

One of Meredith's Newest Degrees: Women's Studies

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Staff Writer

Women's Studies is a new degree offered at Meredith College to give the students a major that puts more emphasis on women's issues and gender roles. Although it was pronounced a major last May, the formal inauguration for the program will be held on October 18, 2004 in Jones Auditorium from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Women's Studies is designed to help students gain a higher understanding of a woman's role in society, gender roles, theory, and social structure. According to the website, "As a lens (or method) through which to see the

world, Women's Studies has two facts. First, Women's Studies will focus your attention on the intimate nexus between theory and practice, between what you think and what you do. Second, Women's Studies will develop your ability to recognize and critically analyze the socially constructed nature of knowledge".

Several events are on the calendar to promote the new major program and to get students interested. On October 11, Kim Gandy, president of NOW (National Organization for Women), will speak to students in Jones Auditorium from 10-11 a.m. Other speakers include Azar

Nafisi, author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, higher education expert and author, Robert Birnbaum, Alexander Sanger, author of *Beyond Choice: Reproductive Freedom in the 21st Century*; and Adam Wibrowski, who will discuss the life and work of George Sand. Sanger is the grandson of Margaret Sanger, who founded Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

A Women's Studies major requires 33 credit hours, which include courses such as *Reading Women's Lives*, *Introduction to Women's Studies*, *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, *Psychology of Gender Roles*, and many others.

This degree incorporates a variety of courses and disciplines, including psychology, sociology, religion and family resources.

In these studies, students will learn to place women in the center of their academic exploration, to gain a different perspective. According to the website, "Women's Studies is designed to help you attain a deeper understanding of the new intellectual frameworks that are reshaping how we think about the meaning and role of gender both in women's lives and also in human life and culture". Women's Studies focuses heavily on gender, as well as sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, and nation-

al and regional identity.

The goal of women's studies is to give students more understanding about the concepts, theories, and ideas surrounding women. One student has already declared the new program as her major. Students are not solely limited to a major in the program. Interested students can minor in women's studies for 18 credit hours.

For more information on Women's Studies, contact Dr. Sherry Shapiro, director of Women's Studies, Office 15 Weatherspoon; 919-760-2857; shapiros@meredith.edu.

Abortion

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Ashcroft, the federal court ruled that the federal abortion ban is unconstitutional and cannot be enforced.

Local Planned Parenthood CEO, Janet Colm applauds the court ruling. Colm said, "Today's ruling affirms what Planned Parenthood has always believed. Women and medical doctors should make these personal decisions-not politicians."

The "Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act" has been struck down two times before the Center for Reproductive Rights v. Ashcroft proceedings. A press release from Planned Parenthood of Central NC reported, "in northern California the federal

court struck down the abortion ban act in the lawsuit, *Planned Parenthood Federation of America v. Ashcroft* on June 1, 2004. Again, on August 26, 2004, the federal court ruled against the abortion ban act in the court case of *National Abortion Federation v. Ashcroft*, in New York."

The court cases contained overwhelming testimonies from professionals in the women's medical field. A local press release stated, "Respected obstetricians and gynecologists from around the country opposed the federal abortion ban. They testified that abortions performed 12 to 15 weeks in pregnancy are safe and among the best for women's health. The ban would further fail to safeguard women because it does not contain an excep-

tion to protect their health."

According to Planned Parenthood Federation of America's fact sheet, "the number of abortion after the first trimester is relatively small. Between 1996-2000, the number of abortions in the United States fell from 1.36 million to 1.31 million (Finer & Henshaw, 2003). The CDC estimates that 58% of legal abortions occur within the first eight weeks of gestation, and 88 percent are performed within the first 12 weeks. Only 1.5 percent occurs after 20 weeks (CDC, 2003)."

There are multiple reasons that abortions are not performed until after the 12 weeks of pregnancy. According to Planned Parenthood Federation of America's fact sheet, "barriers to service, medical indications and the delay of

[an] adolescent are often the causes that postpone abortions."

Ashcroft attempted to obtain the medical records of women from Planned Parenthood facilities. A press release reported, "Earlier this year Attorney General John Ashcroft sought to invade the privacy of thousands of women by subpoenaing their medical records from Planned Parenthood health centers. Ashcroft was unsuccessful; Planned Parenthood Federation of America Inc. blocked his efforts."

Last October, Congress passed the "Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003," and President Bush signed the act on November 5, 2003. Abortions have been legal in the United States since 1973.

Position

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woman to hold the position as Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction. Willoughby hopes that her appointment, as superintendent, will be an encouragement to other women.

Willoughby has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and she has a master's degree in education, specializing in reading, from Meredith College.

Willoughby has worked in the public school system and was on the North Carolina State Board of Education when appointed to the superintendent's position. Willoughby has been a professor at Meredith College for sixteen years and plans to return to Meredith and resume her duties in the spring of 2005.

CALLING ALL ANGELS!!!

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