

FOUNDERS OF WOMEN'S STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Prepared for the 20th Anniversary of
THE WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

University of Pittsburgh

by the Foremothers Committee:

Irene H. Frieze
Marcia Landy
Marianne Novy

Information in this report is based on Program archives, on interviews, and on responses to letters sent to people identified as being involved in the Program before 1975. We would appreciate corrections or additions.

As Mary L. Briscoe, our first Coordinator reports:

When I think of the early days of the program, I remember the excitement, enthusiasm, and intensity that filled every moment, every meeting, every class that we taught. Our goal was to make the study of women's experience a legitimate activity, and we were convinced that if we did it right, we could significantly change the world for the better. Many of us believed that in order to achieve this goal, we needed to re-examine the process and the substance of our every activity--in teaching modes, research projects, office practice, and personal lives. What difference would our belief in the value of women's experience make in our behaviors? What changes could result? And how long might it take? We had far more questions than answers, but more than that we had a commitment to the Women's Studies Program and believed in what we were doing. It was an exhilarating time, naive in its way, but with a strong sense of community.

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Brief Program Prehistory and History

The University of Pittsburgh Women's Studies Program developed out of a combination of teaching, research, political organizing, administrative work, committee meetings, behind the scenes negotiations, and other activities, most of them very hard to document. In the fall of 1969 Roberta Salper was appointed Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and in Winter 1970 she and two graduate students, Judy Rosenthal of English and Susan Kleinberg of history, taught the first Women's Studies course at Pitt, the History and Social Role of Women. In Fall 1970 other courses in Women's Studies were taught by Susan Kleinberg in History, by Marcia Landy and Judy Rosenthal in Comparative Literature, by Cynthia Matlack (now Sutherland) in English, and by Roberta Salper in Hispanic. Meanwhile Marcia Landy, Roberta Salper, and members of the University Committee for Women's Rights, such as Ina Braden, Jo-Ann Evans Gardner, Ellie Smeal, and Sharon Johnson, gained public support and spoke before the faculty senate about inequities to women at the university. In response, the Chancellor formed the Advisory Council on Women's Opportunities, and a task force of this organization, chaired by Marcia Landy and including Cynthia Sutherland, Susan Kleinberg, Susanna Downie (now Felder), Rae Siporin, Dorin Schumacher, and Ginnie Benke (now Eskridge), worked on the proposal for setting up a Women's Studies Program. Marcia wrote the proposal and Cynthia presented it to the Faculty Senate, at the October 23, 1971 meeting, where a more general resolution endorsing Women's Studies was also presented by the Dean of the College, Jerome Schneewind. The proposal passed. Others teaching or working with Women's Studies by this time included Kathy Davis, Nancy Donnelly, David Bramhall, Nora Faires, Ellen Ganley, Marilyn Goldsmith, Donald Henderson, Audrey Holland, David Montgomery, Linda Pritchard, Cathy Ritts, Gilbert Shapiro, Ann Sklut, Eleanor Smith, Miriam Smolover, and Bernice Wells.

After the proposal passed, the Provost appointed an Advisory Committee on Women's Studies, which included Kathy Davis, Pamela Foa, Marilyn Goldsmith, Susan Kleinberg, Cynthia Matlack, David Montgomery, and Bernice Wells. This committee, with the help of many other people, hired Mary Briscoe as the first Coordinator of the Program and Irene Frieze and Maurine Greenwald, who joined the University in the Fall of 1972 as core faculty of the Women's Studies Program. The program involved a broadly based committee system; its structure was developed by a working group which included Mary Briscoe (the first coordinator), Pat Buddemeyer (the first administrative aide), Kathy Davis, Nora Faires, Irene Frieze, Ellen Ganley, Maurine Greenwald, Marilyn Goldsmith, Jan Miller, Marguerite Renner, and Miriam Smolover. In the year 1972-73, new Women's Studies courses were developed by the core faculty and also by Cynthia Matlack and Marilyn Goldsmith, with undergraduate teaching assistants Kathy Davis, Miriam Smolover, and Jan Miller. Other early courses were developed and taught by Joy Ann Grune, Ellen Ganley, William Matlack, Jan Feagans, Halina Swidzinska, Virginia Elliott, Pamela McCorduck, Peggy Batten, Marcia Landy, Dave Bramhall, Helen Hellman, Bill Hanks, Karen Vander Ven, Aldona DiPietro, Jackie Zeff, and Valerie Valle. Also active in the program and developing new courses in the following year were Priscilla de Gasparis, Beth Prinz, Gloria Frazier (now Rudolf), and many others.

WHERE THEY ARE NOW

- **Nancy Topping Bazin**, Director of the Women's Studies Program in 1977-78 went on to be Director of women's studies for seven years at Old Dominion University and is still a faculty member at Old Dominion, teaching feminist courses and writing. Her most recent book is Conversations with Nadine Gordimer.
- **Mary Briscoe**, the first Coordinator, is now Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and a Professor of English.
- **Priscilla de Gasparis**, who taught one of the early courses as a graduate student, is now a People Participation Specialist/Social Analyst in South Africa and works on promoting the position of women in development work.
- **Jo-Ann Evansgardner**, who acting for N.O.W. advocated for women's programs then, is now a N.O.W. activist in Houston, Texas.
- **Nora Faires**, as a graduate student in history, was active with Linda Pritchard in establishing the Women's History Caucus in 1971 that worked to combat discrimination against women in the History Department. Members of this group attended Faculty Senate meetings to provide support for the establishment of the Program and interviewed candidates for the initial faculty positions in Women's Studies. She is now an Associate Professor of History at the University of Michigan-Flint.
- **Marilynn Goldsmith**, a professor of biology involved in the initial program formation and teaching a course of the Biology of Women is now a psychologist working in private practice and part-time at the Counseling Center at CMU. Much of her practice concerns women who are adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and women who have experienced sexual harassment on the job.
- **S. Jay Kleinberg**, one of the first faculty to teach a women's studies course, is now Head of the American Studies Program at West London Institute of Higher Education in England. Her many publications include Women in American Society.
- **Marcia Landy**, a faculty member in the English Department during the early 1970's, taught one of the first Women's Studies courses at Pitt. She was also a major author of the proposal to establish the Program. She is now a Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Pittsburgh.
- **Beth Prinz**, who as a graduate student helped develop one of the early women's studies courses, is now Director of a center trying to combine women's studies research with programs for women in the state of Washington.
- **Linda Pritchard**, as a graduate student in history, was active with Nora Faires in establishing the Women's History Caucus in 1971 that worked to combat discrimination against women in the History Department. Members of this group attended Faculty Senate meetings to provide support for the establishment of the Program and interviewed candidates for the initial faculty positions in Women's Studies. She is now an Associate Professor of History and Associate Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Texas at San Antonio.
- **Judy Rosenthal**, who team-taught one of the first interdisciplinary Women's Studies courses in the United States here at Pitt, is now a Professor at California State University, Fresno, whose work concerns women and popular culture.

- **Gloria Rudolf (Frazier)**, who taught the first course in Anthropology along with Beth Prinz, is now a professor of Development Studies at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. She continues to be active in working on projects for women and is finishing a book on her research in Panama.
- **Roberta Salper**, an Assistant Dean in 1969, who team taught the first women's studies course, is now Head of the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences at Penn State Erie. She also was a founder and director of the nation's first full-fledged Women's Studies Program at San Diego State College.
- **Jerry Schneewind**, who as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in 1969, appointed Roberta Salper as Assistant Dean and supported her in establishing the Women's Studies Program. He later went on to help in setting up programs at Hunter College and at Johns Hopkins.
- **Rae Lee Siporin** was an Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences during the time the program was approved and established. She worked on the planning committee that drafted the original proposal in 1970 to 1972. She is now the Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Relations With Schools at UCLA.
- **Esther Skirboll**, a graduate student in Anthropology who took over teaching Anthropology of Women from Gloria Frazier and Beth Prinz, is now on the faculty at Slippery Rock University and is very active in programs benefiting women.
- **Miriam Smolover**, one of the student founders of the program who graduated with a major in women's studies, is now a psychotherapist in private practice in Oakland, California who specializes in adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.
- **Cynthia Sutherland (Matlack)**, a faculty member active in the establishment of the Program, continues to be on the faculty in English and has served as Coordinator of the Program.