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All About Indiana

By Jean Robinson

It is with pleasure that we at Indiana University/Bloomington look forward to welcoming the National Women's Studies Association's Second Convention.

The Convention will be an exceptional highlight to the history of women in Indiana. Both the state of Indiana and the university have had a long history in the struggle for women's rights. In 1851, the first Indiana State Women's Rights Convention was called to order; resolutions at that meeting reinforced the sentiments expressed by women at Seneca Falls. More recently, women (and men) of Indiana were able to convince the State Legislature to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Indiana University was among the first U.S. universities to admit women on an equal standing with men; and today that commitment to equality continues.

Indiana University, one of the oldest state universities west of the Alleghenies, is ranked tenth largest in the nation. The campus at Bloomington, with a student body of 30,000, offers degrees through the College of Arts and Sciences; Schools of Business, Continuing Studies, Education, Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Law, Music, Optometry, Public and Environmental Affairs, and Library Science.

Bloomington is situated in the rolling hills of Southern Indiana, fifty miles from Indianapolis, and is accessible by train, bus, plane, and (of course) private auto. There are a number of state parks and forests within easy driving distance of Bloomington; camping, swimming, boating, and hiking are all available.

The Women's Studies Program at Indiana University/Bloomington was founded in 1973, three years after the first women's studies course was offered. Since our founding, we have grown from five courses enrolling 380 students to an average of 25 courses per semester, involving 1500 students.

An undergraduate Certificate in Women's Studies, developed by a group of faculty, staff, and students, was approved by the Indiana Higher Education Commission in 1977 and has served as a model for other certificate programs in the state. To earn the Certificate, students must take the introductory women's studies course and the senior topics seminar in women's studies; remaining course work is distributed among the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Undergraduates may also concentrate in women's studies with a major in the Independent Learning Program.

The Program is headed by a Coordinating Committee elected at annual open meetings. Staff, students, and faculty on the Committee set policy and advise the Coordinator on Program goals and policy implementation.

Women's studies, of course, extends beyond the classroom. The Program offers biweekly brown-bag lunch discussions on topics as diverse as "Women's Authority in West African Villages," "The Women's Collective: How to Start One, How to Keep One Going," and "Women's Financial Planning." We also sponsor lectures and invite speakers to address the central problems of feminist theory and research. Issues involving relationships among class, race, sex, and age have been addressed and discussed long after the invited speakers have departed.

The Women's Studies Program at Indiana University/Bloomington has sponsored conferences that promote both the theory and the practice of feminism. In 1978, we hosted the North Central Women's Studies Association Conference, and, in March 1979, we cosponsored a research conference on Women and Work: Sex Discrimination in Employment, funded by a grant from the Indiana University Research and Graduate Development Office.

The Women's Studies Program has not
operated in isolation. In addition to Women's Studies, Indiana University has established two other offices which are responsible for addressing women's concerns: Continuing Education for Women and the Office for Women's Affairs. Continuing Education for Women focuses on reentry women and has been awarded a large number of grants to develop external programs. The Office for Women's Affairs, headed by a dean, is the advocacy unit on campus, and addresses the noncurricular needs of staff, students, and faculty women. All three offices work closely together on projects, conferences, and problems.

Students at Indiana University have formed the Student Association's Office for Women's Services. The major projects of the student group have been the promotion of Women's Week, with lectures, music, and discussions; and the publication of Womensource, a free women's newspaper distributed throughout the community. Womensource has recently become an independent publication, containing news about women's issues and a biweekly calendar of women's activities.

Bloomington has an active and involved women's community. Xanthippe Women's Collective operates A Room of One's Own, a feminist bookstore. The Bloomington Organization for Abused Women has been awarded a grant to establish a safe shelter for battered women. The Bloomington Commission on the Status of Women is developing plans for a joint city-university Women's Center. Bloomington is fortunate to have a group of women artists who jointly exhibit their work, a women's coalition to act upon legislative issues, and many other exciting and vital organizations.

The National Women's Studies Association Second Convention will be able to draw upon the collective strength of women in the Indiana community. We plan to have special exhibits celebrating women's accomplishments and the particular heritage of women's culture in the Midwest. We are looking forward to having you join us.

Jean Robinson is coordinator of the Women's Studies Program at Indiana University/Bloomington.

WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAMS

Updated forms for the 1980 listing of women's studies programs have been sent to all programs previously identified to NWSA or The Feminist Press. That listing will appear in the Women's Studies Newsletter, Vol. VIII, No. 1 (Winter 1980). Any program that has not received a form should contact the NWSA Office at once.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS / PARTICIPANTS

The NWSA Convention Committee invites proposals for the Second National Women's Studies Association Convention, May 16-20, 1980, at Indiana University/Bloomington. Presentations that use or examine feminist alternatives to traditional educational activities and materials are particularly welcome. Convention planners wish to encourage both the submission of program suggestions and the participation of group and individual members in developing Convention activities.

Proposals for program panels, seminars, workshops, presentations, and creative activities in feminist education should include:

1. description of proposed session or activity (title; statement of nature and format; time, space, and equipment required);

2. name, address, and affiliation (if applicable) of person(s) organizing the session and of other participants if designated.

Individual papers and presentations are also welcome; these proposals should be accompanied by an abstract.

Groups desiring to organize related meetings, and groups and individuals wishing to participate in the Convention in other ways, should send a letter describing their interests to the Convention Coordinators.

Address proposals and program suggestions, by December 15, 1979, to:

NWSA Convention Coordinators
National Women's Studies Association
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742