



# Sappho

Tenth muse or  
sixth Marx brother?  
You make the call.

# Gay Studies:

## Dessen, Wooten blaze trail

By DOUG FERGUSON

**S**he? A straight, soft-spoken research assistant with an interest in Women's Studies. He? An enthusiastic gay professor in Classics.

On the surface, the two would seem to have little in common. A closer look reveals otherwise.

Ask Cynthia Dessen and Cecil Wooten what they think about gay studies, and you will get the same answer: It is time for UNC to develop a queer studies curriculum. And they began teaching a course this semester that is blazing new trails in academia at Carolina.

Dessen and Wooten, co-instructors of "Sex and Gender in Antiquity," are the pioneers of queer studies at UNC. Although their course focuses equally on women's and men's relationships in general and on same-sex couples, it is the closest Carolina has come to exploring lesbian and gay topics in the classroom.

Cynthia Dessen, denied tenure by the Classics Department in 1978 but kept on by Arts and Sciences as researcher and instructor, said she had become interested in gay studies only recently before Wooten approached her about co-teaching the course.

"I had just come back from spending a year reading and becoming very interested in gay and lesbian studies when he asked me," Dessen said. "I looked at the course as a way to find out a lot. It's a way to go back into a field that I had studied one way earlier, and come at it from a totally different

perspective."

Wooten, B-GLAD adviser involved with the Classics Department for 21 years, has been trying to get a queer studies course taught at UNC for many years. An honors course on homosexuality he introduced in 1983 did not attract enough students to fulfill minimum requirements. The present course, however, filled up immediately with a waiting list. He said he has been happy with student response.

"So far, it's been very good," Wooten said. "We gave out a preliminary course evaluation just to keep tabs on how things were going. People pointed out problems that we had already recognized. But on the whole, I think the response has been very favorable."

What kind of problems? Conflicting teaching styles, some students said. But this is one problem Dessen and Wooten have turned to their advantage. Wooten said he has learned a lot from observing Dessen.

"She's been a good influence on me," Wooten said. "I tend to be very directive, and I think she tends to be more laid back, and I think it's good for me."

Dessen said she has learned from Wooten, as well.

"I think that Cecil, although he certainly can present a strong gay male viewpoint, is very able to look at things from other perspectives," Dessen said. "That's his great strength. He doesn't have a narrow viewpoint."

Wooten said his original interest in exploring lesbian and gay studies came

## Curriculum could develop

By MICHAEL G. WILLIAMS

**U**NC-Chapel Hill has taken a giant step forward in gay and lesbian education by offering a new course in the Classics and Women's Studies curriculum titled "Sex and Gender in Antiquity." The course focuses on gender and how it affected intimate relationships in the Greek and Roman societies. Its main emphasis is on women and on same-sex relationships.

The new course opens up the possibility of introducing a gay and lesbian studies curriculum similar to the UNC-CH Women's Studies curriculum. Such a curriculum might focus on the study of gays and lesbians in history, litera-

ture, art and theory.

Cecil Wooten, professor in the UNC Classics Department and co-instructor of the "Sex and Gender in Antiquity" course, gave an outline of how the lesbian and gay studies curriculum could develop.

First, he said that individual departments and professors must begin to design courses or to tailor pre-existing courses to include a textual and informational base with a predominantly gay focus. For this to occur, Wooten said the cooperation of several professors and departments in the University