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Letter from Alverno College

Sister Joel Read

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NEWS FROM CAMPUSES

This column will be devoted to developments in women's studies in colleges and universities across the country. Besides announcements of new programs, we welcome brief news items concerning your activities.

Three additions to the list of Women's Studies Programs, making the national total 78:

Kansas, U of, Lawrence 66044—Women's Studies, Janet Sharistianian (English), Coord: program offers "special major" leading to B.A. or B.G.S. degree.

New York, S U of, Albany, 1400 Washington Ave, Albany 12222—Women's Studies, June Hahner (history), Dir: program offers a minor.

South Carolina, U of, Columbia 29208—Women's Studies Institute, Constance Ashton Myers, Coord: program offers minor.

Also, a new development: California State U, San Jose, now offers a minor in Women's Studies.

Corrections and changes: California State U, Long Beach, does not offer a minor. U of Minnesota: 114 Johnston Hall, Minneapolis, 55455; Coord: Toni McNaron (English). U of Nevada: Chairperson Ann Howard. U of New Mexico: zip code 87131. Purdue U does not have a Women's Studies Program.

LETTER FROM ALVERNO COLLEGE

In a women's college, it seems to us, it is unnecessary, and in fact redundant, to have a Women's Studies Program. The Faculty Institute on the Education of Women, September 1-2, 1971, sensitized all those responsible for the educational process to the particular needs, interests, socialization effects which women experience. The whole intent of Women's Studies is infused into every course offered on our campus. If a college is a women's college then all aspects of it must reflect that. So, for us at Alverno College, the whole of our curriculum is, in an analogous way, "Women's Studies." History classes do not negate women; literature classes do not overlook them; religious studies courses investigate the effects of patriarchy upon them; science classes utilize women as models, as contributors, as text writers, and so on. *Infusion* is our method. No one then is untouched or overlooked when the role women have played in the historical and societal development of the world, the role they should play, and the role they will play is indicated. But this is not enough—the administrative aspects must also take cognizance of the fact that our students are women. Hence, class scheduling, baby sitting, etc., are some reflections of that concern. To insure that the faculty keep current, we hold periodic Faculty Institutes.

Alverno College has not "turned" Feminist. A women's college is a feminist institution initiating women into the realm of intellectualizing about creating, effecting and managing change. From administration, through faculty and staff emanating from all personnel, the message of their responsibility for future change, beneficial societal change, is brought to our students.

Sincerely yours,
Sister Joel Read, President

DO-IT-OURSELVES CURRICULUM MATERIALS

The following notes, prepared by J. J. Wilson, reflect the Women's Studies Program at Sonoma State College, Rohnert Park, Calif. 94928.

In our Women's Biography course one afternoon, discussion turned to the kinds of questions we wanted biographies of women to answer—for example, what do women fear most? We decided to begin immediately by asking those questions of ourselves. For twenty minutes the whole class wrote. A loving sister, not ashamed to admit to her secretarial skills, took these papers home and typed them onto dittos; someone else ran them off; others collated them. We could then begin to answer our own questions. Later, we tried to write on what makes women happy and, for some reason, the results were less interesting.

We have tried other approaches, too: collective writing experiments, individuals' careful research projects or personal journal excerpts, poems, plays, even letters to Emma Goldman, Marilyn Monroe, our mothers, or letters to and from one another—we have written and dittoed and exchanged all of these. We also ruthlessly ditto material that is out-of-print or too expensive: Box Car Bertha's autobiography, translations of Rosa Luxemburg's letters, *Ella Price's Journal*, *Patience and Sarah* (before it came out in paper). Of course we share and exchange such materials with other interested women, in community women's groups, faculty wives' groups, and staff here on campus.

Beyond the written word, we have also tried slide presentations, mixed media, and films. For the past two years two women at Sonoma State have been putting together a slide collection of women artists. Alice Wexler and her history class worked all last semester on a production called "The American Woman in History." They researched libraries in the area for photographs and other pictures from which they made slides, for folk music which they then learned to play, and for the text of a remarkable kind of Reader's Theatre performance—which they have been putting on for all women's studies classes, for the history department's classes, for local high schools and colleges, and even for a TV program. Some of the women who are now reciting Sojourner Truth's strong words, or singing women's factory songs, are students who have never "spoken out in public" before. In addition to helping students to speak out, such projects are good pedagogy in other ways. Students learn to consult original sources, to look with suspicion on the so-called authoritative textbooks, to correct for bias, to select for significance, and then to get it all together.

Whether you use words or slides or tapes or mixed media, the lesson is identical: do it yourself, learn from the process, and use the results again in other classes and share them with still others.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

News from high school teachers who have been developing nonsexist curriculum units or courses: three Feminist Press staff members, Carol Ahlum, Jacqueline Fralley, and Laurie Olsen Johnson, will be visiting classrooms in several communities around the country and reporting to the *Newsletter*.