

Documenting the History of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Tasmania

**A project funded by the School of Philosophy
UTas 1999**

Angela Rockel (Editor)

(NB A hard copy version of this history is available from Dr Barbara Baird – contact her on 03 6226 1703 or by email Barbara.Baird@utas.edu.au)

EDITOR'S NOTE

The project which produced this document was the initiative, in late 1999, of Dr Barbara Baird, then newly appointed Coordinator of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Tasmania. Her initial impression upon arrival in Hobart was that there was little sense of collective memory of the history of Women's Studies among those currently teaching in the program, and that a documentation of its development would contribute usefully to its consolidation and growth. She received funding from the School of Philosophy to produce a chronology of the WS program at UTas. Ironically, the project was begun during a time of crisis for Women's Studies at the University of Tasmania. Ten weeks into her appointment as Coordinator of the Women's Studies Program, Dr Baird was advised that there was a proposal that her position be 'deprofiled' ie the position would not be part of the Faculty staff profile, and when Dr Baird left the university, the position would not be filled. The Dean's personal advice, given in a School meeting, was to look for another job. This news made it clear that an account of the development and achievements of Women's Studies at the university would be a very timely intervention. As several women we spoke to in preparing the document have commented, the uncertainty surrounding Women's Studies in Tasmania is a reflection of moves occurring nationally that could jeopardise decades of gains made by women in the academic realm.

This document attempts a chronology of units that have been taught, and gathers personal accounts of involvement from some of those who helped to develop and teach Women's Studies at UTas. As well as speaking to those who were involved in initiating and coordinating the program over the years, we also sought to reflect the cross-disciplinary nature of the program by asking for comments from women who teach, or have taught across a range of disciplines. For a number of reasons, there are obvious gaps in the commentary we were finally able to produce. Because of the modest nature of the project, our deadline was tight, which meant that some were unable to respond within our time constraints. Further, because the document deals with a history that includes difficulties

and tensions that are ongoing, and many of those involved still work at the university or have emotional ties with it, some women were unwilling to comment publicly. Given the time span involved since the inception of the program, it is understandable that there are a few small inconsistencies of memory across varying accounts of events.

Feminist units have been taught at the University of Tasmania as a result of the initiatives of individuals and single schools since the 1970s. As an area of study in its own right, Women's Studies was first conceived of by a group of women in 1986. Christine Goodacre, Marlene Le Brun and Elaine McKay's comments tell of this early period. Ruth Blair and Claire Hiller give accounts of the setting up of Women's Studies proper from 1989 — that is the year when Women's Studies first appeared as a discrete subject area in the handbook, offering second year units. Jennifer Livett and Llewellyn Negrin tell of their experiences coordinating and teaching in subsequent years, as the program was extended, finally being offered as a major sequence in 1994. The years 1995-1998 saw the growth of Women's Studies, although not without some tension and conflict, as a dedicated coordinator was finally appointed, at first as a half-lectureship shared with Political Science. The accounts of Ruth Blair, Claire Hiller Judith Homeshaw and Wei Leng Kwok refer to this period. The position was made fulltime in 1999, and Barbara Baird's statement covers the period from her appointment halfway through that year.

Some schools offered units that were concerned with women and gender issues from a feminist perspective before Women's Studies was established, some of which were later cross listed to WS. From 1978-1984 Dr Kay Daniels taught a range of undergraduate and honours units in the history of modern Britain and Australia, and by 1980, she was offering a 3rd yr and Honours unit called 'Women in British and Australian Society 1780-1945' in History. From 1986-1989, Elizabeth Gertsakis was teaching feminist art history and theory at the School of Art, and from 1990, Dr Llewellyn Negrin offered seminars such as 'Feminist Aesthetics' and 'Framing Feminism', the former cross listed to Women's Studies the following year. From 1988, the Centre for Education Administration offered Women's Studies in Education qualifications (Grad Diploma of Education Studies; Bachelor of Education Studies; Master of Education Studies) with teaching coordinated by Elaine McKay. Units, coordinated by Elaine McKay and Claire Hiller, included: 'Education of Women and Girls'; 'Women in Asia'; 'Gender, Literature and Education'; 'Language, Gender and Communication in Education'; 'Women in History'; 'Education and Women's Careers'. Many of these units were cross listed (see Claire Hiller's account). Also in 1988, Dr Karen Green taught a unit called 'The Politics of Feminism' in the Department of Political Science which was linked with units that were taught later in Women's Studies. Her account speaks of the conditions she encountered in setting up the unit in the late 1980s. From 1995, 2nd and 3rd year units entitled 'Aboriginal Women' were offered as part of the Aboriginal Studies course, and cross listed to Women's Studies in 1999. From 1993, a 3rd year Nursing unit, 'Feminist and Critical Perspectives', has been offered, with no connection to Women's Studies.

The booklet was compiled by searching handbooks for a chronology of women's studies units, and subsequently attempting to check the accuracy of information compiled in this way, by discussion with those involved, where possible. Handbook information proved to

be patchy and unreliable in some cases, so where verification was not possible, there may be some errors of fact, especially regarding names of teaching staff and in some cases dates also. A decision was made not to refer to minutes of Faculty meetings covering the period during which the program was being set up — there were conflicting accounts about whether or not they were in the public domain (they're not) — and in the end time ran out.

Angela Rockel is a post-graduate student in the School of English and European Literatures and Languages

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY WOMEN'S STUDIES COURSES, UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

1989: coordinator Dr Ruth Blair, English

2nd year units: **Sociology of Gender**, Dr SA Crook, Sociology; **Women as Colonisers and Colonised in the British Empire of the 19th and 20th Centuries**, Dr RP Davis, History; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs EM McKay, Education; **Gender in Literature**, Dr RM Blair, Mr JL Winter, Mr A Porteous, English; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Law in Society**, Ms MJ LeBrun, Law.

1990: coordinator Dr Ruth Blair

2nd year units: **Sociology of Gender**, Dr SA Crook, Sociology; **Women as Colonisers and Colonised in the British Empire of the 19th and 20th Centuries**, Dr RP Davis, History; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs EM McKay, Education; **Gender in Literature**, Dr RM Blair, Mr JL Winter, Mr A Porteous, English; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Law in Society**, Ms MJ LeBrun, Law; **Politics of Feminism**, Ms Rebecca Wade, Political Science.

1991: Women's Studies: coordinator Dr Ruth Blair

2nd year units: **Sociology of Gender**, Dr SA Crook, Sociology; **Women as Colonisers and Colonised in the British Empire of the 19th and 20th Centuries**, Dr RP Davis, History; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs EM McKay, Education; **Gender in Literature**, Dr RM Blair, Mr JL Winter, Mr A Porteous, English; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Law in Society**, Ms MJ LeBrun, Law; **Women Writing: Precursors and Prophets**, Dr RM Blair, Mr A Porteous, English; **Feminist Aesthetics**, Dr L Negrin, School of Art.

1992: coordinator Dr Jennifer Livett

2nd year units: **Sociology of Gender**, lecturer not named; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, lecturer not named; **Sociology of Law**, Ms S Berns, Law; **Women Writing: Precursors and Prophets**, Dr JS Livett, Mr A Porteous, Dr R Gaby, English; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Politics of Feminism**, Ms Rebecca Wade; **Feminist Aesthetics**, Dr L Negrin, School of Art.

1993: coordinator Dr Jennifer Livett, Dr Ruth Blair

2nd year units: **Sociology of Gender**, Dr S Crook, Sociology; **Women as Colonisers and Colonised**, Dr RP Davis, History; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Gender in Greek and Roman Literature**, Dr RP Davis, History; **Sociology of Law**, Ms S Berns, Law; **Women Writing: Precursors and Prophets**, Dr RM Blair, Mr A Porteous, Dr R Gaby, English; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Politics of Gender**, Ms Rebecca Wade; **Feminist Aesthetics**, Dr L Negrin, School of Art.

1994: coordinator Dr Rose Gaby

Women's Studies units first offered as a major sequence

2nd and 3rd year units: **Sociology of Gender**, Dr RS Crook, Sociology; **Women Writing: Precursors and Prophets**, Dr RM Blair, Dr R Gaby, English; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Law, Gender and Power**, Dr S Berns, Law; **Gender in Greek and Roman Literature**, (not offered in 1994); **Women and Work in Australia**, Ms Judith Homeshaw, Administration; **Women Colonisers and Colonised**, Prof RP Davis, History; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Politics of Gender**, Ms L Young, Political Science; **Feminist Aesthetics**, (not offered in 1994); **Gender in Australian Writing**, Dr J Livett, English.

1995: coordinator Dr Wei Leng Kwok

First dedicated Women's studies coordinator appointed

2nd and 3rd year units: **Women Writing: Precursors and Prophets**, (not offered in 1995); **Women as Colonisers and Colonised**, Prof RP Davis, History; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs CJ Hiller; **Gender in Greek and Roman Literature**, Dr PJ Davis, Classics; **Women and Work in Australia**, Ms J Homeshaw, Administration; **Women, Power and Society**, Dr R Julian, Dr N Cook, Sociology; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **The Politics of Gender, Politics of Feminism**, Dr Wei Leng Kwok, Women's Studies/Political Science; **Feminist Aesthetics**, Dr L Negrin, School of Art; **Gender in Australian Writing**, Dr J Livett, English; **Women in Chinese Societies**, Dr Jui-Shan Chang, Asian Studies/Sociology.

1996: coordinator Dr Wei Leng Kwok

2nd and 3rd year units: **Women, Power and Society**, Dr N Cook, Dr R Julian, Sociology; **Gender in Literature**, (not offered in 1996); **Women as Colonisers and Colonised**, Prof RP Davis, History; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Law, Gender and Power**, Ms P Baron, Law; **The Politics of Gender, Politics of Feminism**, Dr WL Kwok, Women's Studies/Political Science; **Gender in Greek and Roman Literature**, Dr PJ Davis, Classics; **Women and Work in Australia**, Dr J Homeshaw, Administration; **Contemporary Feminist Thought: Themes, Issues and Conflicts**, Dr WL Kwok, Women's Studies/Political Science; **Women and Medieval Writing**, Dr J Mead, English; **Women in Chinese Societies**, Dr J Chang, Sociology.

1997: coordinator Dr Wei Leng Kwok

2nd and 3rd year units: **Women, Power and society**, Dr N Cook, Sociology; **Gender in European Thought**, Dr M Lindley, History; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Law, Gender and Power**, Ms P Baron, Law; **The Politics of Gender, the Politics of Feminism**, Dr WL Kwok, Women's Studies/Political Science; **Feminist Aesthetics**, Dr L Negrin, School of Art; **Love, Family and Sexuality: East-West Comparison**, Dr J Chang, Sociology; **Women and Work in Australia**, Dr J Homeshaw, Administration; **Contemporary Feminist Thought: Themes, Issues and Conflicts**, Dr WL Kwok, Women's Studies/Political Science; **Medieval Writing**, Dr J Mead, English; **Written Women: Gender in Roman Erotic Poetry**, Dr PJ Davis, Classics.

1998: coordinator Dr Wei Leng Kwok

2nd and 3rd year units: **Women, Power and Society**, Dr N Cook, Dr R Julian; **Gender in European Thought**, Dr M Lindley, History; **Philosophy of Feminism** lecturer not named; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Law, Gender and Power**, Ms P Baron, Law; **The Politics of Gender, the Politics of Feminism**, Dr WL Kwok, Women's Studies/Political Science; **Feminist Aesthetics**, Dr L Negrin, School of Art; **Women and Work in Australia**, Dr J Homeshaw, Administration; **Contemporary Feminist Thought: Themes, Issues and Conflicts**, Dr WL Kwok, Women's Studies/Political Science; **Women and Medieval Writing**, Dr J Mead, English; **British Women Writing (Nineteenth Century)**, Prof L Frost, English; **American Women Writing (Nineteenth Century)**, Prof L Frost, English; **Reading the Classics: Ovid and Chaucer**, Assoc Prof PJ Davis, History; Dr J Mead, English; **Power, Pleasure and Perversion**, Dr I Buchanan, English; **Islam, Law and Women: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives**, Dr A Roy, History.

Honours courses: **Women's Studies: Contexts, Conflicts, Crisis?** Dr WL Kwok, Women's Studies/Political Science; **Women and Public Policy**, Dr J Homeshaw,

Administration; **Theoretical Issues in Feminist Aesthetics**, Dr L Negrin, School of Art; **Education and Women's Careers**, Mrs CJ Hiller; **Feminist Perspectives in Sociology**, Dr R Julian, Dr J Chang, Dr N Cook, Sociology.

1999: coordinator Ms Gwen Nettlefold for Semester 1; Dr Barbara Baird from June

First full-time Women's Studies coordinator appointed

1st year units: **Gender and Power**, Ms G Nettlefold, Philosophy/Women's Studies; **The Representation of Gender**, Dr B Baird, Women's Studies.

2nd and 3rd year units: **Philosophy of Feminism**, Dr M La Caze, Philosophy; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Contemporary Feminist Thought: Themes, Issues and Conflicts**, Dr B Baird, Women's Studies; **Medieval Writing**, Dr J Mead, English; **British Women Writing (Nineteenth Century)**, Prof L Frost; **Power, Pleasure and Perversion**, Dr I Buchanan; **Islam, Law and Women: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives**, Dr A Roy, History; **Aboriginal Women**, Ms J Sabbioni, Aboriginal Studies; **Gender and Nation**, Dr N Moore, English; **Families, Households and Lifecourse**, Dr J Baxter, Sociology; **Gender Issues**, Dr M La Caze, Philosophy.

Honours courses: **Women's Studies: Contexts, Conflicts, Crisis?** Dr B Baird, Women's Studies; **Theoretical Issues in Feminist Aesthetics**, Dr L Negrin, School of Art; **Education and Women's Careers**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Feminist Perspectives in Sociology**, lecturer not named; **Endangered Female Bodies in Colonial Space**, Prof L Frost, English; **Special Studies**.

Women's Studies Summer School, 2nd and 3rd year units: **LA Noir: Film Noir and Hollywood**, Dr J Mead, English; **Migrants in Australian Society**, Dr R Julian, Sociology; **Language, Gender and Communication in Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Gender, Literature and Education**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education; **Education of Women and Girls**, Mrs CJ Hiller, Education.

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Karen Green

I arrived in Hobart pregnant, thinking that I had some prospects of a half tutorship in the Philosophy Department that had been advertised, and I was rather annoyed that the position was given to a man, some years my senior, who had previously been a tutor in the department but had then left to join the public service. My view was that, weight for age, as it were, I was the better candidate (time has vindicated my belief that I had much better publication prospects than my competitor). I therefore asked the equal opportunity officer to look into the reasons for the department's choice, believing that my pregnancy

may have had some influence. This of course soured my relations with the Philosophy Department, however I became an honorary research associate of the department and in 1989 I was offered a half tutorship. Perhaps due to the fact that I was around, and complaining about the sexist attitudes within the Philosophy Department, I was invited to some meetings that had been set up in order to look into the feasibility of an interdisciplinary Women's Studies stream within the University. As there were not quite enough subjects on the books to create a major, I proposed that I should offer to teach an appropriate subject at casual rates in either Philosophy or Political Science. Philosophy flatly refused. At the time I wrote a paper on Feminist Epistemology, in the hope of demonstrating the seriousness of the topics to be covered in the proposed Philosophy course, but the members of the department that I had hoped to persuade, simply failed to attend the paper. For some time in 1987 I ran an informal reading group on French Feminism and Psychoanalysis, then in 1988 I was offered some tutoring in the Political Science department, and gave an introductory first year lecture on feminism and liberalism. It must have been during this year that Political Science accepted my offer to set up a Politics of Feminism course. There were, from memory, about 35 students enrolled in the first year. My memory is that I only taught this for one year, and that it was then taken over by a new appointee. In any case, the lecture material for the course provided the initial basis for a book that I published in 1995, *The Woman of Reason: Feminism, Humanism and Political Thought*. I've always found it ironic that, by failing to employ me, the Philosophy Department propelled me into putting more effort into feminist political theory than I would otherwise have done. In 1990, partly on the basis of my teaching in feminism, I was offered a full time lectureship at Monash University and I have been here since.

Karen Green is the author of The Woman of Reason (Cambridge:Polity,1995) and is currently senior lecturer in Philosophy at Monash University.

Christine Goodacre

In 1985 the Association of Women Employees of the University of Tasmania was formed, with a membership comprising both academic and general staff. At that time I was working in Library and Information Studies. The group met regularly and its steering committee developed an annual program of activities that were aimed at a range of staff interests. Activities included lunchtime meetings with speakers whose work was of interest, and information sessions in areas such as industrial relations and financial management. We invited people like Liz Little, Quentin Bryce, Marilyn Lake, Michael Stokes to come and talk to us. We also had occasional social get-togethers. AWEUT was convened initially by Elaine McKay and later by Amanda Wojtowicz and by me. We continued to meet until the late '80s.

In 1987 one of the primary objectives identified by the steering committee was the establishment of a Women's Studies course, with a cross-disciplinary focus. The working group for this initiative included Ruth Blair (English), Elizabeth Gertsakis (School of Art), Claire Hiller (Education), Marlene LeBrun (Law), Margaret (Thurstans) Sing (Equal Opportunity Officer), Amanda Wojtowicz. The working group formulated a

rationale for the proposal, developed proposals for a subject structure (it was a second year subject initially) and presented this proposal to a meeting of the Faculty of Humanities and social Sciences.

I lobbied heads of departments to gain their support and involvement in offering units — this was time-consuming and a bit delicate, but not impossible. The response of heads of departments varied but the proposal was supported by the Faculty meeting.

Christine Goodacre was a lecturer/senior lecturer in the School of Librarianship at the University of Tasmania between 1981-1994. She is currently Senior Executive Assistant in the Vice-Chancellor's Office

Marlene Le Brun

I was employed as a lecturer in law at UTAS from 1987-1989 inclusive. Along with Chris Goodacre, Margaret Sing (Thurstans) and several others, I was centrally involved in the development of the Women's Studies program. It arose, in part, from the work of the women's group at UTAS, and gained momentum as a result of a social network that developed that included Chris, Margaret, Karen Greene and others involved in the women's group. We began to meet monthly as a group. These sessions became more frequent as we became better friends and colleagues.

The experience for me was mixed. It was great to be involved with wonderful women like Chris and Marg (those friendships have continued to be very close even though I left Tas over a decade ago) but sad because I would have thought that the case for women's studies was obvious — it seemed extraordinary that we encountered so much resistance. I felt like I was going into the Dark Ages at the Law School — wondered what was what in Tas Uni — and my involvement with Women's Studies helped to clarify that sense and make me feel right about my decision to leave after three years ... Once the program was up and running it was reassuring to hear good reports about it from Chris.

Marlene Le Brun is currently an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law, Griffith University and Director of the Client-Centred Legal Practice Unit.

Ruth Blair, Convenor 1989-1991, 1993.

Women's studies had its genesis in a student (Therese Gilfedder) wanting to take part of her Hobart Degree externally so that she could take some Women's Studies subjects. It seemed a shame that there were no such subjects that she could take at the University of Tasmania. At that time (I think this was 1986) there was a strong University Women's group on campus, open to all women — academic and general staff. This group, spearheaded by Christine Goodacre, put together a proposal for a number of units already existing in the departments of English, Sociology and History to be modified so as to be more clearly focused on Women's Studies. Relevant units in Education and the School of Art would also be made available to Arts Faculty students. I became the first convenor as I was the only woman in the Arts Faculty in 1989 teaching in the area! I remained

convenor until my study leave in 1992 and was convenor again in 1993 and on the selection committee for an eventual half-position shared between Women's Studies and Political Science. At this time — and until 1995 — there was no dedicated position in any department in the area of Women's Studies. Though some subjects did have some relation to women's Studies, we thought it was important for students to be able to take courses with that clear designation, not only to develop this subject area, but for the careers of students who wished to work in an increasing number of areas in which it would be useful to have women's studies subjects on their academic transcripts. We felt that the University of Tasmania was lagging behind other universities in this respect.

The courses proved popular and we managed to achieve a major in Women's Studies by the time the committee decided to respond to a call for strategic initiatives in the Faculty in 1991. We put forward a proposal for a dedicated position in Women's Studies. The result was that we were given half a position to be shared with a department in the Faculty. Compromises are rarely without problems. The problem here was that the position was to go to a department that needed a new staff member, not to whichever department might best accommodate Women's Studies or that the best available candidate might best fit. The position went first to Psychology who advertised and then pulled out. It was finally offered to Political Science and an appointment made at the end of 1994 to begin in 1995. Dr Wei Leng Kwok was the appointee. With this appointment, it was possible to develop a core Women's Studies unit and to move towards Honours offerings. I can see now that this position was not well thought through. We were just glad to get anything at all at the time. We at last had a person on board completely focused in her research on the area of Women's Studies — someone who could offer real research leadership in the field, without which there was no point in trying to develop Honours or postgraduate offerings. But the position was a difficult one to fill, especially for an academic in her first lecturing position. She had to satisfy the demands of the Political Science department and at the same time keep enough time to devote to the Women's Studies part of her position. There was no supervisor for her position outside her Head of Department in Political Science. As well as a fine young scholar, Dr Kwok was a conciliator and developed a good working relationship with her home department as well as with the Women's Studies committee (again a body whose powers were rather ill-defined). I think we realized (I left at the end of 1995, but could see this), though, that Women's Studies was in many respects in the same boat as before. It did not have department status and therefore it was very difficult even for the dedicated appointee to carry any weight at Faculty level.

I believe some much needed changes have been made in the last couple of years, particularly as far as the role of the committee is concerned. The dedicated position gave us something some of the larger institutions (UQ, for example) don't have — a coordinator's position; someone who can argue forcefully for the subject area. And most importantly at the time it gave us someone well trained in a range of feminist theory — a position devoted to the area that no single department had been willing to develop. In a small institution like UTas, that was perhaps a good thing, because it meant that Women's Studies was, from its higgledy-piggledy inception — and remained — a strongly interdisciplinary area. This might not have happened if English, for example,

had appointed its own person focused on feminist literary studies. English might then, for a long time, have been the only department offering Women's Studies subjects and other departments might not have felt the need to participate in some way. As it was, the original approach of the Women's Group fostered a collective approach to the subject area. But the position fell between the cracks of the Faculty structure and thus put a tremendous burden on the first appointee.

We did well for quite a long time on no budget and plenty of glue, BUT AT A COST, not only to Wei Leng Kwok, but also to the rest of us who had to fight every inch of the way. From 1988 on, there wasn't a year when I didn't have to win some battle or other on behalf of Women's Studies. Jennifer Livett took on the strategic initiative battle in my absence in 1992. It cost a lot in time and effort for us to join in the strategic initiative round, especially as Women's Studies wasn't represented on the Faculty executive. What we gained, however ill-defined the position, was a genuine research status for the area and the capacity to produce students who could do good postgraduate work either at UTas or elsewhere. If times have changed and a number of people in a range of departments are now working in that area in a focused way, I would urge the Faculty to maintain the cross-disciplinary and collective approach that has informed the development of the area up to now. I feel proud to have been involved in the development of an area of study that gave — along with the hard work — so much pleasure to the students and staff involved in it and the blazed trails for interdisciplinary initiatives in the University.

Ruth Blair taught at the University of Tasmania from 1982 to 1995. She is presently a lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Queensland.

Elaine McKay

I think the work done by Kay Daniels in the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s was a significant precursor to the Women's Studies program. She was an early and strong second wave feminist. Sadly when she left, her programs stopped and there was no direct continuity either in the History Department or in other Departments.

From my point of view, the passing by the Commonwealth Government of the *Sex Discrimination Act* and the adoption of EEO policies were the great stimulus for the activities of 1986-87-88. The University established a committee to formulate an EEO policy, chaired by Prof Colin Wendall Smith who was then Deputy VC. The establishment of the Association of Women Employees of the University of Tasmania (AWEUT) coincided with and was stimulated by these national and local initiatives and AWEUT was represented on the University's EEO Policy Development Committee (I'm not sure that this is its correct title). In true feminist fashion, I was not either the chair or the president but the convenor of AWEUT. We had regular organisational and public meetings and managed to get some significant national figures to speak — I remember Pam O'Neill, the first Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Chris Ronalds who, as a legal consultant, had drafted the legislation. I also remember Bill Joske, Professor of Philosophy attending at least some of these meetings, asking questions and clearly being

hostile to the positions being expressed. Malcolm Waters did not attend but was also known to be hostile and I believe he later spoke against Women's Studies in the Arts Faculty Board meetings, as I think Joske did too. I hope you will be able to check the accuracy of this information in the Board minutes.

As your Chronology records, the first Women's Studies courses so named were conducted in the Centre for the Continuing Education of Teachers (CEET). I don't think this was accidental. Although the qualifications for teachers taking these courses were recognised by the University, they were developed through course committees made up of teachers and Education Department bureaucrats. It was perhaps easier to get course approval this way since part of the justification was that the courses were mounted in response to teachers' needs. To be accurate, there was a meeting of those needs and the interests of the academic staff teaching the courses. However, there was already a unit in the Education Department working on a gender inclusive and girl friendly curriculum and one of the functions of the CEET was to up-date teachers' knowledge and skills and to prepare them professionally for change. I taught the first of these courses, the Education of Women and Girls, in the first semester of 1988 to a class of about six female teachers. This number may not have justified holding the class but I was anxious to teach it to get the series moving. Although I had developed course outlines for Women in Asia and Women in History, these courses were never taught. I went on Study Leave in May 1988, and didn't return to the University of Tasmania.

The Centre for Education was founded in 1981 as a result of the amalgamation of the TCAE and the University. Apart from incidentally teaching in the Australian and European History courses in the Bachelor of Education program, my main fields were Southeast Asian History and Asian Studies and Curriculum Studies in the Social Sciences. The position of women in SE Asian societies included, for example, the nature of the matrilineal society of the Minangkabau, the role of women in the informal economy and Raden Ajeng Kartini - was she truly an Indonesian nationalist and feminist? With Heather Felton (who was then a curriculum developer in the Education Department), I developed a teaching kit for schools on the Minangkabau and also on a woman petty trader in Jakarta, and one of my male students did an honours thesis comparing Kartini with a Japanese nationalist.

Christine Goodacre deserves much of the credit in getting the Women's Studies program developed and accepted. She did indeed carry the burden of lobbying and persuasion.

Elaine McKay is currently Principal Associate with P J Dawson & Associates in Canberra and works on gender related projects for Commonwealth and State Governments, APEC and the United Nations. She will leave Australia at the end of January to work with the women of Kosovo for UNHCR.

Claire Hiller

My involvement in women's studies courses and gender studies started prior to my involvement with the Women's Studies interdisciplinary course in the Arts Faculty. In

1985-1986 I went on study leave from the Faculty of Education and the first half of 1986 I spent at the University of London in the Institute of Education. My explicit intention was to study preservice teacher education programs, particularly the teaching of English, in language and literacy and in children's literature.

The experience at the University of London was particularly interesting. There was such an awareness of class, race, ethnicity and gender. This awareness informed the politics and the pedagogical practices of the Institute of Education.

It was there that I met an academic, Jane Miller, who has written book titled *Women Writing About Men*. And it was through her that I became interested in gender and literature issues. From 1986 the Faculty of Education became very interested in gender issues in schools. In Education in the University of Tasmania we started a gender studies unit, not as part of undergrad offerings, but in an in service program for teachers and as part of the masters program. Initially there were about half a dozen units on offer. There was some resistance initially to the offerings from the hierarchy of the Faculty of Education but through determination and persistence the courses were endorsed by both faculty and University quality assurance. It was becoming imperative for schools to become interested in issues of equity and social justice. The Labor Government supported initiatives on the education of girls. It became a policy initiative of State Education Department. There were several women on the staff of the Faculty of Education at that time who offered Women's Studies courses, and these courses were popular. Teachers remain interested and committed to the courses.

I was invited to be part of the committee to get Womens Studies off the ground in the Arts Faculty. That group included, among others, Karen Green and Margaret Sing (Thurstans). The initiative for the group probably came from Margaret Thurstans who was then the Equal Opportunity Officer, who felt that there ought to be courses in the Faculty of Arts. The original committee was small. I was excited by the opportunity to contribute to the extension of courses which were proving popular for teachers.

The first committee worked fairly quickly and established certain principles of organisation that we wanted to work to, both as a committee and as a group. I was exhilarated by the feeling of equity and mutual support that the group produced. One of the things that was very important to us was that we wanted to work in a non-hierarchical way rotating the positions of chair and secretary so that the meetings would be as equitable and supportive as possible. The process worked extremely well until recently in terms of the existence of the Women's Studies Committee. Although it could be read that we stumbled from year to year never quite knowing what would happen, how much money would be available, who would be willing to offer courses, on the whole the process worked well. The students were keen and there was an energy among the staff which drove us. We worked extremely hard for the position of Women's Studies co-ordinator and were delighted when it looked a possibility. Through most of this time we were supported by the intense devotion of Ruth Blair and we were very sorry to see her leave the university.

The committee set guiding principles for ourselves which we were very happy with. It was important to establish the courses and as this happened the committee grew. Courses were developed across faculties and eventually passed by the Faculty of Arts. It was a fraught but exciting political process. That lobbying was done by people in the Faculty of Arts. Ruth Blair took over the coordination of the program through the English Department. Her period of co-ordination was one of challenges for her and for the committee but there was a feeling of optimism structured around a group of highly committed, enthusiastic, hard working and mutually supportive staff.

After the establishment of the interdisciplinary course in Women's Studies the committee then worked on gaining a permanent appointment to co-ordinate the area. Our dream was to get this position and we worked hard to get it. Wei Leng was appointed as the first co-ordinator. From my perspective she did the work extremely well. She was very well organised, she promoted the courses through advertising pamphlets, she shared her expertise among us, taught very exciting feminist courses and was enthusiastic and supportive. It was a very difficult position for a new academic, indeed for anyone. Its interdisciplinary organisation is very challenging and shifting politics within faculties are often difficult to fathom.

I was rather alarmed in 1998 when there was dissension and some members of the committee suggested that a more hierarchical structure was necessary. At first I was opposed to the notion but eventually was convinced by the argument that new university structures demanded a stronger committee structure. The new steering committee was set up and seemed to work well. It was disappointing for me that Wei Leng resigned, however, I felt optimistic about the future of Women's Studies when I knew that there had been a full time appointment for the first time. This is what we had been working towards from the beginning. It is my hope that the university will continue to endorse and promote what remains a very important area.

Claire Hiller is currently Assistant Head of the Bachelor of Teaching program at the university of Tasmania where she has lectured for 20 years. Her current research interests are literacy and gender in Education.

Jennifer Livett: Women's Studies at the University of Tasmania, 1992-94

I became Women's Studies Co-ordinator at the University of Tasmania in June 1992 when Dr Ruth Blair, who had held the position until that time, went on 'Outside Study Leave' to America. Ruth had been the leader among the original group of three or four women at this university who worked perseveringly (and against considerable opposition from some members of the faculty) to set up a small core of women's studies subjects. At the time when I took over from Ruth, the position was 'honorary' in the sense that it received neither direct salary nor any allowance of hours beyond those involved in teaching the one subject offered by the (then) English Department, 'Women Writing'. The Co-ordinator's duties were thus added to a full-time lecturing load, without secretarial assistance, the main role being (ostensibly) to act as chair of the 'Women's Studies Committee'. This was a loosely constituted, informal body consisting of the

lecturers involved in each department which offered a Women's Studies subject. The heads of those departments were also invited to attend but it was rare for any to do so. When I accepted the job, it was in a 'holding' capacity, ready to hand back to Ruth when she returned in mid 1993, and since I was also Co-ordinator of English 1 (a gruelling task) during both 1992 and 1993, I was relieved to find that the general week to week running of the women's studies courses was smooth, and the committee fundamentally a very amenable group. Unfortunately, in practice, this was the very least of the work involved. Coordination became hugely time-consuming for me, as it had done for Ruth, largely because of events in academia nationwide. An AVCC review of universities in 1992 meant the hurried production of Strategic Plans and Mission Statements by all disciplines. Ruth produced one for Women's Studies before she left in May 1992, but a new one was required from me in early 1993. This was followed by plans to restructure the BA degree at the Uni of Tas, and it became clear that Women's Studies could only survive if it could offer a major sequence.

We had wanted this for some time. Ruth had pushed for it, and had also worked hard to put a case for a first-year subject, a core 'theory' subject, and future planning for honours and postgraduate work, but the difficulty with the major was that it would require at least nine units (minimum) on offer in each two year period, as students needed seven (I think?) for a major, and provision had to be made for the resting of units in some years due to lecturers' study leaves and internal changes in the participating departments. Peter Davis in Classics offered 'Gender in Greek and Roman Literature' and Sandra Berns in law offered 'Sociology of Law' which saved us, but these new units had to be processed through Quality Committee and Full Faculty Meeting; the latter also had to debate and approve the Women's Studies major, to which there was still opposition. (Around this time Judith Homeshaw also put up a proposal for a new unit in Political Science, 'Women and Work in Australia'. The motion was passed to allow Women's Studies a major sequence starting in 1994. Once the major was accepted, it became imperative to renew our longstanding push for a properly designated Women's Studies Co-ordinator, as the admin involved would escalate even further. It was also becoming necessary for the discipline to have a proper budget, instead of the ad hoc granting of \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year that had been the current practice. This had been almost completely spent on library resources, which were still far too sparse even for present use, let alone to service a major sequence. Another of my jobs had been to collect book lists from participating lecturers and put forward library orders. It was clear that we would now also require money to produce advertising leaflets similar to those of other disciplines (for use at colleges, new enrolment days etc), and we had also been trying to run a few public women's studies lectures to raise awareness of the availability of the subject. Unfortunately, with the budget as in so many other ways, the interdisciplinary nature of Women's Studies proved a stumbling block. University rules did not allow for the handling of budgets by any but Heads of departments.

Apart from ideological opposition, the severe tightening of federal funding to universities at this time was the main problem in trying to appoint a designated Women's Studies Co-ordinator. Several departments in the Arts Faculty were 'owed' unreplaced lectureships. They were not in a mood to vote a new one to Women's Studies while their own

remained unfilled due to lack of funding. After negotiations (with the Executive Dean, Prof Brian Mackenzie, and the Academic Dean, Dr Malcolm Waters), it was decided that the Psychology Department, which was 'owed' a half-lectureship, would be allowed to advertise a full one provided that the applicant chosen was one who could spend half their time as a Women's Studies lecturer and Co-ordinator. This position was to be advertised around the middle of '93 but wasn't. In September Psychology pulled out of the agreement. The same deal was offered to Philosophy but was turned down. Ruth had in the meantime returned from study leave deeply involved in new research areas and had decided she did not want to be Women's Studies Co-ordinator again. My contract was due to run out in Dec '93. In the meantime we had produced Uni Handbook entries for the major and as the end of the year approached there were many administrative tasks needing to be done. In the end it was not possible to arrive at any solution regarding the designated lectureship in time for the end of the year. I was offered a year's extension of my contract if I would continue to be Women's Studies Co-ordinator, with the understanding that a lectureship would be advertised during 1994. I accepted this. In early December I set up a leaflet showing course for the following year, and we received funding for 200 copies of this to be printed (on purple paper!). During 1993 there had also been many changes in the English Department arising from the appointment of a new Chair (Prof David Lawton), and the Department itself was restructuring. As events turned out, I had to take study leave in 1994 or risk losing it if I was refused tenure at the end of that year. Dr Rose Gaby (who had been involved for a number of years in the teaching of the Women's Studies subject in English) took over the position from me and later the Political Science Department accepted the half-and-half lectureship arrangement and the position was advertised. Dr Wei Leng Kwok was appointed for the start of 1995.

Jennifer Livett lectured in English for many years at the University of Tasmania and is now a freelance writer.

DR JUDITH HOMESHAW: WOMEN'S STUDIES @ UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA, *PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS*

These are my personal, subjective opinions which are not intended to cast blame but to explain the current situation as I see it. My first recollections are that there weren't any — women's studies, that is. In 1984, twelve years after the establishment of the Women's Electoral Lobby in Australia, and in the year that the Sex Discrimination legislation became Commonwealth law, I was a mature age student majoring in Sociology and Administration. In Social Stratification we learned about class, status and party as concepts enabling analysis of society. We had half a lecture on gender. I remember fuming as we were told that the strongest indicator of our position in society was our father's occupation. Oh, and by the way, only males were measured in the study. Only three women were employed full-time in the Department of Sociology: Dr Margot Roe, a first year tutor; a woman laboratory technician; and the secretary. The situation was the same in the Department of Political Science and Administration. Miss Margery Eagle was a tutor and there were the secretaries. At least in Administration we had four lectures from a visiting lecturer, Ms Eve Richardson, on women in the bureaucracy. In Political Science there was nothing.

In 1987 for Administration honours I was advised not to pursue gender as a topic because it was not considered mainstream academic study. By then I was personally involved with a senior lecturer in Sociology who was writing a textbook. He gave me the manuscript to read and I remarked that there was no chapter on women. Again I was told that this was not serious mainstream Sociology. Women's position in society was mentioned in other chapters and that was enough. It was almost the end of a beautiful relationship. The first draft came back from the publisher's referees with a request for a chapter on gender. It was then that I realised that the chronic structural patriarchy of the University of Tasmania emerged directly from the attitudes of the academics and not only from institutional inertia.

It was at about this time that Karen Green (now I think at the University of Monash) was teaching a unit on the political philosophy of gender, because I remember that she left in the first or second year of my PhD and I was very tempted to apply to be her replacement. There was some controversy over the funding of the unit. Associate Professor Richard Herr was Head of the Department of Political Science then, and it might be worth asking him about it. In 1990 I took leave of absence from my studies to work on Women's Health Policy in the Tasmanian State Service.

I returned in 1992. By then Women's Studies had become informally established in the Department of English with Drs Ruth Blair, Jennifer Livett and Rose Gaby rotating responsibility for its administration. At the end of 1992 I began my first teaching contract in Administration and was allowed to introduce the unit on Women and Work in Australia. At the same time Liz Young began teaching the Politics of Gender in Political Science. Liz had graduated from Flinders University and had a major in women's studies. Ruth Blair became the informal co-ordinator of women's studies assisted by an informal committee consisting of the lecturers teaching gender units in their respective disciplines.

Ruth was instrumental in winning from the then Executive Dean, Dr Brian McKenzie, a commitment to a half-time Women's Studies Co-ordinator. When Professor James Cotton became Head of Political Science he agreed that the position should be in Political Science. I was a candidate for the position which was given to Dr Wei Leng Kwok, a first-time lecturer from the University of Melbourne who had specialised in the philosophy of gender.

Wei Leng, with impeccable academic achievement and potential, had no administrative experience, and little idea of intra-organisational politics in a small university. This was a considerable handicap when it came to formalising Women's Studies within the university funding system. The allocation of her time, which should have been equally divided between Women's Studies and Political Science, was gradually dominated by the latter. She received no guidance from Professor Cotton who professed an autonomous status for the program. There were fewer and fewer Women's Studies meetings and little effort to nurture community relationships. Consequently there was no liaison with the Office of the Status of Women which would have been so beneficial. Instead this relationship was built up by others, primarily Dr Elizabeth Shannon of the Centre for

Public Management and Policy who started the Ausfempolnet e mail network and the Women and Public Policy group, and Dr Jenna Mead.

When Wei Leng took study leave I became Acting Co-ordinator, mainly because the position was in Government, but also because I wanted to revitalise the program by increasing the falling EFTSUs. There was by now a much larger women's collegiate in the Faculty, and with Professor Lucy Frost, representation at the senior levels of administration. I had already virtually written the Women's Studies Strategic Plan with Wei Leng so I was aware of the structural opportunities and constraints. Dr Margaret Lindley and I submitted a proposal for a First Year in Women's Studies which was accepted. Unfortunately, in 1997 I was diagnosed with a mild immune disorder which now makes full-time work impossible. So when my contract ended in December 1998 I finished teaching at the University of Tasmania. I was very sad not to be able to apply for the position when Wei Leng left. I was devastated to hear that the position may disappear once again. It is simply not academically effective to have fragmented units on gender with no particular academic leadership and community development.

As to the future, I think there is great scope for aligning women's studies in the University with women in the community. A lecture series with a broad general focus is an obvious way. Another is to set up a women's bibliographic resource electronic data base for Tasmania to be based in Women's Studies at the University. It could be run in conjunction with Women Tasmania and would consist of details of location and authorship of all the information sources, literary works, literature and government reports about women and by women in Tasmania. There is enough expertise in the faculty to accomplish this. Alison Alexander has an enormous knowledge of archival material in Tasmania. Kate Walpole in the Morris Mitchell Library has done similar work designing databases on a more modest scale for Jenna Mead and Lucy Frost in the School of English. There are dozens of women in the community with material and knowledge to contribute. Once the database is designed, it would be a matter of five or so years to catalogue the works. Perhaps this would make a suitable application for a SPURT grant which could keep Women's Studies alive and active in the community.

Having been a radiographer, pharmacy assistant, mother, policy researcher and academic, Judith is now about to begin her next career as an accommodation manager.

Llewellyn Negrin

I have been involved in the Women's Studies program since 1990 when my course 'Feminist Aesthetics' was first offered to students enrolled in Women's Studies. In 1998 my course 'Fashioning the Body' was also cross-listed with the Women's Studies program. During this time I have regarded my involvement in the Women's Studies program as an extremely important part of my teaching for a number of reasons. Firstly, it has enabled me to participate in an area that fosters cross-disciplinary approaches and interaction with students and academics from various educational backgrounds. This has been a very valuable experience for me as I have always found traditional disciplinary boundaries constraining. Another reason why I have greatly valued my participation in

Women's Studies is that it provides the opportunity for a teaching practice which is not dryly academic but which connects with issues of current concern both on a cultural and a personal level. Because of its connection with issues of contemporary relevance, I have generally found Women's Studies students to be among the most enthusiastic and motivated.

In developing courses in the Fine Arts area for Women's Studies students my concern has been not to focus exclusively on the realm of high art as it has been traditionally defined but to operate with a broader conception of visual culture which encompasses images derived from popular culture as well. Also, with the development of my course 'Fashioning the Body', the concern has been not just with how the female body has been represented but also with how it has been physically altered through various practices of body modification. Because my courses are inter-disciplinary in nature, drawing on material from many different areas besides Art History including Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology and Literary Theory, I have not found any difficulty in offering them to Women's Studies students without a Fine Arts background.

The main difficulties have been mostly to do with the lack of adequate economic and collegial support for the program. Over the years, I have found difficulty in securing adequate funding for the teaching I have done for the program (particularly when the School of Art was in a different faculty from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences where the Women's Studies program was based).

One of the main challenges I see in the future for the Women's Studies program is how to maintain its importance and relevance in the light of claims both in the press and in some recent academic writings that we are in a 'post-feminist' age. The term 'feminism' now seems to be a deterrent for a number of students as I have found in recent times with my course title 'Feminist Aesthetics'. Whereas once this was a drawcard, I now find it much easier to attract students to my other course 'Fashioning the Body'.

Despite the recent challenges to feminism though, I still remain very committed to the importance of the Women's Studies program. While some of the issues and terms of the debate have changed since the 1970s, I still regard the category of 'woman' as a legitimate way of delineating the field of study.

Llewellyn has been lecturing in Art Theory at the University of Tasmania since 1989. She is currently a Senior Lecturer.

Dr Wei Leng Kwok: Women's Studies: Looking back, but not travelling back Women's Studies Feb 1995-Feb 1999

The story of my involvement with the Women's Studies program begins in February 1995. My position was Lecturer in Women's Studies/Political Science, although formally I was 'administered' through what was then known as the Department of Political Science. Later, through a process of Faculty restructuring, that Department became the School of Government. The name, 'Women's Studies', remained unchanged by this

process, as did the names of the other interdisciplinary programs offered through the Faculty.

As with any good story, there's usually always a pre-story, and in the story of my involvement with Women's Studies this was most certainly the case. In formal terms, the actual position entailed equal and complementary commitments to teaching and research in both halves, Women's Studies and Political Science. The joint nature of the position was made abundantly clear by those who prepared the position description for the post, advertised in October 1994. Indeed, in applying for the position, and in my interview a couple of months later, I spoke to my formal training in Political Science (University of Melbourne) and my doctoral research in the field of contemporary feminist thought (also at the University of Melbourne). It was my hope that the selection committee would look favourably upon my qualifications in Political Science and expertise in feminist theory as appropriate to the description of the post on offer.

The composition of the selection committee also reflected the joint nature of the position. The committee consisted of Professor Brian McKenzie (Dean), Professor James Cotton (Head of Political Science), Dr Ruth Blair (Senior Lecturer in English and Convenor of Women's Studies) and Dr Stephen Bell (Senior Lecturer in Political Science). For this reason, the interview itself was not exactly straightforward. I recall responding to questions that came from both sides of the equation, and feeling like I was being interviewed for two different positions. And so I talked about the kinds of teaching I would do in Political Science, and described the courses I'd propose for Women's Studies. Given the strong 'history of ideas' approach to much of my training and doctoral work, I outlined my teaching and research agenda for both parts of the post and how I wanted this to be my contribution to the University of Tasmania. To my mind, I also secretly saw this as a useful way to unify the two components of the job. What I did not know at the time was that this kind of stitching together of two halves into a whole would become an abiding structural feature of my entire term as Lecturer at the University.

One of my first duties in 1995 was to assume responsibility for the co-ordination of the Women's Studies program. Although not discussed at any point during my interview, I had a few ideas about my role as the only dedicated appointment to the program and the work I could do for its development. Under the co-ordination of Dr Ruth Blair, the program already offered a major sequence to students enrolled in the BA and rested on the strengths of staff and cross listed units from disciplines across four major Faculties (Law, Education, Visual and Performing Arts, and, of course, Humanities and Social Sciences). To ensure further expansion of the program, and with the approval of Professor James Cotton, I thus set about exploring the possibility of honours in Women's Studies. I compared and evaluated Women's Studies programs in Australia and internationally and met with Women's Studies Co-ordinators and Directors from three major Australian Universities (Sydney, Macquarie and the ANU). What became apparent in my research and discussions with other Women's Studies professionals was that any program with honours rested upon core subjects in Women's Studies, and that of these core subjects there was always at least one which covered contemporary feminist debates. As I had already discussed my ideas for a unit on contemporary feminist thought in my

interview, I decided then and there that this unit would also be the core subject in Women's Studies. I subsequently developed a proposal to Faculty that introduced such a unit to the program and allowed the major to progress to honours. The honours program and the core unit, 'Contemporary feminist thought: Themes, issues, conflicts', were both approved by the Faculty Quality Assurance committee early in 1995. They were supported by Faculty members shortly after this and submitted to the University Handbook for 1996.

In the meantime, I assumed responsibility for an existing unit in the Department of Political Science and commenced teaching in the program. That unit, 'The politics of gender, the politics of feminism', was in fact one of the first units to be cross listed to Women's Studies (in 1988, I believe) and so teaching it gave me a deep sense of continuity with the program. Of the students in this class, several were to enrol in 'Contemporary feminist thought' the following year, either as Political Science or as Women's Studies students ('Contemporary feminist thought', whilst first and foremost a Women's Studies subject, was also available to Political Science students as a 'Theory and methodology' elective). Indeed, some of the Political Science students continued their interests in the subject area by changing their major sequence to Women's Studies or electing a minor through the program. In subsequent years, a sizeable number of students would be drawn to both units (and the program itself) through my teaching in first year Political Science and the introduction of feminist critiques in that discipline. Once again, these students came through either as Women's Studies or Political Science majors, and in this way enrolments in both units remained strong from year to year.

I first taught 'Contemporary feminist thought' in semester 1, 1996. I recall this to be a challenging time simply because I was learning to set the right kind of pace for this unit. I wanted to cover a great deal of material, perhaps too much for a single semester. And although many of the students in that class of '96 expressed their overall satisfaction with the unit, I took their evaluations seriously and offered a more stream-lined version of the unit in 1997 and 1998. Moreover, as I became more comfortable with 'The politics of gender', I was able to use that unit as a quasi pre-requisite for 'Contemporary feminist thought'. The former prepared students for some of the more challenging debates and discussions of the latter, although it was not necessary to have progressed through the two units in this particular sequence. Certainly, as the teacher of both, it made sense to connect the two units in some way for students. The outcome was that I did find teaching 'Contemporary feminist thought' easier after 1996.

One student I'd like to mention from 1996 is Aimée Heuzenroeder. Aimée commenced her BA the previous year through the University's undergraduate scholarship scheme. She desperately wanted to keep her enrolment in 'Contemporary feminist thought' in 1996, but feared that timetabling clashes would prevent her from attending the tutorial times for the unit. By mutual agreement, however, Aimée was able to attend the first hour of the weekly honours seminar in Women's Studies (see further below) and was in this way able to meet all assessment requirements for the unit. Aimée went on to complete a major in Women's Studies, and in 1998, in my last year of teaching at the University, I had the great pleasure of supervising Aimée's honours thesis in the program and for her

combined degree. Aimée thus stands as the first Women's Studies honours graduate of the University.

The honours program attracted two enrolments in its first year of offering (1996). Since neither of these students had completed the core undergraduate unit (they both fell outside of the new rules for the Women's Studies major and entry to honours), we agreed that some coverage of the undergraduate material would be beneficial to their theses work. Both students completed the first semester of course work in the program but withdrew from their University degrees after semester 1. Although disappointed by their decisions, I also respected their (personal) reasons for withdrawing. In the following year, the Women's Studies honours seminar was offered once again to two students, this time as part of their requirements for honours in another discipline (English). In our discussions, we canvassed material as set by the Handbook description for the Women's Studies honours seminar. We also tailored topics to meet their interests and research questions for their honours degrees in English. Then, in 1998, the program approved Aimée's candidature in honours. And so it was in 1998 that the first student formally completed honours in Women's Studies.

All in all, I taught 'The politics of gender' for four consecutive years, and 'Contemporary feminist thought' and the honours seminar for three. It was, for me, a pleasure to be involved with students who were genuinely interested in the course material and who never failed to give me fresh insights and different angles from which to pursue texts that I thought I already 'knew'.

Apart from teaching in the program, I also played a role planning and co-ordinating public events hosted by Women's Studies. In 1995, I worked with Dr Roberta Julian (Sociology) and the Tasmanian Educational Consortium on a lecture/seminar/workshop series entitled 'Meeting points: Class, gender, culture'. This series was a great success, attracting around 80 people to one of the public lectures. In 1996, the program hosted another public event, 'An evening of critical inqueeries', which drew a crowd of nearly 100 from the University and general public. In 1998, the program continued with the public lecture theme, inviting an international speaker (as a visiting fellow in Sydney) and another interstate guest to the University, and hosting the inaugural Women's Studies Occasional Paper.

All the while, the program continued to expand. As more new Faculty staff arrived with specific teaching and research interests in the subject area, more units were cross listed to the program. When I began in 1995, the program consisted of eleven units. In February 1999, as I prepared the program's undergraduate and honours brochure before leaving the University, there were twenty-six units with HAF (i.e. Women's Studies) codes and enough units in the undergraduate program to form a double major. Women's Studies offered 100 level subjects for the first time this year, after the idea of first year was embedded in the program's strategic plan of 1996 and a successful proposal was put to Faculty by the Steering Committee (again, see below) in 1998. And the program participated in the Faculty's summer school in 1999, offering several electives to students who wished to get a head start in the academic year or make up percentages in their BA.

By 1999, the Women's Studies Committee had also grown to around twenty staff members from several disciplines across two campuses. Given the increasing difficulty in bringing associated staff together on a regular basis, the Women's Studies Committee had already proposed a Steering Committee of four elected members drawn from the larger Committee with the Co-ordinator (i.e. me) making five. The brief of the Steering Committee, first constituted in December 1997, was to advise and offer collegial support in program planning and development. At the time, I particularly looked forward to working as part of a small group and hearing ideas from others about program expansion, since to date I had received *no* effective guidance or constructive comment from immediate supervisors nor from colleagues whom I believed had strong investments in the program but who seemed to withdraw their involvement once I was on board. (The exception here was Dr Ruth Blair, who remained Senior Lecturer in English until the end of 1995, whereupon she accepted a post at the University of Queensland.) At the time, I was also beginning to feel out of my depth as junior academic thrust into a leadership role that had *never* been clarified and was therefore amorphous enough to be variously interpreted by different stake-holders and changing senior personnel. I thus saw in the Steering Committee an opportunity to safeguard against such 'wild' analysis, a forum in which I could at least have a say in determining the role of Co-ordinator as appropriate to my other duties and responsibilities.* In administrative terms, the Steering Committee additionally meant that I could count on the support of others to negotiate with Political Science/Government should more involvement in the program be required. But most of all, I saw the Steering Committee in symbolic terms, for it meant that the program had finally formed a structure around it — not bad, given the absence of a 'department' or 'school' of Women's Studies.

Looking back, even though my activities in Women's Studies were always going to be constrained by the amount of time I could commit to the program — I did, after all, carry a separate teaching and administrative load in Political Science/Government and, as an early career academic, had the added pressures of building a postdoctoral research profile in my chosen areas of expertise — I feel honoured to have played some part in the history of the program and to have been involved with staff and students at the University. But looking back, I also hope that Women's Studies continues to travel along its established trajectory, one set well before my time there, and that the Faculty and University continue to support the program in the spirit of interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship. For looking back need not mean travelling back or staying stuck in the past, and there are many ways to write a reflective essay. This is why I'd like this personal statement and the booklet of which it forms a part to celebrate the history of Women's Studies, with an eye not to the past but to the *future*. This is also why I've chosen not to dwell on all those times when I very much wished for things to be different, not to mention that convergence of events which brought me to my letter of resignation in 1998.

* In psychoanalytic terms, 'wild' analysis may be defined as the resistances which incite the analyst to misunderstand (that is, not hear) the analysand's statements. It is therefore based upon the imposition of ready-made 'interpretations' rather than listening. Seen this way, 'wild' analysis typically reflects a power relationship: the one over an 'other'. Indeed, 'wild' analysis justifies power by appealing to notions of 'superior' knowledge, and can easily appear in the analytic situation as well as outside of it.

Upon leaving UTas Wei Leng Kwok was Fellow at the Ashworth Centre for Social Theory, Department of HPS, University of Melbourne. She is currently at the National Centre for Gender and Cultural Diversity, at Swinburne University of Technology

Barbara Baird, Coordinator, Women's Studies Program, 1999-

The advertisement for the Women's Studies Coordinator position at the University of Tasmania was timely for me: I had just submitted my PhD thesis and, after five years of year-to-year contracts, my half time appointment as a Women's Studies lecturer at the University of Adelaide was finally at an end. I had often thought that it would be interesting to 'return to Tasmania', where I grew up, to take up an academic position, so the job looked exciting. I was encouraged by the fact that the full time position I was applying for signified an increase in the Faculty's commitment to Women's Studies. (My predecessor had been only a half time appointment in Women's Studies). I was interviewed in a second round of interviews at the end of January by the Acting Dean, Jan Pakulski, and members of the Women's Studies Committee, Lucy Frost, Roberta Julian and Janeen Baxter. I took up the appointment, a continuing position, at the end of June. Gwen Nettlefold, a post-graduate student in Philosophy, stepped into the breach at extremely short notice and coordinated the first semester first year unit, which was being offered for the first time, and undertook other coordinating duties until I arrived.

I came to the position with a strong background in Women's Studies. I returned to study in the late 1980s and all my post-graduate study, including my PhD with Prof. Lyndall Ryan, was in Women's Studies. I had worked as a research assistant, tutor and lecturer in Women's Studies at Flinders and Adelaide Universities and I feel a strong sense of identification with the Women's Studies community in Adelaide. I also came with a strong background as a community activist, having worked in lesbian and gay coalition politics, anti-racism and feminist politics.

During the period leading up to my arrival in Hobart I was involved in choosing the school in the Faculty of Arts to which I would be attached. This was a hard task because, from Adelaide, I had little information on which to make my decision. Jeff Malpas, the new professor in Philosophy, was clearly comfortable with interdisciplinarity and Women's Studies and was actively welcoming in discussing the possibility of the location of Women's Studies in his school. For these reasons I chose to go into the School of Philosophy.

My first weeks were spent getting to know the university and preparing for the two units I taught in semester 2 – the first time first year unit *The Representation of Gender*, in which I focused on popular culture, and the Women's Studies core unit, *Contemporary Feminist Thought*. Both built on familiar material and extended into material that I hadn't taught before. I also arrived to take on the supervision of the one Women's Studies Honours student, Briony Alderslade, who, ironically, moved to Adelaide the week after I arrived in Hobart. Supervision of her thesis, about the new Job Network's impact on the place of women in the employment market, was conducted by email and over the phone. These teaching and supervision tasks were a highlight of my first

semester. Briony's excellent thesis and attainment of a first class Honours result were a credit to her and to the Women's Studies Program.

My early assessment of my position as the only Women's Studies appointment, coordinating a program that is made up of units taught across several schools and faculties, is less straightforward. I am aware that the University of Tasmania is not alone in pursuing this model of organising a Women's Studies Program. It has, however, several disadvantages. Despite the support of a Women's Studies Committee, the Coordinator's position is very isolated: there is no one else who is fully responsible for the Women's Studies Program, and no formal structure that operates in an everyday way to support the Coordinator. I should note here that the support given to me in administrative matters by Sandra Kellett, the School of Philosophy's secretary, has been life-saving. Jeff Malpas has also been a supportive Head of School and other colleagues in Philosophy have talked me through student and general administrative matters when required. But much of the decision-making about Women's Studies falls outside my role as lecturer in the School of Philosophy. There are few senior academics on the Women's Studies Committee and all members have busy schedules in their respective schools. Further, the status of interdisciplinarity in the Faculty of Arts is, to put it mildly, shaky. The three interdisciplinary programs in the Faculty – Women's Studies, Cultural Studies and Asian Studies, are all recent innovations and do not have high level structural or intellectual support in a very discipline-oriented faculty. (Aboriginal Studies, taught by Riawunna, is a separate matter to which my comments do not necessarily apply). Likewise I have found little active support at high levels in the faculty for feminist teaching and scholarship. Relatedly, the network of feminist scholars is not strong and nor does it enjoy high visibility.

Ten weeks after my arrival in Hobart the Faculty of Arts announced a plan for cost-cutting and restructuring that proposed to 'deprofile' the Women's Studies Coordinator's position. This would have meant that the position would not be part of the Faculty's 'staff profile', and when I left it would not be filled. The Dean advised me personally, in public, to look for another job. This turning away from Women's Studies, so soon after an increased commitment to the program, was accompanied in the original plan by a similar proposal with respect to the Asian Studies Coordinator position, and by a proposal to drop the Cultural Studies program. After spending about three weeks feeling completely stunned, I called a meeting of the Women's Studies Committee and began a campaign to lobby for rejection of the proposal. Lyndall Ryan, now at the University of Newcastle, provided key support at this stage, sending me an email telling what seemed like all she knows about doing politics in Tasmania and encouraging me to resist this move to undermine Women's Studies. She also provided historical context, reminding me that nearly every Women's Studies program in Australia has had, at one time or another, to fight for its existence. The Women's Studies Committee responded formally to the proposal by writing to the Dean (with copies to the Vice-Chancellor and others), outlining the successful history of Women's Studies at this university, arguing its value as a flexible and innovative interdisciplinary area, and pointing out the negative impact of any decision to downgrade the Coordinator's position. I undertook a program of meeting people, those in certain key positions within the university and likely supporters outside

it, to talk about the Women's Studies Program and to seek advice about how to counter the Faculty's proposal. My quiet campaign also had a public face in the organisation of two public events, which provided key opportunities to put Women's Studies in the public eye, and to enable public statements of support for the Women's Studies Program. The first was the Hobart presentation of the Clare Burton Memorial Lecture, in which legal academic Rosemary Hunter addressed pay equity issues. The event was organised in collaboration with Viki Rutter from the Dept of Premier and Cabinet, and chaired by Jocelyne Scutt, newly appointed first Tasmania Anti-Discrimination Commissioner. The second public lecture was a talk by historian Marilyn Lake about feminist efforts in the 1930s and '40s in the lead-up to the formation of the United Nations, organised in conjunction with Women Tasmania (the state government's status of women office) and chaired by Professor Kate Warner from the School of Law. Both events were well very attended.

At the end of a long process, the Faculty did not pursue its proposal to 'deprofile' the Women's Studies position, and the position is secure – for the moment! While the process was never transparent, and so the best way to intervene was never clear to me, it is my view that the survival of the position is a credit to those who publicly and privately expressed support for Women's Studies. The positive outcome of the process for me has been an accelerated introduction to university politics, and to feminist networks beyond the university. I have found a willingness among feminists beyond the university to support the Women's Studies Program, and an encouraging interest in participating in the opportunities which an expanded program might offer.

I write during a difficult time to be working in Australian universities. The discourse of economic rationalism is promoted not only by the federal government but 'trickles down' to the administration of universities and faculties. Feminist or other critical discourses, indeed any discourse about the value of university teaching and scholarship beyond immediate economic returns, are hard to sustain. Clearly, the federal government's devaluing and downgrading of the humanities and social sciences has a negative effect on women. The humanities and social sciences are, with Education and Nursing, the areas in tertiary education where women are represented best among academic staff and where feminism has had the most impact on teaching and scholarship. Universities are constrained by the broader economic and political climate but they do not have to entirely accept the government's framework in their individual responses. In this light the University of Tasmania's Faculty of Arts' decision to support 'established strengths' (ie the traditional disciplines), inevitably at the cost of 'the smaller programs', is a decision that has gendered effects. Whether these are felt in its impact on curriculum offerings, or on the status of traditional disciplines vis-à-vis interdisciplinary areas, or, to be quite specific, on the Women's Studies program, such decisions are not just about economic necessities.

My plans for 2000 include the Inaugural University of Tasmania Women's Studies Seminar series, to include presentations from local and visiting academics and other feminist commentators. Developing a post-graduate program in Women's Studies is a priority for 2000. I am exploring the possibility of a SPIRT grant with government and

non-government partners and my own personal research interest in the shape and place of sexuality in public discourse is bubbling along in the background. While the imperatives of promoting debate in feminist theory and related areas, (and bringing cutting-edge debate to Tasmania), and building links beyond an academic constituency, do not always sit comfortably beside each other, simply in terms of the commitment of time and resources, both are crucial for the vibrancy of a Women's Studies program, and indeed for its success in the current hostile climate.

The Women's Studies Program at the University of Tasmania has much to build on, but it is limited by its size. While about twenty academics contribute to the teaching program it is dependent on one appointment to coordinate and develop it, and this impacts not only on its quantitative capacity but also on its intellectual capacity to provide a range of specialised teaching and supervisory expertise. The maintenance and growth of the undergraduate teaching program and the development of a strong interdisciplinary feminist research profile in the university will have to be supported by a second Women's Studies appointment in the Faculty (or whatever structure may follow), perhaps in one of the schools with a smaller complement of female academic staff.

The Coordinator position is a Lecturer Level B appointment, with no special administrative or research support yet I have often felt that the position demands the status and authority (and experience) of a professor! The challenges and possibilities of working in a small community like Tasmania are exciting, and despite the constraints of a small, conservative regional university I look forward to developing the Women's Studies Program.

Barbara Baird is currently Coordinator of the Women's Studies program at the University of Tasmania.

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