Summer 1978

Part-Time Work and Part-Time Leave

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Catharine R. Stimpson (English); and Maria von Salisch (student).

**Classic Problems but Lively Context**

A listing of the courses for next year (see below) reveals some of the richness and diversity of the offering, as well as some of its limitations. We have a relatively small group of courses, compared to some of the larger and older programs elsewhere; and we are concerned about a lack of "coverage" in some crucial fields, although one can of course view this situation, more optimistically, as room for future growth. In this respect, the program is just beginning to encourage the introduction of women's studies courses in fields where these are now lacking, and in some cases we have had interested and even enthusiastic responses about possible future courses.

Obviously the new program at Barnard confronts many of the classic problems of women's studies programs nationwide. The offering at present depends in large part on the good will and the commitment of other departments and programs for the continued availability of our courses. Funding for the program is at a minimal level and is not likely to increase rapidly in a time of stringent academic budgeting. Students, for their part, show an intense interest in the courses and in the program. Yet some are hesitant to major in women's studies, because of pressures, from within or from parents: can you make a living doing women's studies?

On the other hand, there are some benefits to establishing a program at this relatively late date. One is that the legitimacy of women's studies as an important area for research and teaching is somewhat less in question than in the pioneering days of 1969 and 1970. The Barnard program was not given a time limit by the faculty, nor was it required to schedule an evaluation, internal or external, to determine its permanency in the curriculum. And the Women's Studies Program finds itself in a very lively context. Barnard is the place where Catharine Stimpson edits *Signs*; where the annual "The Scholar and the Feminist" conference takes place; where the Women's Center, directed by Jane S. Gould, with its large resource collection and its myriad activities—speakers, meetings, publications—and the Women's Counseling Project, a referral center for women, create networks that increasingly connect us to the women's community on and off campus. We hope that, over the coming years, we will be able to report that the Women's Studies Program at Barnard will be, as it is now, alive, well, and even flourishing in New York. 

*Hester Eisenstein is lecturer in experimental education and coordinator of the Experimental College, Barnard College, Columbia University.*

**The List of Courses for 1978-79**

Women's studies courses for the coming academic year 1978-79, as of this writing, are (in addition to the core courses—Junior Readings, Colloquium in Women's Studies, Senior Research Seminar, Senior Thesis):

- Annette Baxter, History of Women in America (2 semesters)
- Daisy Dwyer, Sex Roles in Cross-Cultural Perspective; Seminar on Sex Roles
- Hester Eisenstein, Contemporary Feminist Thought
- Tatiana Greene, 20th Century French Women Writers
- Carolyn Heilbrun, Studies in Female Selfhood: Literature and Psychology
- Mirra Komarovsky, Female and Male: A Sociological Perspective
- Jackie Leavitt, The Built Environment: Sex Roles and Social Policy
- Cynthia Lloyd, Sex Discrimination and the Division of Labor
- Mary B. Parlee, Seminar on Psychology and Women
- Abraham Rosman, Colloquium on Current Anthropological Theory: Male and Female in Cultural Analysis

Susan R. Sacks, Child-Rearing: A Survey of Alternative Practices
Ann Sheffield, Women in Antiquity
Catharine R. Stimpson, Sex, Gender and the City: The New York Example
Suzanne K. Wemple, The History of Women in the Middle Ages

**Sheila Tobias**

**Part-Time Work and Part-Time Leave**

*The Modern Language Association convention in December 1977 included a panel on the subject of "Women and Part-Time Work." Joanne Spencer Kantrowitz, moderator, explained that, in forming the panel at the request of the Commission on the Status of Women, her "one objective was to create a group where men and women could discuss, together (and dispassionately, if possible), an area where women are consistently used."*

"In recent years," Kantrowitz noted, "the part-time category has become a male professional problem, too, as some institutions have seized on it as a convenient cost-cutting device which uses the surplus of Ph.D.'s as cheaply as possible. However, as a permanent position in professional life, this job category has traditionally been the lot of married women who have continued for years to be department housewives teaching at the lowest levels of the academic hierarchy for pin money."

In her opening remarks, Kantrowitz went on to quote Dr. Juanita Kreps, now Secretary of Commerce in President Carter's cabinet, as having stated (in *The New York Times*, May 8, 1977) that "the universities have been the worst offenders in this area because although everyone else did the same thing, the universities are dealing with highly intelligent people, highly motivated professional women, so there was no excuse." Speaking of her own career as a part-time teacher, Kreps said, "I was supposed to be a Southern gentlewoman who taught classes well, was patient..."
with the students, didn’t really think any
great thoughts. People are astounded that
you write books because, after all, you are
a teacher. . . . But I must say in retrospect,
I couldn’t do it again. And I would take
the place apart, if I saw that sort of thing
happening to my own daughter.”

Turning to her own experience, Kantrowitz added, “Far too many of my male
colleagues continue to deny the facts and
continue to hide behind the comforting clichés of ‘merit and excellence,’ those
sacred Brahman bulls of our profession.
My own position is that of protest. I have
refused to work as a part-time convenience
and have fought Kent State University to
force the change it would not make.”

The following paper, which was presented
at the panel, describes one university’s ap­
proach toward eliminating the exploitative
aspects of part-time work.

The increased incidence of women in part­
time nonladder positions at colleges and
universities during the 1960s was the result
of several independent developments. Dur­
ing a time of expansion, institutions of
higher education had to find faculty where
they could; and women, especially wives of
men on faculties, provided an available
surplus labor force to meet that need.

Treated as moonlighters, these women were
often employed in the introductory humani­
ties and language courses where enroll­
ments might not be predictable until only
weeks before the semester began. Any
instructor who would be willing to take
over some additional section of a course on
short notice was much appreciated, and
people who were “stuck” in an area had to
be satisfied with jobs instead of careers.

In the urban institutions, the situation
was a little more ingrown. Part-time instruc­
tion was a traditional element in the staff­
ing pattern of such institutions. Both to
meet the needs of working students and to
ease the budget, urban institutions tradi­
tionally employed women and men in part­
time work. Sometimes the instructors
were graduate students happy to have a real
course to teach. Sometimes they were full­
time professionals—lawyers and account­
ants, for example—able to impart a set of
skills to their students but not especially
interested in the research possibilities that
a regular faculty appointment would offer.

Indeed, the incidence of part-time instruc­
tion was inflated by the shift in predomi­
nant type of higher education facility from
the rural, residential college to the com­
muting institution, where the fact that the
instructor would not be available to share
after-hour activities, evening meals, and
weekend experiences with students was not
a particular handicap.

With the incidence of part-time instruc­
tion thus increasing, going into the seven­
ties, it needed to be reassessed not only
from the point of view of the institution
and its students, but from two other points
of view: that of the otherwise-employed
moonlighter, who was very pleased to have
no more than one or two courses to teach
in addition to other regular employment;
and that of the person, usually female, who
might be as well qualified in every respect
as other members of the staff, but who,
because of her marital and family status,
could not pick and choose among jobs or
did not seem to want to work full time
during some lengthy period of her work
life.

The Group Who
Called “Foul”

It was the last group who first called “foul.”
They noticed that for the same qualifica­
tions and the same or even more of a course
load they were getting less pay, no research
support, and low status. Yet to transform
the entire body of part-time workers into
full-status employees would not necessarily
be financially realistic; nor would it satisfy
those true moonlighters who liked things
the way they were. Facing these dilemmas,
my college and some neighboring institu­
tions in New England set about trying to
find some way of refashioning part-time
faculty status to satisfy everyone.

We began with an analysis of the status
itself. It turned out that although not
everyone working for us part time was in
fact a moonlighter, in the true sense of
that term—that is, someone having another
regular job that paid well and provided
benefits—everyone working part time at
our institution (with three exceptions) was
being treated like a moonlighter. The pay
on a per course basis suited the person
otherwise employed, but not the person
who had only family responsibilities and no
other employer. The absence of benefits
did not disturb the person otherwise em­
ployed but very much affected the person
who had no other way to be covered,
especially the divorced woman. If non­
participation in regular departmental
activities and limited contact with stud­
ants were felt to be a deprivation by
such women, then their second-class status,
their short-term contracts, and the lack of
any opportunity to do research, to travel
to professional meetings, or to compete for
tenure were considered to be an oppression.
What we decided to do was to distinguish
three types of part-time personnel, each
having different skills, different needs, and
a different relationship to the university,
and to order their statuses accordingly.

Moonlighters, Sunlighters,
and Twilighters

Out of this analysis came some new policy
and some new nomenclature:

1. The Moonlighter, as before, was prem­
umed to be a person having full-time em­
ployment somewhere else, no long-term
interest in our university, responsibility for
just one course, and the word “visiting”
before his or her title.

2. “Twilighter” was a new designation
for a person who was not otherwise em­
ployed, but not necessarily research­
oriented. This person needed prorated
benefits, longer-term contracts wherever
possible, and greater participation in de­
partment and college life. In the course of
analyzing all the people on our staff who
fell into this new category, we discovered
that the majority of them were women
teaching introductory language courses,
and we proceeded to “regularize” their status. Most of them are now called lecturers (instead of teaching associates) and they enjoy four-year renewable contracts.

3. The third category was the “Sunlighter” status—to be reserved for those part-time faculty members who were indistinguishable in every way from other members of the department, having a terminal degree, research interests, scholarly reputation, ability to teach at the most advanced levels, and long-term commitment to their fields. The only difference between a Sunlighter and a regular member of the faculty was to be time worked and total (but not rate of) pay. Benefits, like pay, were to be prorated, and tenure was to be available on a competitive basis after no more than 17 semesters—a figure arrived at by trying to be both fair and realistic. Committee, tutorial, and other departmental responsibilities would be expected.

After sorting out the Sunlighters from the Twilighters and Moonlighters, we investigated which persons on the faculty qualified for Sunlighter status, bearing in mind, of course, that since we had not previously advertised it we might have very few. Indeed, we found that only three faculty members had made special personal arrangements to work part time with prorated pay benefits and long-term status: two men, one an artist and one a writer, who for personal reasons wished to work no more than 60 percent of the time; and one woman, an instructor in film who, being a mother, chose the same 60 percent option. In the course of time, the men left (one died) and the woman opted not to be considered for tenure, though by then we offered her that possibility. She now holds a series of five-year renewable contracts at the rank of associate professor. Disappointingly, few others have taken up this attractive option.

Younger Women Want Part-Time Leave

The reason for the paucity of Sunlighters may be that the younger generation of women scholars want something else—not permanent part-time status, but part-time leave for one, two, or three semesters, during which they can raise their infants to the toddler stage. Their intention seems to be to return to full-time status as soon as possible. We did not anticipate this preference when we began our analysis, and to accommodate these women we have had to add a “part-time leave” possibility to our list of options.

Part-time leave is defined by us as reduced load, permitted with the concurrence of the department and of the administration, with no loss in benefits or status, though with reduced pay, and including the possibility, again with everyone’s concurrence, of postponing the tenure decision by some amount of time appropriate to the duration of the leave.

This option has become very popular. Its popularity has led us, however, into a new dilemma. Owing to financial pressure, the administration these days tries not to replace unpaid leave-takers. This makes department chairpersons reluctant to grant part-time leaves, although these are legal and encouraged by the central administration. We are working on this issue now. Women faculty want to persuade the administration to accept a policy that exempts the mother-to-be or the new mother from having to overburden her department when she takes her part-time leave.

The other danger, one that we do not face at institutions like mine, but one that seriously threatens the entire profession if not controlled, is that large numbers of regular full-time faculty will be replaced by overworked part-timers so that the university effectively ceases to support faculty research and saves money in the short run. In the long run, of course, this is a very serious threat to the autonomy and to the research orientation of the faculty, and it is for this reason that in the past the AAUP was reluctant to regularize part-time work, fearing that institutions would use it as a guise for halving the number of people the organization supported.

Princeton has demonstrated that it is quite possible to allow part-time status up to and including tenure and, at the same time, to guard against its abuse. But not every institution has the resources or the faculty voice in decision-making that Princeton enjoys.

Questions Still to Be Resolved

The issues facing us, then, are:

1. Who wants part-time work and why?

We at Wesleyan started with the assumption that women with children would want to work part time for long periods and we found, at least at our institution, that we were wrong.

2. Who is going to support research if part-timers are employed at the expense of full-timers? And, from this perspective, ought not we who cherish the part-time option be willing to take a position on the allowable ratio, say, between part-timers and full-timers in any one department or at any one institution?

3. What should be the boundaries of part-time tenure? Should one be allowed to be tenured at two institutions?

4. And, finally, what will be the effect of unionization on all of this?

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TO OUR READERS

The Women’s Studies Newsletter welcomes both brief news articles and longer essays of description and analysis about any aspect of feminist education. We are eager for accounts of women’s studies in elementary or secondary schools. In particular, also, we would like to receive essays or shorter pieces on women’s centers—their functions on campus or in the community and their relationship to women’s studies programs. Please send us two typed copies of your article and include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.