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Control of the Curriculum and Standards

Florence Howe

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the more usual courses in history, psychology, and English. The Continuing Education Program also offers such courses as Home Repair for Women and Automobile Maintenance for Women.

Dona Neuman is pleased with the program. The response from students has been good, particularly from nontraditional students who find the program relevant. Neuman is committed to Women's Studies as a separate academic field and sees it as a moderately bright future. The Avila program is evaluated and reassessed periodically, staying flexible and responsive to students' needs and teachers' creative urges. Courses Neuman would like added some day include Women in Art, Women in the Professions (especially math and science), Legal Rights of Females, and Male-Female Relationships.

Rockhurst College, a small coeducational Jesuit school, offers a unique Women's Internship Program. The brainchild of Marcella Womack, Women's Center Director, the Internship Program is funded by a Women's Educational Equity Act mini-grant. Less than one year old, it has been a tremendous success and has a great potential for expansion. The purpose of the program is to place women "in the career exploration process" with women professionals in nontraditional fields, so that they will be able to test their career choice and at the same time have an encouraging and sympathetic model to look to. For the initial period, only white collar professionals were chosen as supervisors, representing the law, veterinary medicine, corporate management, higher educational administration, television production, politics, broadcasting, and advertising. Eighteen interns were placed in mid-February 1977, selected from 150 applicants; the average age of interns is mid-thirties. Some had never worked outside the home; others had been underemployed for years. Interns need not have been Rockhurst students or graduates. The program was widely advertised in the community, and the response was mostly good. (Contact Jill Adams, Project Director WEEA, Rockhurst, for more information.)

The University of Missouri/Kansas City (UMKC) does not have plans for a Women's Studies Program, but does have two special facilities for women: the Women's School at Communi­versity and the Women's Resource Center. Communi­versity, held at UMKC, is a "free" university—courses call for a $1.00 donation. Partially funded by UMKC student activity fees, it is open to the community on a drop-in basis. Courses are meant to be nonstructured, nonacademic, and relevant. The Women's School division offers a wide array of courses for women only, including, for example, Vertical Rock Climbing, Bisexuality, Feminism and Mothering.

The Women's Resource Center at UMKC "provides assistance with school entry or reentry (for those beyond traditional age); research on sex roles and social changes, women's issues, legislation concerning women; workshops, seminars, rap groups; assessing future directions; independent study projects; living a multidirectional life." It maintains a resource library of books, periodicals, brochures, papers, and clippings by, for, and about women. It offers career counseling programs that draw women from all over the midwest. It also offers noncredit self-help courses, focusing on personal growth. In addition, the student-run Feminist Union acts as a support group for traditional students.

There are countless Adult Education opportunities at colleges, community centers, extension centers, and churches in the Kansas City area. Many of these programs are especially geared to women. Ottawa University's College without a Campus has a Women's Program directed by Rhonda Holman which is totally responsive to the needs of community women. Ottawa, Avila, UMKC, and Rockhurst offer day-long seminars from time to time on such topics as Financial Management for Women or Career Advancement for Women.

An awareness of Women's Studies is filtering across to secondary and elementary schools, although major programs have not been initiated. Young women's sports programs continue to gain strength and career counselors in high schools no longer automatically steer students into traditional roles. Despite discouragements and setbacks (the defeat of ERA was demoralizing to all Missouri feminists), the women's movement is strong in Kansas City and a lot of women are determined to make it stronger. □

Florence Howe

Control of the Curriculum and Standards

The following short excerpt from Seven Years Later: Women's Studies Programs in 1976 by Florence Howe raises questions of particular importance today. We print it here to inaugurate a series of articles on Evaluating Women's Studies. Howe's full one-hundred-page report will be available free in the fall from the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs, 1832 M Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Long-range, perhaps the most controversial and critical question in women's studies will concern control of the curriculum, particularly with respect to standards. That this should be a question at all suggests how quickly women's studies has achieved a certain level of legitimacy. Seven years ago, it was risky to associate oneself with women's studies; hence, those who did so were, for the most part, a self-selecting group who welcomed all comers. Today, both inside and outside programs, there are questions about what makes a particular course a women's studies course, about the standards for such a distinction, and about who controls the standards.

From the outside, standards have to do with the credentials of faculty (their holding doctorates or writing dissertations) and the academic quality of requirements in courses and for majors. By and large, programs have satisfied their institutions with regard to those two matters. Again and again, administrators outside the program expressed approval of the women's studies faculty both as publishing scholars and excellent teachers, and of the curri­culum as intellectually demanding of students.
The further, as one administrator said, "How rather than on what a coherent curriculum to teach from term to term—and on what program, when one is entirely dependent available are chiefly in history and sociol­
coherent curriculum when the faculty administrator put it, can one organize a 
an economist? Or as one women's studies administrator put it, can one organize a 
example, without a historian, or without 
organize a women's studies curriculum, for 
without a historian, or without 
to teach about women and men, and should not produce sex-type intellectual programs or activities that are isolated from 
where they are chiefly in history and sociology and not in other areas at all? What 
does one do, as an administrator of a 
program, when one is entirely dependent on 
what individual faculty members want to teach from term to term—and on what 
their disciplinary departments will allow—rather than on what a coherent curriculum needs?

As the legitimacy of women's studies has increased and its enrollments have con­
tinued to rise, some programs have begun to experience a rather different kind of 
problem: who is to decide whether a 
course about women or gender is accept­
able as a women's studies course? And 
further, as one administrator said, "How do you do anything about academic 
standards when you have no control over 
the course, except to choose to cross-list it or not?" Can a faculty member or an 
administrator outside the program insist that any course "on" women be included 
as a women's studies course?

Some programs have begun to work out specific criteria for the acceptance of 
courses for cross-listing. At Northeastern Illinois University, for example, an official 
document includes the following Criteria for Approval of Courses:

a. courses should be taught in a nonsexist manner, ie., women should be considered equal and autonomous members of society and instructors (male and female) should be sensitive to past scholarly neg­
lect of and bias against women;

b. courses should set high academic stand­
ards to emphasize that the Women's 
Studies Program is a serious and scholarly effort;

c. courses should guard against the assump­
tion that because women's courses are at 
present offered separately, women's 
intellectual abilities are different or inferior; women's studies courses should 
be seen as part of a process of develop­
ing a new body of knowledge for and 
about women and men, and should not produce sex-type intellectual programs or activities that are isolated from 
the programs; seven years ago, some programs solved the problem by deciding that only 
men could teach the introductory 
courses and that qualified men could teach advanced courses. Of the fifteen 
programs visited, five had no males cur­
rently teaching courses, though some had had males teaching in the past: four had one, 
two, or three. (In two cases, some of the 
original persons to offer women's studies 
courses on particular campuses—Bennett 
and Minnesota, for example—were males.) In general, whether or not males could or should teach is not a current subject of 
debate, though most men interviewed pre­
ferrred to team-teach with a woman, and 
several programs were using that model for 
such courses as Human Sexuality and Women and Religion.

The major issue already discussed or 
under discussion is the necessity that all 
who teach women's studies be not only singularly prepared in a relevant academic area but also in feminism. In the North­
eastern Illinois document, that qualifica­
tion comes out in the language that re­
quires a "nonsexist manner" of teaching 
and sensitivity to "past scholarly neglect of and bias against women." The docu­
ment also requires teachers of women's 
studies to believe in women's intellectual capacity. At Brooklyn College, a key sen­
tence in the official document that 
established the program describes those 
courses to be cross-listed as electives: 
"While viewing materials from the 
perspective of women's studies, and 
including feminist analysis of topics 
discussed, each elective would be 
academically sound in terms of the 
individual departmental discipline." (Italics mine.) The "perspective of 
women's studies," as members of that 
program and others have explained it, is 
the perspective that acknowledges the 
experience of women as a legitimate part 
of the classroom and research. A "feminist 
analysis," whatever its particular ideology, 

Thus, program representatives explain, 
the women's studies curriculum is broadly 
prescriptive as well as descriptive. Just as 
environmentalists work to improve foul 
air and water, and medical pathologists 
aim to eradicate disease, women's studies 
faculty are expected to be interested in 
and informed about strategies for amelio­
rating the existing status of women. From 
off campus, such criteria for controlling 
curriculum may seem self-evident and un­
controversial. On campuses, however, the 
myth of "objectivity" still dominates 
thinking, especially in schools of liberal 
arts and sciences, which usually do not 
include such areas as environmental studies 
or medical pathology. While some members 
of academe may still feel uncomfortable 
with the notion that racists are unaccept­
able faculty in ethnic studies programs, 
they understand the political reality of 
such programs. It is not clear, on some 
campuses, however, that women's studies 
may represent another political reality.

Beyond the general feminist criteria, no 
programs visited were interested in con­
rolling the ideology of curriculum. 
Indeed, several programs, evaluating their 
strengths, reported as primary the diversity 
of their faculty with regard to feminist 
ideology, degrees of activism in the 
women's movement on or off campus, and 
sexual preference.