

Letters

THE SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES



VOL. 11, NO. 1 • FALL 2002 • VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Gender, Sexuality, and Cultural Politics An Interview with John Sloop and Carolyn Dever

The 2002/2003 Fellows Program at the Warren Center, “Gender, Sexuality, and Cultural Politics,” explores interdisciplinary approaches to issues of gender and sexuality, in the academy as well as in public policy and more general cultural contexts. Now at the twentieth anniversary of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, and the tenth anniversary of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, gender and sexuality studies reside at an indeterminate locus at the nexus of the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and legal studies. In particular, this seminar will investigate the evolution of gender and sexuality studies, pursuing such diverse topics as queer studies, masculinity and transgender issues, feminist work in linguistics, biology, and overlapping constructions of race and gender. This year’s participants come from a wide range of academic disciplines, including English, French, philosophy, history, women’s studies, communication studies, political science, and American studies. The program’s co-directors are Carolyn Dever, associate professor of English, and John M. Sloop, associate professor of communication studies. In a recent interview with *Letters*, Professors Dever and Sloop discussed the new program, its relation to their current research, and some of the larger issues their on-going discussions will engage.

LETTERS: This Fellows program has its roots in a more infor-

mal gender and sexuality discussion group that came together several years ago. Could you tell us about this group and how it has evolved into the current program?

DEVER: Vanderbilt has a strong cohort of researchers in different departments working intensively on questions of gender and sexuality and, in many



Carolyn Dever and John Sloop

cases, on lesbian and gay sexuality within a feminist and gender-studies framework. Two years ago, to support this research and the various feminist initiatives already taking place on the campus, faculty members working in this field started a discussion group. The group has served as a forum for the sharing of our current projects, as well as an idea bank for these works in progress. It has been a tremendous re-

source for all of us, and John Sloop and I decided at the end of last year that we should formalize this project and propose a Warren Center Fellows program. What excites me about this particular seminar is precisely this *history* of substantive intellectual engagement and also intellectual generosity.

SLOOP: In attempting to interface with other scholars in the field, I saw a unique problem for myself and for my colleagues in the communication studies department. It’s a small department, and one of the things I thought about was how we could interact with people from other departments. I missed what I had in graduate school—the excitement of all these ideas coming together. This working group has recreated

this atmosphere of collaborative learning. All of the members have been so generous with their ideas. There is never any hostility or negativism.

LETTERS: You mention in your proposal that we are currently facing a watershed moment in gender and sexuality studies. Could you say a bit about the history of scholarly work in this field and point to some of the new directions the field might be taking?

DEVER: We are at a moment in the scholarly discourse of gender and sexuality that is very rich and that will be focused in interesting new ways in the next few years, and we’re trying to become a part of that. About ten years ago, there were several extremely important publications in gender studies and queer theory. “Queer theory” was a new theoretical term at that moment; it was introduced as a kind of post-feminist AIDS-era homophobic approach to the analysis of culture, and it took root in the academy and in activist contexts very intensively around the beginning of the 1990s. It has matured in very important ways and is still a significant discourse in the

Inside

2002/2003 Fellows	6
2003/2004 Fellowships	6
The Holocaust and Other Genocides	7
Kay Redfield Jamison to Present 2002 Howard Lecture . . .	7
We the People	8

DEVER: I want to bring the terms “activist” and “academic” more intimately together as a way of thinking about them, how they constitute each other, and how they talk to each other.

academy. It has opened up many questions, but it's not yet clear to me what the new directions for scholarship are going to be. We were trained at the moment of the genesis of this discourse, and now we have to figure out what the big questions for the next ten years are going to be.

SLOOP: I think something that Carolyn just said is very important to thinking about why this will be such an exciting group of people. We're talking about all types of very fluid, and very contested, areas in engaging these topics. What we are referring to in speaking of “gender” or “sexuality” embraces all of these terms and practices, and there is a lot of contestation and theoretical transition that makes this a very exciting moment, not only within the academy, but as she said, in political activism as well. We have people in this group who have talked with and worked with activists and indeed, have *been* activists, and all of that excitement will be with our group. Also, in terms of interdisciplinary work, these participating scholars are mostly very young in their fields and are coming out of the excitement of the beginnings of the field, ten years ago.

LETTERS: This year's Fellows program, like past Fellows programs, involves a rigorous interdisciplinary discussion of issues. What are some of the challenges that such a discussion presents? What are the fault lines, points of contention? Are there moments at which the interdisciplinary nature of the discussion makes communication break down?

DEVER: It is interesting to think about interdisciplinary discussion in two important and different ways: the first involves the nature of academic work itself and it gets to something that John was just saying about our desire as scholars to be thinking in political ways and to be engaging with practices of activism. Since we are a group

of scholars working in an academic context, one of the translations that we're going to need to make, one of the frames that we'll need to break, and one of the borders that we'll need to cross, is the border between academic and activist work. We will also need to think about how we constitute ourselves as academics, and how our academic work can be in conversation with activist work at the same time. I anticipate that the interdisciplinary nature and diversity of the group will prove to be tremendously enriching. Most of the group members have already been working together for the past two years in the ongoing discussion group we were just talking about, and the disciplinary range has enriched every meeting.

SLOOP: Sometimes interdisciplinary friction can result when scholars have different approaches to supporting their arguments—for example, the employment of a quantitative approach versus a qualitative approach. Many productive discussions can come out of these different types of methodological assumptions, but occasionally they can bog down discussion. This year, we have the advantage of having common roots, in particular, our familiarity with the seminal works of the early 1990s that Carolyn mentioned earlier. Our methodologies might be a little different, but we have enough assumptions in common that we probably will not have difficulty interfacing. One of the differences, though, that I do want to mention is the fact that we come from different sexual identities and gender experiences. This is important to this group because of the link between our work and our political activism. I am expecting that we'll have some very productive “friction” in the course of our discussion.

LETTERS: It seems that all the Fellows understand their work as part of an activist agenda. How do you understand your own

work in the field of gender and sexuality as shaping current politics and what are some of the critical debates?

DEVER: I have a book that is coming out shortly, entitled *Feminism in Theory: The Practice of Abstraction*. It is in some sense a reconsideration of academic feminist theory in conjunction with activist feminist theories from the period of the women's liberation movement. Part of what interests me about this period is its archive. I'm looking at lots of activist documentation from the early 1970s that hasn't really been examined with respect to literary contexts, such as neighborhood newsletters, flyers, circulars, and group manifestos. These are integral to my book and are juxtaposed as theoretical texts with theoretical texts that would be more familiar to a contemporary academic audience. Part of what I'm trying to do as a means of linking activist and academic work is to historicize how we think about activism by thinking about theories of activism as theories of interpretation and theories of politics. I want to bring the terms “activist” and “academic” more intimately together as a way of thinking about them, how they

constitute each other, and how they talk to each other. My sense is that there has been an enormous amount of interest in the academy around projects that are similarly working to historicize these categories.

SLOOP: The book that I'm currently working on is a series of contemporary case studies of “gender trouble.” I focus on such issues as trans-genderism, sexual identity, and other debates that trouble people and get talked about in mass media and discourse. One thing I'm trying to do in this book is to expose the stability of all of our categories in mass culture, not as a means of implying that they cannot be changed—for obviously that's what activism is all about—but rather, to raise questions about how much room for optimism we have in being able to change the meanings of terms in categories that already exist. That's one source of tension that always gets played out among the more optimistic critics, who think that it is easy to push borders, and others who focus on constraints. Recently, I've been reading essays from a collection of historical cases that my colleague in the communication studies department, Charles E. Morris, is

putting together in a volume called *Queering Public Address*. One of the draft essays, by Dana Cloud of the University of Texas, Austin, exhibits this type of theoretical or critical tension. Cloud questions the value of going back in history and trying to reclaim certain figures as queer, gay, or lesbian. Her argument is that it is not worthwhile to go back and reclaim, for example, Eleanor Roosevelt, because Roosevelt never made a public statement about being lesbian. Instead of doing such projects, she suggests that we



Carolyn Dever

SLOOP:

Part of our job as academics is to look at the public archive and challenge that archive.

should be focusing on policy and the present.

DEVER: I think that right now in gender studies, queer theory, and feminism, that we are at a moment when people are doing very interesting work on questions of globalization, human rights, postmodernism, and race—especially in the postcolonial context. I think that in the next few years we're going to see this global perspective occupying a more and more central place in discourses of gender. In early discourses, in trying to understand, for example, what the identity of the woman's movement might potentially be—that is to say, what its objects of analysis or objects of activism might be—it was very difficult, and to some extent remains very challenging, to simultaneously analyze issues of race, issues of gender, and issues of sexuality. The terms are asymmetrical relative to one another, and they operate differently, but they are crucial. It's very important to keep them all in play, fairly, at the same time.

SLOOP: I've been thinking about these issues since Jennifer Terry, a visiting speaker from the comparative studies department at Ohio State, met with our workshop last year. I've been listening to these claims about where we need to go, and what our work needs to be saying and doing. I tend to think of our work not in terms of what I'm writing, or what any of the members of this group are writing, but in terms of the work of the critical community as a whole. In that mosaic, I think, all of this needs to be worked out.

DEVER: Our Visiting Fellow, Lisa Duggan, who is in the American studies program at New York University, is somebody who is working to bring discourses of race, gender, and sexuality together. Her book, *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence and American Modernity*, is an excellent example

of those efforts. The book she'll be working on next year with us is about Jesse Helms and the origins of a political stance in the U.S. that is based on hate. Her work demonstrates how homophobia and racism have been fused in public discourse. She is someone who will be very important to the way in which we as a group are attentive to intersections of race and sexuality. Another member of the program, Brooke Ackerly, who is a new faculty member in the political science department, is currently at work on a book on human rights in a global context. Most of us are in humanities departments or in "humanistically" inclined social science departments, so I think Brooke's more empirical work on matters of social justice will bring a fresh perspective to our group.

SLOOP: What Lisa [Duggan] is doing with class in *Sapphic Slashers* has been very important to me in thinking about one of the cases that I'm working on. One of her arguments is that people have understood lesbian relationships as being disruptive of domestic spaces—white, middle-class and upper-class homes. As I was looking at a case of what we would now call trans-genderism from the same period, I found that I was focusing almost entirely on identity issues in terms of sexuality and gender while overlooking, to some extent, issues of social status. After working through Duggan's book, I realized that one of the sub-themes that was running throughout this case was the way in which lesbianism compromises status. The subject of this case, Lucy Lobdell, had lived like a man and ended up marrying a woman named Marie-Louise Perry, who was of the "Boston Perrys." There was this casting of Marie-Louise Perry as the "normal" partner in the relationship, and much discussion about the wealthy family she came from, how she gave up her inheritance,

and how lesbianism had led to the downfall of a "proper" woman. It's a thing that wasn't blatantly exposed in the context of the case—none of the doctors were saying these things explicitly—but the allusions were definitely there.

LETTERS: Do you think that the current scholarship in the field speaks to the experiences of people of the lower classes?



John M. Sloop

DEVER: It's a tension with any theory that pretends to talk about a category like gender. Even a category such as "women," which seems coherent to us, is an utter failure. There is absolutely no way that any body of theoretical work could possibly account for all kinds of experience. I think there are two things that are important to realize from that failure: the first of those is that we must be constantly aware of the limitations of our theory, and keep going back dialectically and working in a corrective fashion. Second, we must be cognizant of blinders, such as the issue of class or status that John was just speaking to, that might erase particular categories within the category of women altogether without even

realizing it. I see any theory—and feminist theory in particular—as requiring this constant vigilance.

LETTERS: You have referred in your proposal to work being done in legal studies and medicine, and the ways in which gender and sexuality scholarship is responding to current issues in these fields. In what ways do you see the field of gender and sexuality shaping medical research and funding or legal decisions?

DEVER: I see the most profound areas of overlap in the discourse of Critical Legal Studies, which is small but vibrant. What Critical Legal Studies shares with the kind of scholarly work we do in humanities centers is an investment in the kind of post-structural discourse, to which such theorists and philosophers as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault have been important. There is a sense in which Critical Legal Studies and post-structuralism in the humanities are concerned with a similar deconstructive impulse—the fact that there is no "essential subject" for example.

SLOOP: I agree with you, although when I heard the question I immediately thought of the impact in a courtroom and in the writing of law. I think that Critical Legal Studies has some impulse towards that. But in terms of medical research and medical decisions, I sometimes find myself questioning our impact as scholars. Is progress being made in these fields because of the work we're doing? I'm not quite sure. But it's true that there have been people in the academy who have been writing about medical research and engaging in medical discussions about gender study

(for example, what we should do with intersexed children) for quite some time. If I ask what has led to the major changes in policy, major changes in doctors discussing these issues—or in some cases, being forced to discuss these issues—I do think that it's due in part to the type of work that we are doing, particularly the big discussions, such as the John/Joan Twins case, for instance.

DEVER: I'm thinking about an organization like HRC (Human Rights Campaign), a lesbian and gay advocacy organization, which is working through legal channels and through political action. I don't think their members are necessarily familiar with our scholarship, but we're working on similar issues. We're not necessarily familiar with their specific work products either, but we're clearly all working on the same projects, just from different ends.

SLOOP: I agree, and I think that indirectly, as we take part in the evolution of this discursive community, this will lead to the change in assumptions in the medical and legal arena.

DEVER: Take for example, someone who is working in medicine like Anne Fausto-Sterling, whose book, *Sexing the Body: Gender, Politics, and the Construction of Sexuality*, is informed by work like ours, but isn't written for us exclusively.

SLOOP: I was reading an interview with Fausto-Sterling in which she said that she didn't think she had any influence in changing anyone's mind until she wrote an article that appeared as an editorial in the March 1993 edition of the *New York Times*, entitled "How Many Sexes Are There?" She identifies this moment as the one in which she entered a conversation that might function to change medical discourse. It's almost as if these communities are impenetrable until mass media discourse forces them to talk about the issues up front.

LETTERS: Could you say more about the John/Joan Twins case

that you are currently working on?

SLOOP: The Twins Case is a fairly famous case that engages the issue of what to do with intersexed children—children with ambiguous genitalia. There is an excellent account of it in John Colapinto's book, *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl*, a profoundly sad work that recounts the psychological problems that "Joan"—who now calls himself "David Reimer"—had during the experience of being raised as a girl. This has obviously always been a troubling question for physicians and parents. One of the major studies, one that has affected for years what has been done with these children, was conducted by John Money, a sex psychologist at John Hopkins. His arguments were very cut and dried at the time; Money's theory was that gender was completely socially constructed. He believed that the sexual identity of the physical matter of any body could be constructed simply by raising it as male or female. He thought, for example, that if we took a boy and crafted a vagina for him, and raised him as a girl, he would become a girl. In his argument, it was very clear that he was maintaining gender stereotypes while at the same time claiming that gender was socially constructed. His theory and its supporters seemed peripheral until the very celebrated John/Joan Twins Case came about in 1967. In this case, one member of a set of twins had his penis accidentally severed during circumcision. The mother, not knowing what to do, saw John Money on television discussing gender transition and was persuaded by his arguments. Ultimately, she had her son's penis removed and raised him as a girl. Money did not stay in touch with the family, but over the years, he claimed this experiment as a phenomenal success. Other physicians looked upon Money as the "guru" in the field and accepted his experiment as evidence that we can do anything sexually.

Unfortunately "Joan" experienced great difficulty being raised this way. Upon finding out that he was born a boy, he made the transition back into being a male. One of the things that I was interested in studying was the way in which this experiment was taken over by other physicians. For instance, Milton Diamond, a biologist at the University of Hawaii, thought that this case proved John Money's ideas to be an absolute failure. As he would argue, gender and sex are hard-wired into the brain and there is no room for transition. What seems clear, though, is that both Money and Diamond had very un-nuanced theories of what gender is. Diamond's theory, though supported through the evidence of this case, had a rather disturbing essentialist argument built back into it.

DEVER: Clearly, in medical circles, questions about the location of gender are as germane as in communication studies or English. These are always questions of interpretation, questions about bodies, what bodies do, what bodies are intended to do, and how the social world constructs bodies. The meaning of what a body *is*, however, is always a matter of interpretation.

SLOOP: Yes, this seems true, and in fact a lot of physicians and medical researchers understand this, but unfortunately in mass media discourse this gets lost. The way that bodies are talked about always becomes a "This-Is-What-It-Is" issue.

DEVER: Except when definitions conflict with each other, as in the Twins case, in which one physician believed he could make anyone any gender he wanted to, while the other believed gender to be hard-wired in the brain. That's a very interesting conflict, because it presents two declarative, authoritative statements that are directly opposed to each other.

SLOOP: Yes, but whichever side of it you took, what it meant to be male or what it meant to be female were ultimately the same.

The evidence given—what kind of toys did the person play with, what kinds of clothing did they wear, what did they like to do—ultimately supported a narrow construction of categories. Money and Diamond *agreed* on the categories: this is what a man does, this is what a woman does, this is what boys do and girls do. Even though Money took a socially constructed stance to gender, he certainly wasn't troubling it.

DEVER: Was anything done to Joan other than the alteration of genitalia?

SLOOP: Yes, they had started hormone treatment, but the child refused to take it sometimes and was never comfortable with taking it. But perhaps what is most interesting about the account presented in Colapinto's book, and in all of the articles that responded to it, was that everything about this child's life was used by Colapinto solely as evidence of the failure of Money's experiment. So, in the end, Colapinto's discourse, which essentially matches all the other public discourse, does not present a very nuanced argument at all. We are lucky, though, to have the expanded perspective of the current medical discourse on intersexed children. Activist Cheryl Chase, whose efforts preceded those of Colapinto and who has now become fairly well known, had petitioned against physicians doing surgery on intersexed children. She suggested that parents of children with ambiguous genitalia refrain from doing anything. But no one would listen to her until Colapinto's book came out. While it took a major case for Cheryl Chase to have any impact, she has been in conversation with academics for years. She is doing the kind of work where we see this type of interfacing between activists and the academy. In fact, she's editing a book right now with Alice Domurat Dreger, who has written about the history of hermaphrodites and intersexed people in her book, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of*

Sex. Chase is trying to bring the voices of these people, historically and in the present, into that work. Through her efforts, we're seeing the combination of public activism and academic activism that is so important.

LETTERS: You mentioned earlier, Carolyn, the relationship of your current book to the concept of archives. Could you say a bit more about the kind of archive that we are building for future scholars of gender and sexuality?

DEVER: Constructing an archive in lesbian and gay history can be exhilarating and it can also be challenging, because there isn't always a lot of material there. You can't construct an archive of silence, and sometimes what you are confronted with is silence. Similarly, constructing an archive of aspects of the women's liberation movement, as I'm trying to do in this book, is really challenging because much of the activist literature of the period has gone unrecorded. We don't have the utterances—the records of what people did on the streets—and that creates a historical archive in the context of memory, but not necessarily within the context of paper. This brings us to the kinds of questions that we are constructing now. I have a friend who is a librarian in a collection in New York City that specializes in nineteenth-century British fiction and contemporary American literature from the 1960s and 1970s. He has told me that being an archivist as a profession is very strange, because computers and technology are changing the nature of the archive altogether. We no longer have draft manuscripts because we save over them every time we save a document. So, what counts as data from this historical moment has yet to be figured out. This is, of course, one of the points that Judith Halberstam [professor of English literature, University of California, San Diego] is making, though from a different perspective, in her current work on the Brandon Teena archive. She is interrogating the

larger presumption of the archive. It's really important to understand what the assumptions of any coherent body of knowledge are, and to closely consider what is being included and what might be eluding any archival project.

SLOOP: Exactly. Part of our job as academics is to look at the public archive and challenge that archive. There is very important work to be done in building archives, especially with the sort of material that gets lost. Conversations are lost, and so there is the matter of trying to help people build their memoirs. In terms of archival work though, we must be as comprehensive as possible when researching any case, finding every scrap of that discourse, and understanding the themes and assumptions we make as a culture.

LETTERS: Could you say more about the positive and negative aspects of the dissemination of information through the mass media?

SLOOP: I'd like to have something optimistic to say, although I'm at a point where I'm fairly pessimistic. When I think of traditional mass media or electronic media, television, or film, I'm optimistic about the fact that issues are being raised. I know that transitions are always ongoing. I'm not an ironclad Althusserian—there is always room for transition. But I'm pessimistic as well, because much of the time our common-sense assumptions get repeated. Mass media has to appeal to mass consumers, so therefore it caters to their assumptions. This is what John Fiske [professor of communication arts at the University of Wisconsin, Madison] has referred to as "ideological claw-back." He uses the metaphor of a bucket of lobsters—if one of them tries to climb out, the other ones are always there to pull it back in. New ideas, configurations of being or different ways of representation, don't completely shut down, but in order to be popular, they have to fit common sense assumptions. I'm at heart a "McLuhanite"—not a media-determinist, but one who has been

influenced heavily by Marshall McLuhan's work—and I do think that new modes of communication alter our ontology and epistemology and our common-sense assumptions. Ten years ago I was more optimistic, as many other critics were, because I thought that we could play with gender, sexuality, and race—see them as performative—and ultimately deconstruct them. But I think that it's clear to almost anyone who looks, critics such as Lisa Nakamura [assistant professor of English at Sonoma State University] for example, and others who in looking at this discourse have seen a rigidification of stereotypes, that in performing identities, we reify them. If I see anything positive coming out of these new modes of communication it's the fact that political activists have a much easier time cohering around these spaces. Cheryl Chase has said that with access to the internet she was able to build a coalition that she could never have built otherwise, because the intersexed community is very small in some sense. Building a coalition via the internet forms new identifications, new categories, new communities—that's a positive aspect. But if we put media in this material culture, I've very pessimistic. The internet has, if anything, turned me back to a very base Marxism in a sense.

DEVER: I'd like to consider these issues pedagogically as a means of understanding how to create an optimistic vision out of something somewhat pessimistic. I just recently finished an undergraduate feminist theory course; most of the students had taken John's gender trouble course. Some of the most interesting and empowering work they did on their final projects involved the analysis of various media outlets. A few students worked on magazines, a few worked on topics involving television—one student produced a really good paper on "Sex in the City"—and one or two others were working on internet topics. These students were

just beginning to get a sense of the kinds of analysis that feminist theory made possible, and the media-oriented approach worked extremely well as a means of helping them to articulate a position. In watching these undergraduate students try to figure out for themselves how the analysis of gender and sexuality might work in their worlds, it became clear that pop culture gave them something to push off against.

SLOOP: Pedagogically, one of the reasons why it's easy for me to have popular courses is because I teach mass media. No matter what analytical approach I take, or what tool I'm providing the students with, it's something that they are familiar with, and it's something they can work from. It's intuitive for them. Teaching them to analyze these resources in new ways has been exciting. No longer do they succumb to common sense assumptions. I'm very optimistic about this. It's in considering how the mass media operates organically, without our helping people to intervene that I become pessimistic. This semester, I had students doing analyses and building web-sites that helped to deconstruct some of these things I'm talking about. I teach a course called "Communication Culture and Consciousness" which is a media ecology course. This course used to be so exciting, the students would come in every day excited about the possibility of new communities, of new forms of democracy, of trans-nationalism, and the throwing off of borders. There was this intense excitement about connections and links and for a brief moment, this sort of Haraway cyborg utopia. But within three years the assumptions the students had come into the class with, changed. When I first started teaching the course, there were no web browsers, now they've been using browsers forever, and the students work with the new media just like it's the same old song. And of course, it's not.

2002/2003 Fellows

BROOKE ACKERLY, assistant professor of political science, specializes in democratic theory, cross-cultural human rights theory, feminist theory, and social criticism. She is the author of *Political Theory and Feminist Social Criticism* [Cambridge UP, 2000], as well as several articles on women's rights and empowerment, and democratic institutions. She is currently working on a theory of cross-cultural universal human rights that is respectful of differences both across and within cultures, focusing on the cultural politics of Singapore, China, and Muslim countries.

KATHERINE B. CRAWFORD, assistant professor of history, studies early modern European history. She has written on gender and politics in early modern France with respect to regencies for child kings. Her current project, tentatively titled "The Sexual Culture of the French Renaissance," investigates the meanings attached to erotic practices during this era and the ways in which the boundaries and definitions of acceptable sexual expression, the sites of repression, and the relationship between sex and society, are under constant negotiation.

CAROLYN DEVER, associate professor of English, is Spence and Rebecca Webb Wilson Fellow and co-director of the Fellows Program. She specializes in feminist theory, queer theory, and Victorian literature. She is the author of *Death and the Mother From Dickens to Freud: Victorian Fiction and the Anxiety of Origins* [Cambridge UP, 1998] and is co-editor, with Margaret Cohen, of *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel* [Princeton UP, 2001]. She recently completed a manuscript entitled *Feminism, In Theory: The Practice of Abstraction* (forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press in 2003), which reconsiders academic feminist theory in conjunction with activist feminist theories from the period of the women's liberation movement.

LISA DUGGAN, associate professor of American studies and history at New York University, is William S. Vaughan Visiting Fellow and Visiting Associate Professor of History. Professor Duggan has published extensively on gay and lesbian history, with an emphasis on cultural politics in the twentieth century. She is the author of *Saphic Slashers: Sex, Violence and American Modernity* [Duke UP, 2000]; *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and National Interest*, co-edited with Lauren Berlant, [NYU Press, 2001]; *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*, co-authored with Nan D. Hunter, [Routledge Press, 1995] and *The Incredible Shrinking Public: Sexual Politics and the Decline of Democracy* [forth-

coming from Beacon Press, 2002]. Her current project, entitled "One Nation? Jesse Helms and the Politics of Americanism," assesses the legacy of Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, analyzing his imprint on U.S. political culture in the post World War II era as a means of understanding intertwined contests of race, gender and family relations, sexual morality, religion, foreign policy, and global political and economic institutions.

LYNN ENTERLINE, professor of English, is a comparatist trained in the English, Italian, Latin, and Greek literary traditions. Her research and teaching interests address sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English dramatic and non-dramatic literature as understood in relation to continental influences and classical antecedents. She is the author of *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* [Cambridge UP, 2000] and *The Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing* [Stanford UP, 1995]. Her work is informed by her interests in feminist, psychoanalytic, and queer theory; her current book project "Imitating Schoolboys: an Essay in Shakespeare's Emotions," focuses on the discursive and material practices of the Elizabethan grammar school, examining how rhetorical negotiations in early modern texts reveal an intense and unresolved transpersonal struggle over the meaning and social value of different bodies and desires.

JOSÉ MEDINA, assistant professor of philosophy, studies the philosophy of language and the philosophy of mind. He is the author of *The Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy: Necessity, Intelligibility, and Normativity* [SUNY Press, 2002] and the co-editor (with David Wood) of *Truth: A Reader* (forthcoming from Blackwell in 2003). He is currently at work on a book project with the working title "Subversive Identities and Discursive Practices," which draws upon the philosophical views of Foucault and Wittgenstein, and examines the sense in which sexuality and ethnicity are normative categories and how their normativity is produced, maintained, and transformed through discursive practices.

DIANE PERPICH, is assistant professor of philosophy and the author of numerous articles and book chapters on Emmanuel Levinas, as well as the co-editor (with B. Bergo) of a book-length collection entitled *Levinas's Contribution to Contemporary Philosophy* [New School for Social Research, 1998]. Her current research concerns recent debates over the foundations of moral theory and related conceptions of subjectivity and agency. Her project takes up the feminist claim that sexual difference is not

incidental but central to a fully elaborated conception of embodied subjectivity, and explores the ways in which this consideration of "sexed subjectivity" has implications for traditional problems in ethics and political philosophy.

KATHRYN SCHWARZ, associate professor of English, studies early modern representations of femininity. She is the author of *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance* [Duke UP, 2000], which situates Amazonian narratives in Elizabethan and Jacobean literature within the workings of social theory as a shaping and defining force with respect to sexuality and gender roles. Her current book project, tentatively titled "Femininity and Intention in Early Modern England," considers the problematic nature of conventions that govern feminine behavior as presented in works by Donne, Shakespeare, Wroth, Cavendish, and Milton and investigates the ways in which these conventions complicate terms of power.

JOHN M. SLOOP, associate professor of communication studies, is Jacque Voegeli Fellow and co-director of the Fellows Program. He specializes in rhetorical theory and cultural studies and has published extensively on these subjects. He is co-author

of *Shifting Borders: Rhetoric, Immigration, and California's "Proposition 187,"* with Kent A. Ono, [Temple UP, 2002]. He is also the author of *The Cultural Prison: Discourse, Prisoners, and Punishment* [University of Alabama Press, 1996], and co-editor (with Thom Swiss and Andrew Herman) of *Mapping the Beat: Popular Music and Contemporary Theory* [Basil-Blackwell, 1998], and *Judgment Calls*, with James McDaniel, [Westview Press, 1998]. His current project, entitled "Disciplining Ambiguity: Rhetorics of Gender Trouble," focuses on contemporary case studies of trans-genderism, sexual identity, and other issues discussed in the mass media.

HOLLY TUCKER is assistant professor of French and the author of *Pregnant Fictions: Tales of Childbirth in Early-Modern France* [forthcoming from Wayne State UP], which considers how narratives of pregnancy and childbirth were used by male and female authors alike to resituate the gendered boundaries between scientific "facts" and marvelous lay fictions. She is also co-editor (with Virginia M. Scott) of *SLA and the Literature Classroom: Fostering Dialogues* [Heinle and Heinle, 2001]. Her current area of research concerns the implications of the recently invented microscope for early-modern notions of sex and gender.

2003/2004 Fellowships

The 2003/2004 Fellows Program at the Warren Center, "Medicine, Health, and Society," will be co-directed by Vanderbilt University faculty members Larry Churchill (medical ethics) and Matthew Ramsey (history). The study of medicine, health, and society is one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing areas of interdisciplinary research and teaching today. The year-long seminar will explore how various societies—including our own—have understood, experienced, and responded to disease.

Health-related beliefs and practices are deeply embedded in particular societies and cultures; this observation applies with as much force to modern Western biomedicine as to pre-modern and non-Western medical systems. Such an approach is inherently comparative; the humanities broadly conceived can elucidate the variety of experiences of health and illness, hygiene and medicine, across time and space.

The Warren Center will sponsor a Visiting Fellow with expertise in the area of study, in addition to selected Vanderbilt faculty members. Information regarding the internal and external applications processes can be obtained from the Warren Center.

The Holocaust and Other Genocides: History, Representation, Ethics

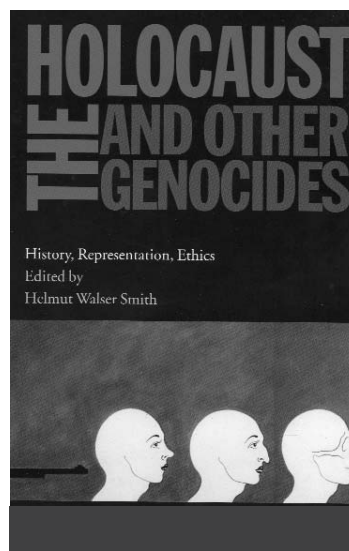
Vanderbilt University Press has recently published an interdisciplinary curriculum guide for teaching about the Holocaust and other acts of genocide. This volume, *The Holocaust and Other Genocides: History, Representation, Ethics*, edited by Helmut Walser Smith, associate professor of history at Vanderbilt University, is the product of a collaborative project sponsored by the Warren Center and supported by grants from the Tennessee Holocaust Commission and the Zimmerman Family Foundation. Funding for this project will allow the Holocaust Commission and the Warren Center to provide a copy of the volume to all high school libraries in the state of Tennessee.

The curriculum is the first to systematically tie the teaching of the Holocaust to the analysis of the genocides in Armenia, Bosnia and Kosovo, and Rwanda. The volume consists of five parts: introduction; history of the Holocaust; representations of the Holocaust in literature, film, and

the arts; other genocides; and ethics. It models an interdisciplinary approach through the presentation and analysis of primary documents, and provides the reader with detailed introductions for each section that reflect current research in different academic disciplines. It also includes discussion questions, suggestions for further reading, additional resources, and intratextual links designed to promote interdisciplinary reflection on this controversial topic.

The curriculum was shaped with feedback from those who teach Holocaust studies, including twelve faculty members from five universities across the state, representing eight academic disciplines, and eight secondary school teachers from a variety of academic backgrounds from schools in middle Tennessee. The Warren Center hosted a year-long seminar involving the primary contributors to the volume, and convened a summer workshop with the secondary school teach-

ers the following summer to read and revise the manuscript for use in the classroom. Contributors include William James Booth, professor of political science, Vanderbilt University; Penelope H. Brooks, professor of psychology, emerita, Peabody College at Vanderbilt University; Joel Dark,



assistant professor of history, Tennessee State University; Paul B. Fleming, teacher, Hume Fogg High School; Ernest Freudenthal, associate professor of engineering, Vanderbilt University; Jay Geller, senior lecturer of modern Jewish culture, Vanderbilt University; Sue Chaney Gilmore, teacher, Hillsboro High School; Teresa A. Goddu, associate professor of English, Vanderbilt University; Peter Haas, Abba Hillel Silver Professor, Judaic Studies, and director, Samuel Rosenthal Center for Judaic Studies, Case Western Reserve University; David Patterson, Bornblum Chair of Excellence in Judaic Studies and director, Bornblum Judaic Studies Program, University of Memphis; Gary Phillips, professor of religion and chair, Religion Department, University of the South; Margaret Vandiver, assistant professor of criminology and criminal justice, University of Memphis; and Meike G. Werner, assistant professor of German, Vanderbilt University.

Kay Redfield Jamison to Present the 2002 Howard Lecture

This year's Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecturer, is Kay Redfield Jamison, professor of psychiatry, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Honorary Professor

of English, University of St. Andrews (Scotland). She will present her lecture, "A Life In Moods: Personal and Professional Perspectives on Mental Illness," on Thursday

October 17th (location and time TBA). Professor Jamison is a psychologist and a leading expert on serious mood disorders. The Harry Howard Jr. Lecture Series was established in 1994 through the endowment of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Nash, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. George D. Renfro, all of Asheville, North Carolina. The lectureship honors Harry C. Howard, Jr. (B.A. 1951) of Atlanta and allows the Robert Penn Warren Center to bring an outstanding scholar to Vanderbilt annually to deliver a lecture on a significant topic in the humanities.

Professor Jamison's writing, teaching, and clinical research on depression have had a broad impact on mental health treatment, on patient support and advocacy, and on public awareness of psychiatric disorders. Jamison herself suffers from manic-depression and has drawn on her own affliction in an attempt to educate the public. Her books include *Touched With Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (Free Press Paper-

backs, 1993); *An Unquiet Mind* (Picador, 1995); and *Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide* (Picador, 1999). She co-authored an influential medical text on manic-depression, *Manic-Depressive Illness* (Oxford UP, 1990) and has published numerous articles in journals such as *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, and the *Annual Review of Neuroscience*.

Professor Jamison received her B.A. (1971), M.A. (1971), C. Phil. (1973) and Ph.D. (1975) from the University of California, Los Angeles. She taught at UCLA's School of Medicine from 1974–1987 and has been affiliated with the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry since 1987. She is the recipient of the National Mental Health Association's William Styron Award (1995), the American Suicide Foundation Research Award (1996), the Community Mental Health Leadership Award (1999), and the MacArthur "Genius" Award (2001).



We the People.... The Citizen and the Constitution

For the second consecutive year, the Warren Center hosted a week-long professional development program entitled "We the People.... The Citizen and the Constitution" for educators from across Tennessee. This year's institute met at the Warren Center June 16 through June 21. The program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education through the Center for Civic Education, helps teachers find creative ways to educate students on the history and principles of constitutional government. The institute was co-directed by Sue Chaney Gilmore and Mary Catherine Bradshaw, both teachers at Hillsboro High School in Nashville, Tennessee. Ms. Bradshaw is also an adjunct instructor in education at Vanderbilt University.

Vanderbilt faculty members from a variety of disciplines led the series of workshops. Those scholars included William James Booth, professor of political science; Lisa Schultz Bressman, associate professor of law; John Lachs, Centennial Professor of Philosophy; and Samuel T. McSeveney, professor of history, emeritus. R.

B. Quinn, assistant professor of media law at Middle Tennessee State University, also served as a presenter. In addition, several mentor teachers from across the United States were in attendance to provide their guidance and expertise in using these classroom materials: Blaine Betts (Marquette, MI), Peter Gunn (Easthampton, MA), and Kathy Switzer (Greeley, CO).

"A lot of students think of history and civics as dry, uninteresting subjects," said Ms. Bradshaw. "Having students learn by debating the issues faced by our nation's founders encourages them to think about the alternatives and what it means to live in a free society."

The first session included a mock congressional hearing put on by sixth graders from Mountain City, Tennessee. Their teacher, Daphne Greene, attended last year's program and had used the "We the People" curriculum guide with her elementary school students during the past school year.

Participants were Kevin Brewer (Puryear, TN); Amy Brill (Nashville, TN); William Cate (Marion, AR); Pennye Deal (Finley, TN);

Darlene Holder (Dunlap, TN); Julie Howerton (Nashville, TN); Roger Jolley (Decherd, TN); Fred McFalls, Jr. (Savannah, TN); Terry McFalls (Savannah, TN); Mac

Macovits (Nashville, TN); Brian Moore (Elizabethton, TN); Beverly Ramsburg (Kingsport, TN); Nicole Reyes (Nashville, TN); and Ashley Smith (Nashville, TN).



The Mountain City Elementary students who conducted the mock congressional hearing: First row: Leea Phillips, Cory Forrester; second row: Ericka Fenner, Kristin Harrison, Ian Bellamy; third row: Matt Church, Zach Yoggerst, Erica Lynn, and their teacher, Daphne Greene.

THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

Warren Center Staff

Mona C. Frederick,
Executive Director

Elizabeth A. Festa, *Editor*

Letters is the semiannual newsletter of the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities at Vanderbilt University, Box 1534 Station B, Nashville, Tennessee 37235. (615) 343-6060 Fax (615) 343-2248. For more information concerning the Center or its programs, please contact the above address or visit our web site at www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center.

Statement of Purpose

Established under the sponsorship of the College of Arts and Science in 1987 and renamed the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities in 1989, the Center promotes interdisciplinary research and study in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Members of the Vanderbilt community representing a wide variety of specializa-

tions take part in the Warren Center's programs, which are designed to intensify and increase interdisciplinary discussion of academic, social, and cultural issues.

Vanderbilt University is committed to principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

Published by University Design and Publishing
Photographs by Neil Brake