

Women's Studies at Dalhousie

by Heather Hueston

Dalhousie now offers an interdisciplinary three-year program leading to a BA in women's studies. Check your course calendar, it's really true. Dal has seen the light.

Although the degree is new, it is actually a roundup of courses already offered at Dal. The program also includes courses given at Mount Saint Vincent and Saint Mary's universities.

"It was a question of coordinating them and getting a BA attached to it," says the Coordinator for Fall 1988, history professor Jane Parpart.

The program has been in the works since 1982 and was recently approved by Dal Senate after the proposal emerged from a five-year holdup before the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Council. Current program coordinator Sue Sherwin attributes the delay to the MPHEC's concern about "duplication" or

courses offered by the Mount.

But Barb Harris, Advisor to President Clark on Women's Issues, says every university should have a women's studies program. "It's as universal as (the study of) English."

Sherwin says both faculty and administration were supportive of the idea. Dal Senate has awarded a three-year development grant to the program.

A recent feature on women in education compiled by the Canadian Association of University Teachers details some problems of women's studies programs in Canada. One is inherent in an inter-disciplinary program such as Dal's, where "coordinators" don't have the power to bridge departments and influence the course content of scattered classes. Another problem, which Dal may have avoided, is that of using part-time, untenured and therefore expendable lecturers. Of the eight instructors on the

women's studies coordinating committee, four are associate professors, one is an assistant professor, and three are full professors.

Students will take some core classes at MSV, whose women's studies department is just that — specifically women's. It was the first in Canada when established in 1984.

Parpart says the format is similar to Dalhousie's International Development Studies program set up a few years ago, calling it a "very successful interdisciplinary degree" that has attracted "gobs of students". She hopes a comparable flood of male and female students will register next fall in women's studies, but warns of any misconceptions that the women's BA will be a "Mickey Mouse" credit.

"Most interdisciplinary courses are harder than average because the student must



PHOTO: ROCHELLE OWEN

Current women's studies program coordinator, Susan Sherwin.

become familiar with several approaches — from arts to science."

An expansion of classes offered is the next step for Sherwin and Parpart, especially in areas of science and in departments such as political science, economics, and psychology, which currently lack women-oriented courses. It's no accident that Sherwin launched the program at last Thursday's *Science and Sexism* lecture.

Parpart says graduates of the program will fill a current need for people qualified in women's issues and analysis.

"It's a very viable BA. The government is interested in people who know about women, and corporations are also under pressure to implement programs for women. For example, graduates of the Masters program at Carleton have had no problems finding jobs in government or teaching."

The glorification of motherhood

by Erin Goodman

The manager of the Pub Flamingo must have been surprised. He probably didn't expect a debate entitled "The Glorification of Motherhood: Is it a threat to feminism?" to be much of a draw on a Monday night. But then again, he's probably never even heard of International Women's Day.

The women were there. They packed the Pub to capacity to see lawyer/professor/columnist Mary Clancy slug it out with social worker/Four the Moment manager Jackie Barclay, as they debated an issue dear to all of our, um... wombs; Motherhood.

The debate stems from a growing belief within the women's movement that some feminists

are buying back into dirty diapers and drooled-on rugs, by buying into the myth of motherhood as the ultimate forum for self-expression and completeness.

Clancy began the debate by stating, "There's no reason for feminism and motherhood to be in conflict, but they are." She places the blame squarely with the patriarchy, which she believes excludes women who want to express themselves solely through their work and their ambition. These women threaten the patriarchy by rejecting their traditional role.

"In the context of our society, the nuclear family is still the standard. Societal ideal is still mommy, daddy, and kids," said Clancy. She believes that the

glorification of motherhood threatens feminism in both an economic and a psychological sense. She cites problems such as inferior divorce and maintenance laws, daycare shortages, inadequate maternity benefits, and pressure from friends and family to deliver (quite literally) — all of which, she believes, are generated by the patriarchy to contribute to women's oppression.

Jackie Barclay disagrees. She rebutted by saying, "I'm not terribly interested right now in discussing how the patriarchy is oppressing us, but rather how we as women are buying into new frameworks that are putting us back with no help whatsoever from the patriarchy. I see the glorification of women as defi-

nately as class issue."

Barclay, a mother herself, points out the large group of baby boomers in their late 30s who have "discovered motherhood with a vengeance". She feels children are being marketed by society as a commodity, an accessory for the woman who wants to have it all. As children become a symbol of affluence and importance within the nuclear family, struggling single mothers are excluded.

"Many of us don't share our children with each other," comments Barclay. "We have a real inability to understand the problems of single parents."

Clancy couldn't resist disagreeing with the class issue. She sees child care as the issue of our time, and says, "Rich or poor,

childcare is basically inadequate in our society today. It is unfair and divisive for us to look within the movement to lay the blame." She calls for greater unity among women, to "fight the common enemy of stereotyping and the common enemy of poverty."

Barclay shoots back, "I think unity is sometimes used as an excuse to avoid the divisions among us."

Clancy chortles as she tells the crowd that a person with political aspirations like herself should know better than to end up as the first speaker in a debate. Barclay smiles and lights another cigarette. The audience loves it, well aware that this is no debate, just two women who love to argue, nitpicking on the same side of the fence.

Women-only events don't discriminate

by Brian MacDonald

In some cases, not only is it not illegal to treat various social groups differently, it is sometimes necessary, to promote equality and prevent discrimination in the broader sense," says Wayne MacKay, a professor at Dalhousie Law School.

MacKay was addressing questions concerning the constitutionality of "women only" events.

The student council at Mount Saint Vincent University

refused a recent women-only pub night because they considered the event discriminatory towards men.

According to MacKay, the crucial difference between women-only events and men-only events is that "men, by and large, are an advantaged group and women, by and large, in terms of power are a disadvantaged group."

"If this were a permanent designation of a pub as being women only, it would be hard to justify, but a one-night designa-

tion with the purpose of celebrating International Women's Day seems to be much easier to defend."

Asked whether a decision could be made on all women-only events, MacKay said, "it depends on each case. In the Mount Saint Vincent situation, this was part of a celebration of women on International Women's Day. It was a one-night affair. It wasn't a permanent situation, and most importantly, it was not intended primarily to exclude men."

The difference between holding a women's night and, for example, the case of the MicMac Aquatic Club, which had a permanent ban on women, is that in the latter case, "it was not a one-night exclusion but a long-term exclusion which wasn't tied to any particular purpose."

Asked if charter of Rights makes illegal any difference in treatment based on sex, MacKay

says, "we have to have different treatment when certain groups

are not in an equal position to start with. It would be silly to say a physically disabled person should be treated equally to a normal person." Such "equality", says MacKay, would make it unconstitutional to install ramps to be used by people in wheelchairs.

Different treatment for different social groups "isn't a problem if it is done for a valid reason," says MacKay. "Sometimes it promotes rather than denies equality."