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Introduction to Women's Studies: New Textbook Being Developed at Hunter College

By Nancy Dean
and Sarah B. Pomeroy

The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded a grant to the Women's Studies Program of Hunter College for the writing of a textbook and instructional manual for the basic course, "Introduction to Women's Studies." Unlike other comprehensive women's studies textbooks which are described as multidisciplinary but are actually collections of individual chapters, each written from the perspective of a single discipline, Hunter's books will be thoroughly interdisciplinary, with each chapter written collectively.

The nine authors, from four divisions of the college—Humanities and the Arts, Social Sciences, and the professional schools of Nursing and Education—are: Ulku Bates, Nancy Dean, Florence Denmark, Dorothy O. Helly, Susan Lees, JoAnn McNamara, Sarah B. Pomeroy (Project Director), E. Dorsey Smith, and Sue R. Zalk. In 1978-79 they participated in an interdisciplinary seminar directed toward designing a curriculum for "Introduction to Women's Studies" and training teachers in interdisciplinary techniques. Supported by faculty-development funds available to Jerome Schneewind, Hunter's Provost, and Gerald Freund, Hunter's Dean of Humanities and the Arts, each of the core group of nine was granted two courses' released time.

Meetings open to interested members of the Hunter community were held weekly as the core group proceeded through a year-long version of the Introductory Course's one-semester curriculum. The seminar meetings were recorded on tape and transcribed. In addition, minutes were taken. For each topic, participants would offer remarks from the perspective of their academic disciplines, one or two would present extended comments, and all would contribute bibliographical sources from their own fields. The resulting bibliography, available in xeroxed copies to all participants, grew to be impressive.

Out of the experience of that year, but-tressed by the tapes, minutes, and readings generated by this seminar, a textbook for undergraduates—*An Introduction to Women's Studies*—is developing. The book aims to integrate material from many disciplines and present it in a way appropriate for first-year college students. The planned table of contents is organized into three parts: "Defining Women," "Family Circles," and "Women in Society."

The first section, "Defining Women," will present biological, philosophical, psychological, and social definitions through which the central problem of women's difficulty in gaining independence can be explored. "Family Circles" will describe the placement of women within kinship structures, as well as women's autonomous placement in nonkinship structures (e.g., communal groups, lesbian households, and religious communities). "Women in Society" will cover the major areas outside the home in which women are active and acted upon, including religion, education, health, commercial and noncommercial work, politics, and the law. Although there will be a final chapter called "Changing the Present and Planning the Future," within each chapter questions and suggestions will also look ahead with strategies for social change.

Recognizing that few professional women receive the support of their college administration for retraining to teach in an interdisciplinary Women's Studies Program, and that women's studies is a new field with rapidly expanding bibliographies, the Hunter College Program is writing a Teacher's Manual to accompany *An Introduction to Women's Studies*. The Manual will follow the chapters of the textbook closely. For every chapter it will offer outside readings that the teacher may suggest for the students, as well as bibliographies designed for the teacher. The bibliographies will be multitiered: the most essential readings will be annotated, while further readings will be merely listed. In connection with each chapter the Manual will suggest further activities: group projects, writing assignments, research projects, panel presentations, and discussion topics. Suggestions for incorporating feminist process within the

ongoing classroom activities will be a major focus. A final general bibliography will list available women's studies bibliographies, journals, and newsletters, as well as important texts in the disciplines central to the women's studies textbook.

The Teacher's Manual will have a focus slightly different from that of most ancillary materials in that it will be designed to support the teacher who wants to work with depth and solidity but whose graduate study and personal research have not been primarily in the field of women's studies. It will aim to be of value to the teacher who is experienced in one field but who is untrained in the interdisciplinary mode of work and thinking, and wants to take advantage of the experience of others in other disciplines. The published version of the textbook will consist of approximately 600 large-format pages, while the Manual will have approximately 200 pages.

The newly designed Introductory Course is now being taught at Hunter College by faculty from the group of nine authors. Beginning in the spring of 1980 the textbook is being used experimentally, and it will be evaluated by Hunter students and teachers. Other instructors who are interested in using the syllabus, the textbook, and evaluation materials in xeroxed form in the fall of 1980 are invited to write to Sarah B. Pomeroy, Box 483, Hunter College, CUNY, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021. We hope that our books will be used experimentally by a heterogeneous readership of students and instructors, and we welcome comments, suggestions, and criticisms. Finally, the manuscripts of the textbook and Teacher's Manual will be sent to two outside evaluators who will be selected on the basis of their knowledge and teaching experience in the field of women's studies. Qualified candidates are urged to apply. Consultants' fees will be paid.

Nancy Dean and Sarah B. Pomeroy teach in the Women's Studies Program at Hunter College, CUNY.