ideas, connections, and critical evaluation skills of society and self.

Brad Freihoefer is an undergraduate student with a double major in Women’s Studies and Philosophy. He was also recently acknowledged as a “Vagina Warrior” as part of the national V-Day campaign for his efforts in ending violence against women.

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**Fall 2007 Women's Studies Course Offerings**

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<th>Course Code</th>
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<td>Introduction to Women’s Studies</td>
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<td>WOST 120W:</td>
<td>Violence &amp; Gender</td>
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<td>WOST 220:</td>
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<td>WOST 265:</td>
<td>Women &amp; Spirituality</td>
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<td>WOST 310:</td>
<td>Feminist Thought</td>
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<td>WOST 440/540:</td>
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<td>WOST 610:</td>
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<td>WOST 620:</td>
<td>Feminist Research</td>
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Please see Minnesota State University, Mankato web site for further course details at [www3.mnsu.edu/courses](http://www3.mnsu.edu/courses)
Behind the Curtain: An Interview with the Producers of Minnesota State Mankato’s “The Vagina Monologues”

Christal Lustig: How is “The Vagina Monologues” a form of feminist activism?

Katie Bowman: “The Vagina Monologues” is a demonstration of how women’s voices are empowered. A lot of issues around women’s bodies, sexuality, and violence against women are stifled in our society, so it’s important to have a campaign to work through those issues. V-Day is the campaign; “The Vagina Monologues” is the production that makes it tangible for people—for those who might not otherwise have access or be exposed to these issues.

Lindsay Gullingsrud: Feminism in action at the basic level is grassroots consciousness-raising. What “The Vagina Monologues” does is allow a format to educate people on how pervasive violence against women is, and in a non-threatening manner.

CL: What is unique about “The Vagina Monologues” this year?

Lindsay: We have two directors and a huge cast.

Katie: Some people came to the audition to support a friend and ended up participating as cast members after reading at the auditions. Also, the 2007 Spotlight Campaign for V-Day is “Women in Conflict Zones,” and the monologue that highlights that theme is called, “Reclaiming Peace.” It’s about how women are affected by the atrocities of war and men that are violent because of war. So the proceeds of V-Day 2007 will go to benefit women in conflict zones. This year, we also took nominations for “Vagina Warriors” and awarded three activists for their overarching leadership in the movement to end violence against women and girls. It’s to show appreciation for activists because activism is a thankless job.

CL: What have you learned from this experience?

Lindsay: This is my second one and I’m truly amazed with the process that happens through practice. There’s a unity of women. It sets women up to find their own voice and inner courage. They come out of the box that society created for them and they flourish!

Katie: To us, it’s just as important to foster a supportive community among the people involved as it is to focus on the production and outcome. We’ve definitely learned strategies for doing this. We had to ask, “What does a feminist production mean?” The auditions and much of the production process are not standard in any way. We’ve learned to revamp the process to make it conducive to feminism.

CL: What advice do you offer for future participants, including cast members and volunteers?

Katie: HAVE FUN! Don’t ever rule out getting involved due to lack of experience. So many of our cast members had little background with theater, “The Vagina Monologues,” or performing on-stage, and they ended up having a blast. The script can be modified based on who is involved. It doesn’t matter what you come to the table with.

CL: What’s your favorite part of “The Vagina Monologues” productions?

Lindsay: Seeing the end result, going through minor details and stress and then seeing how the audience and cast interact with each other and have so much fun.

Katie: I agree. I also very much enjoy goofing around and being dorky with the cast and crew—just cracking jokes and messing around. Just because the topics for some of the monologues are very serious doesn’t mean we have to be.

Lindsay Gullingsrud (BS, 2003) is the Sexual Violence Education Program Coordinator.

Katie Bowman is a first-year graduate student in Women’s Studies and the Program Advisor of the Sexual Violence Education Program.
New Graduate Student: Christal Lustig  
Hometown: Owatonna, MN  
Hello, I’m Christal and I’m a new Graduate Student in the Women’s Studies Department. I’m also your diligent editor of this Newsletter. I just graduated with my Bachelor’s Degree in Women’s Studies and minor in Ethnic Studies. I enjoy listening to music, playing Baldur’s Gate, drinking copious amounts of coffee daily, and doing activist work for the LGBT Center, Women’s Center, and related groups. I am interested in gender, pro-sex, transnational, and radical feminist issues.

Quote: “Sometimes when we are generous in small, barely detectable ways it can change someone else’s life forever.”

-Margaret Cho

Graduating MS Students  
Congratulations to our eight students who are graduating with their MS degrees in spring and summer 2007. Their research projects for their theses and APPs cover an interesting and diverse set of topics related to feminism, as the titles below indicate. Best wishes, graduates!

Abby Buck: “Learning about Bisexuality in the Women’s Studies Classroom”  
Yuko Endo: “Haken: Female Temporary Workers in Japan”  
Kate Goff: “Gods Gone Wild: A Feminist Analysis of Ovid’s Rape Myths”  
Emily Huyck: “Coaching Community, Leadership and Empowerment on the Pitch: Feminist Coaching and Women’s Division II Soccer”  
Lila Kahmann: “Margaret’s Story: A Feminist Perspective of Insider/Outside Roles”  
Cindy Mark: “Women’s Well-being Rethought, Reframed, Transformed: A Study of Women’s Health Course Syllabi from a Feminist Perspective”  
Saswati Sarkar: “Questioning the Silence: A Study of Menopausal Experience and Attitudes from Kolkata”

Triota Inductees  
The department would like to recognize the thirteen majors and minors who qualify in 2007-2008 for Iota, Iota, Iota, the women’s studies undergraduate honor society.

Gail Baker  
Tiana Gee  
Beth Harders  
Stacy Huntington Scofield  
Kathryn Kamerud  
Melissa Kjolsing  
Angela Losasso  
Jen Melby  
Desirae Nelson  
Amanda Slowinski  
Kelly Trytten  
Courtnay VanDeVelde  
Amanda Wilcox
Tina England (BS, 2000) is currently attending graduate school at Hamline University fulltime. She’s completing a dual master’s degree in Nonprofit Management and Public Administration.

Tara Tull (MS, 1991) served as Interim Assistant Dean of Letters, Arts and Sciences for four years, before returning to her position in the Institute for Women’s Studies and Services at Metropolitan State College of Denver in July. She taught Feminist Theory in the fall semester. She says she’s “happy to return to my ‘home’ in women’s studies and services.” She’s also involved in a meditation program and is currently being trained to teach meditation classes.

Beatrice Quist (MS, 2005) works as the Clinical Specialist for Mt. Carmel Guild Behavioral Health care System in Newark, NJ. She offers counseling and therapy to adults with mental illness in the community of Newark. The focal point of her job is to advocate for these populations, ensure their continual stay in the community, and to prevent re-hospitalization. Beatrice notes, “the great part of my job is the advocacy aspect – advocating for the rights, privileges and needs of this ‘often forgotten population.’” Although the burnout rate on this job is high, at the end of the day she feels proud and happy to see beautiful smiles on the faces of these adults whose needs are being met, especially women. Beatrice advises, “I couldn’t have performed better in this position without the advocacy skills gained at Minnesota State Mankato.”

Julie Wilbert (MS, 2001) is working as a Senior Health Promotion Specialist for Hennepin County Public Health and teaching Women’s Health at Metropolitan State University, St. Paul. She is also working on her second master’s degree in Health Journalism at the University of Minnesota. Julie recently got engaged and will be marrying a fellow journalist on October 27, 2007. This year marks her fifth year of women’s mountain bike racing.

Krista Jacob (MS, 2000) just published a book in November and is currently on tour. There has been some controversy over her book. She sent this excerpt from her recent press release. “Krista is a ten-year advocate and counselor to victims of rape and domestic violence. She has collected the amazing stories of notables such as Amy Richards, Jennifer Baumgardner, Rebecca Traister, Frances Kissling, and Gloria Feldt in Abortion Under Attack: Women on the Challenges of Facing Choice (Seal Press/ November 2006/ $15.95). Through the eyes of loving mothers, unwanted children, strong Catholics, and abortion counselors-readers discover how closely entwined abortion rights are with political issues such as minimum wage, affordable healthcare, education, birth control methods, religion, and basic human rights. Compelling and honest, the perspectives in Abortion Under Attack touch on an ever-changing continuum, illustrating that there may only be two sides to the same coin, but that human thoughts and emotions have multiple dimensions.” Krista’s book is available at Barnes and Noble as well as independent bookstores. For more information, log on to her website at kristajacob.com/blog/
Philip C. Warren (BA, 2006) writes: “Throughout my time at Minnesota State Mankato as a Theatre major and Women’s Studies minor, it has been my challenge to blend the two disciplines. I may have found that bridge with a film project that I’ve been working on for the past couple of months. The goal for this picture stems from a project Christal Lustig and I presented at the URC last year. The research project brought the deplorable lack of sexual violence awareness to the front of my mind. I hope, with this movie, to help tell a realistic portrayal of rape and the consequences it has, not only on the survivor, but also on her loved ones and the community. The story follows a young heterosexual couple, deeply committed and in love. As the audience is getting to know and love these characters, a fellow student with whom Allison is working on a project rapes her. This affects those around Allison in significant ways, but you’ll need to see the film to find out how.”

“I feel that art should not give us answers, but instead should present questions. We know that sexual violence is a problem in society, but how do we approach it? How do we lend strength to a survivor when even she is unsure what she wants? Does the desire for vengeance blind us to the need for healing? I have been aided greatly by the Women’s Studies Department, the Women’s Center, Lindsay Gullingsrud, the URC, and many others on campus. I will be presenting at the URC conference again this April, where I hope to have a public viewing of the film along with a discussion to address the issues presented.”

Special Thank You:

Lila Kahmann, Graduate Student, Women’s Studies

John Murphy, Graphic Arts Specialist, Printing and Photocopy Services

Cindy Veldhuisen, Office Manager, Women’s Studies

Katie Bowman, Graduate Student, Women’s Studies

Kim Burrow, Graduate Student, Women’s Studies

Everyone who submitted articles and photos

Continued from page 9
Please consider making a donation to Women's Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato

Women's Studies needs your support. We have numerous fundraising efforts underway, and with your help we can meet our goals. One effort is to raise funds for Women's Studies students to attend the National Women's Studies Association conference in St. Charles, IL this June. Another effort is to endow the Carol Ortman Perkins Lectureship, which invites lecturers to campus based on their contributions to feminist scholarship and their ability to think creatively about the connections between theory and practice. Finally, you can support the department's general foundation account, which helps to fund other student travel and purchase educational DVDs and other instructional supports. Any amount is appreciated with any of these efforts. You can help Women's Studies fulfill our mission of promoting interdisciplinary feminist teaching, learning, and research. Thank you! Use the pledge form below for any gifts you can make.

Pledge Form

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