

A Look to the Future

■ We are pleased to announce that the WSP has received a grant from the Humanities Foundation at Boston University, which we intend to use to bring in speakers of a prominent stature.

■ Our first speaker is **Wendy Doniger**, the Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions, in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, and the Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago. On Nov. 3, she will be speaking on "The Third Nature: Gender Inversions in the *Kamasutra*." Following a close reading of the *Kamasutra*, Doniger will discuss the text's surprisingly modern ideas about gender which challenge stereotypes of feminine and masculine natures.

■ **Dr. Brenda McSweeney** will join us this year as the WSP's first visiting scholar. Dr. McSweeney has spent 30 years working for the United Nations and brings to the program a wealth of experience in international women's issues (please see page two). In the spring semester, Dr. McSweeney will teach a course on Gender in International Development (WS305).

■ **The Sarah Joanne Davis Scholarship Prize Competition** (awarded for an essay on Women's Studies) will be held again this year. Two prizes of \$250 each will be given. The submission deadline this year will be Friday Feb. 6, 2004. Please stop by the office or see the "News" page on our website for more information.

Letter from the Director

The Women's Studies Program had a great year in 2002-2003, and we look forward to having an even better one this coming year! To begin with, I am pleased to announce our reception of a grant from the Humanities Foundation at Boston University, which enables us to invite prominent writers, scientists, and performers to the WSP. We are also happy to host our first visiting scholar, Dr. Brenda McSweeney, who just returned from India where she had been the Resident Representative at the United Nations Development Program.

Boston University's Women's Studies Program has attracted much interest both from within the University and from outside. I receive many phone calls, E-mail messages and inquiries from interested students, academics, artists, and performers who are interested in bringing their research and work to Boston University.

Knowing the great academic talent and resources at Boston University, I have started an archive of BU professors and advanced graduate students whose teaching and research is relevant to gender and women's studies. I have sent out over 75 letters to Boston University professors, of whom some 25 have responded so far. Our intention is to request, on occasion, their participation and attendance in some of our ongoing events and programs. I would like to invite our colleagues from across the BU campus to let me know of any creative and educational ideas they may have for collaborative work in order to engage the wider student body at Boston University.

With the increasing number of students minoring in WS, the Women's Studies Program continues to be a hub of BU students' academic and intellectual activities. Professors Diane Balser and Barbara Gottfried carry on teaching three courses per semester to full capacity and to the high praise and enthusiasm of their students. Three adjunct professors and advance graduate students also teach highly popular courses throughout the year, including the summer sessions. The WSP has updated and expanded its cross-listed course offerings, which can be accessed at www.bu.edu/womenstudies.

I invite BU students to take an active interest in the WSP, to participate in its writing competition, to keep us abreast of their observations and experiences during their summer breaks or study abroad, and to suggest ideas for improvement in order to make the Program all the more an intellectually exciting and academically vibrant place.

Dr. Shahla Haeri,
Director

WSP Visiting Faculty



Dr. Brenda Gael McSweeney, who has spent 30 years working for the United Nations, will be joining us as a Women's Studies Program Visiting Scholar in September 2003. She brings with her vast global experience spanning from the grassroots to the policy-making level. She began her UN career in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, living in a West African courtyard and managing the project portfolio of the UN Development Program. While there, she undertook one year of research in villages as a basis for her doctoral thesis on issues concerning the "Impact of Development on Women" (<http://gael.net/ppr.htm>).

After 3 years as a Senior Policy Analysis Officer in UNDP Headquarters, she was moved to Kingston, Jamaica, (a post which also involves serving other countries in the Caribbean), as UN Chief Executive Officer. The Jamaican Government initiated affirmative action to ensure more equal participation of *men* at the university level!

She next went on to head-up the global UN Volunteers Program first from Geneva and then from Bonn. Under her direction, the Program expanded to include UN Volunteer Specialists in humanitarian and peace-building contexts, and the program also renewed its emphasis on "Gender and Development."

Dr. McSweeney has just completed a 5 year posting in India, heading UNDP's largest program worldwide. The UN Family in India, along with

the Indian Government, chose "Promoting Gender Equality" as one of just two priority cross-cutting themes for the UN System's work in India.

Prior to her UN career, Dr. McSweeney also did short stints in the private sector and in the US Government, as well as spending time researching and teaching at Harvard and Tufts Universities. She studied in Massachusetts at Smith College and at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and also in Geneva and in Paris, where she was a Fulbright Scholar.

Her office is in room 102B, 704 Comm. Ave., just across the hall from the WSP main office.



Do you have great artistic talent? Are you interested in creating the WSP's logo? Now is your chance! The WSP is holding a competition for the design of a logo (image, text, or both) for the program. We'll even provide a prize of \$100 to the winner! The deadline for submissions is the first week of December (1-5). Stop by the main office or see the "News" page of our website for more information.

Summer Activities Faculty

Barbara Gottfried

This past summer, as always, was a busy one. I began by teaching "Women and Film" in the first Summer Session, all the while researching possible texts for this Fall's WS 305 on Asian women's literature and film. Any "spare" time I had went to working out the details of my 3-week trip to Romania, Bulgaria, and Istanbul (July 14 – August 5) and dancing (zydeco, Balkan, contra, etc). I also attended the National meeting of the American Association of University Professors, where I worked closely with a number of colleagues on issues germane to the current state of the profession of university teaching, and participated for several weeks in Freshman orientation activities here at BU. (*cont. on next page*).

Several days before leaving on my trip, I fell ill with a mysterious virus, couldn't eat (or think), packed too much, but finally made it to Bucharest, where I met up with my traveling companion. We attended a "dance camp" in Transylvania, traveled throughout the eastern (Moldavia), northern (the Maramures), and central (Transylvania) parts of Romania, took an overnight train (what an ordeal!) to an old Byzantine, now resort, town on the Black Sea in Bulgaria, then took a tedious 9-hour bus-ride to Istanbul, an enchanting city.

We saw lovely mountainous country, modern cities, villages that seemed like they were right out of a Thomas Hardy novel (no cars, horse drawn carts, farming done by hand-- no tractors!), many very old churches, monasteries, nunneries (which we especially liked), and enormous mosques. Of course, we also "researchd" local eating and cafe habits, and shopped a lot. What a great summer!

Diane Balser

This summer I visited El Salvador and led a workshop in San Salvador for women from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Argentina. (I lead workshops through a peer counseling network). Some of the women were poor, struggling with poverty, racism and sexism. Most were mothers. Most of the women particularly from El Salvador and Nicaragua had been engaged in fights against military dictatorships in their respective countries. Their issues as women were very connected to issues of general social justice. I gave a talk to about 80 women in a small village near San Salvador. Most of the women who came were involved in community organizing and in women's issues. There were a few women who were very active leaders in the FMLN political party. I helped organize the women into support teams so that they could get support in their lives and in their work.

My last workshop for the summer was held in England. Women attending were from Africa, India Israel and Europe. There were many young women from all over the world who were focussed

on issues related to appearance and the beautification industry. I did a panel asking each woman on the panel how their lives were affected by the global economy. Many of the women - from South Africa, Russia, Hungary, India and Israel - talked about poverty. Others raised issues about child raising, racial prejudices, privatization of important services, etc.

I continue to learn alot from and about the women I meet. From all of these conversations I get a picture of women's lives and the quest for freedom, equality, empowerment and the need to live in non-violent world.

Students

In the spring of 2003, the Women's Studies program awarded the first annual Sarah Joanne Davis Scholarship prizes. These two prizes, \$250 each, were given to Julia Gester for her paper "Economic Inequality: Effective Organizing and Self-Enlightenment" and to Lisa Morris for her paper "Child Abuse and Sexuality Development: A Historical Perspective." Both students are psychology majors.

Teaching Fellow

Gillian P. Mason will continue as the WSP teaching fellow for the fall 2003 semester. She is currently completing her doctoral work in BU's American Studies Program. She has a Bachelor's degree in English and Dramatic literature from New York University, and has studied in Prague with the faculty of Karlova University. Her research interests include gender and sexuality in American literature, American popular culture, intellectual history, and theories of critical iconology.

WSP Events 2002 - 2003

Quratulain Bakhteari

On Thursday, October 10, the WSP presented our first speaker for the 2002 to 2003 academic year, Dr. Quratulain Bakhteari, who presented a talk entitled, "Women, Education, and Development: the Case of Pakistan." The event was very well attended and quite successful. Many thanks to all who came. *(cont. on back page).*

Dr. Bakhteari is the founding director and the president of the Institute for Development Studies and Practices in Pakistan, an organization that works to promote community-based education in Pakistan. Dr. Bakhteari has spent more than 20 years working in community development and other fields of social work; she has been especially active in promoting education for women and young girls in Pakistan.

Taslima Nasrin

On Friday, Nov. 15, Taslima Nasrin, novelist and poet, presented a talk entitled "Writing Muslim Women: A Bengali Perspective." Taslima Nasrin, a native of Bangladesh, is a well-known advocate for women's rights. Her work has established her as a leading voice on the experience of women in the Muslim world. She is the author of numerous books, including the novel *Shame* and the autobiographical *Meyebela: My Bengali Childhood*, and she has been the recipient of numerous awards and accolades. Ms. Nasrin engaged her audience in a highly and often heated discussion on the topic of Islam and Women.

Our thanks to the James Geddes, Jr., Lecture Series for co-sponsoring this talk with us.

Jasbir Jain

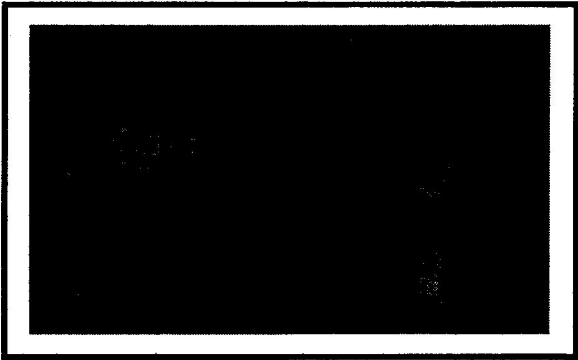
The Women's Studies Program had arranged for a talk by Dr. Jasbir Jain, a native of India, on "Women and Leadersip Patterns: Impact on Democratic Practices in India" for Thursday, March 6. Due to a severe snowstorm and the closing down of the university campus, her talk was cancelled at the last minute.

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Kishwar Naheed

On March 24, the WSP hosted a talk given by the Pakistani Poet Kishwar Naheed, who was on a speaking tour in the U.S. on "The Poetics & Politics of Literature in Pakistan." The talk, and Kishwar's poetry, provided an enlightening insight into Pakistani literature and society.



Body & Sold

Body & Sold was performed at BU on April 14. *Body & Sold* is a play-in-progress accompanied by an exhibition on the issue of trafficking in women and girls, presented by Tempest Productions.

Body & Sold is based on interviews with survivors of sex trafficking in Nepal, India, and the United States. It tells the stories of the perilous journeys undergone by three young women. In conjunction with the play, there was an exhibition of drawings and statements made by young women in Nepal who were survivors of sex trafficking. Following the performance, facilitators with expertise on trafficking led a discussion on the worldwide sale and exploitation of women and children in the sex industry.

Body & Sold was created by Deborah Lake Fortson and Myrna Balk. Tempest productions is a multi-cultural company of Indian, Nepali, Japanese, African American, Chinese, and European American actors.