

Why Women's Studies?

Listed below are the brief explanations as to why a group of women in one of the Women's Studies classes initially enrolled in the programme. The same themes can be found throughout: the need to understand women's past; the need for that past to be articulated; the need to share this articulation in a supportive environment; the need for change to develop out of this sharing ...

These are the voices of women at UNB.

Why women's Studies?

"For me, it was an opportunity to finally understand what the women's movement is, what we have accomplished, and where we are going."

Alane

I realized a few years ago that a large part of history seemed to be missing - that part being women's contribution to society. Women's studies is giving me a better understanding of myself and other women. Hopefully I will be able to impart my new knowledge to others so that society can finally claim that we truly are free!

Janice

... Where else are we going to learn about women!

Women comprise approximately 51% of the world's population, yet our accomplishments, perceptions and experiences are virtually invisible in history. Still today, women's voices are largely unheard. Women's studies is needed in order to learn the other half of the story and to help change the future for women and men.

Laurie

Women studies is women's lives. ... we have our own history, 'her story,' that's been buried for too long. We need to know what the 'other' half of the population was doing while the men fought in the 1st world war. We need to inform our children that the first novel ever written was written by a woman. We need to recognize Rosalind Franklin's contribution to the discovery of DNA.

Believe it or not, women did more than give birth to great men!

Heather

Women Studies is allowing us to see a whole side of our history that was previously denied. After the Montreal Massacre I think that most women were in some way affected. The very fact that women are killed, beaten, and violated every day means that there is need for Women Studies.

Elizabeth

I worked for a year in a Muslim country where women were obviously suppressed. I returned to Canada and felt free. I could wear what I wanted, say what I wanted, do what I wanted. Then, 14 women were massacred for wanting to go to university and for wanting to be engineers. I realized women in Canada are just as suppressed; but in a less obvious way than the veiled women of Islamic countries. Women's Studies helps me understand and survive.

Valerie

I chose Women's Studies because I felt that as a woman I needed a voice and in these classes I feel I have one. Dealing with the issues facing women become much easier knowing that others are struggling with the same problems and sharing the opportunity to talk about them.

Karen

Women's Studies act as a support group for many students; women share their experiences and their views on many different issues. Many times discussions enlighten participants in that they realize they are not alone. Often, thoughts are generated about how things could improve for women.

Misty

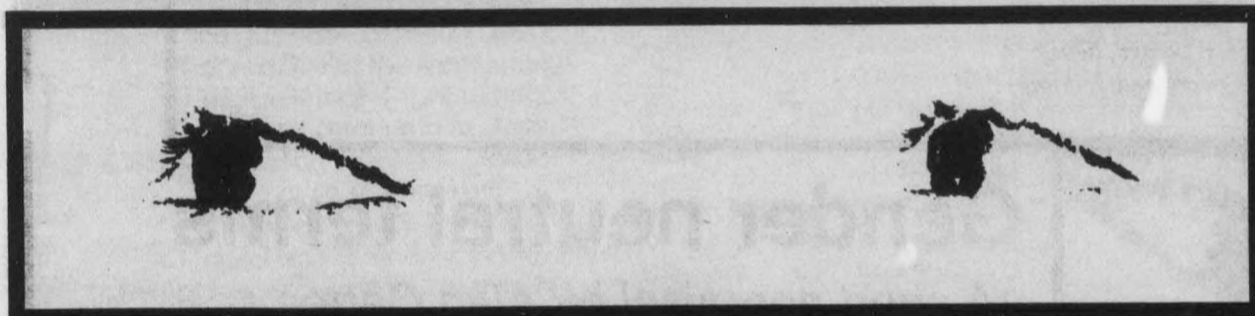
Why not!

Pat

what women
best cannot
the "tem-
r making; it
en to reveal
ions and ex-
and do per-
nguage for
en evidently

my quest, at
heart from the
marae when
taking steps
age structure
anguage and
ng to change
ty; they are
e legitimacy
up. We still
in terms of
ales in terms
e often nega-
them for no
ing born "fe-
not question
communicat-

and appealed
e-liners when
is the peg on
his jest, the
he cynic his
his justifica-



Woman's voice in the Gulf Crisis?

BC Radio, Noam Chomsky, world-renowned linguist, dissent."

commonly considered to be the "Father of Liberalism", the spinsters and the dairymaids must be told what to they must believe"

committee of "senior officials from the same departments to massage and co-ordinate all political, military and participation in the war" (Hugh Winsor, Parliamentary

esmen, spinsters and dairy maids: we "cannot know" ed, so that we may believe in it.

the notion of censorship is in a democratic context is MPBN, 27 Jan) one panelist, the "odd voice out" in voice, managed to interject into the discussion a "Big S. correspondent's line "our pilots came back giddy",

of the above censorship was introduced, switched the of the "three-voices-in-one" was a denunciation of p of the press").

Clearly enough to all of us, there is and will continue are comfortable with this, things are straight-forward. d to comment on some enormous question, may simply censored media.

e. And, as a woman, I find I am searching specifically, yonistic and tailored responses to the crisis of this war. men's tears).

liberal MP) Sheila Finestone being each in the process k on Iraq was announced, and when (Finestone) news he reactions of these two women (I have no firsthand ons, and the first historical Canadian reactions were

is was to run through the night. On Friday afternoon, the "gender gap" of war. Her expression of women ada's involvement in a war of aggression (at this point

ame Dawes

Photos by: Al S. Tare

a fait accompli) felt, to me, to be again a historical moment ... even as the Liberal Party's "official position" in the debate began to creep into her speech.

Saturday, 2:40 a.m. our time, Marlene Catterall (Liberal) spoke - it seemed she was very deliberately, and eloquently, speaking as a woman. She spoke of phoning her grown children to say she was sorry because Canada's participation in the war was by "fiat", not vote. Voicing her "disdain" for this, she went on to address a "larger question" - who are the countries who prosper from weapons production? She questioned - "have we seen one dead child?" and "how many wars do we have to have to end all wars?" She made a plea that we "put aside centuries of belief that reason makes us civilized..."

Ray Skelly (NDP) strongly supported Catterall, calling hers a "magnificent speech". He suggested that there was perhaps a need for more women in the house and thanked the individual women, who had "spoken so strongly", for helping to "give a voice to Canadians".

My feeling, through the long night of this debate, was that while the discussion to a large extent wallowed in petty party-line arguments (perhaps understandable given the frustrations of arguing the question of Canada's commitment to a war we were already committed to), the women were consistently attempting to broaden the perspective ... were courageously stating and trying to draw forth truths embedded in the reality of Canada's actions. I applaud these women's courage. I also question whether their very special courage will be supported.

It has been suggested that women's groups, some already very effectively organized on the international level, may help lead the way in empowering pacifism in this time of crisis. The Canadian "Voice of Women", for instance, is "a national network of women, linked with other women in Canada, globally working together (since 1960) to create a peaceful, just and healthy world". Fredericton's "Voice of Women" reacted instantly to the "Gulf" crisis, which is a world crisis and a Canadian crisis, and has held peace rallies and, last Friday, a twelve-hour peace vigil.

As women we can support such groups: there is a forum here for the voices of individual Canadian women to reach out to one another

and to reach women in other parts of the world. (The "Voice of Women" is also connected to other peace groups in this country, loosely linked as the Canadian Peace Alliance).

Where else are North-American women in this war while Iraqi and Kuwaiti women are caught in the midst of the "strategy" of "carpet-bombing"?

Well, we are present as "symbol" within the "myth" (a story which explains the beliefs of a nation) of war. For instance, as George Lakoff (Linguistics Department, Berkeley), in his in-depth analysis "The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf", points out: "American officials, in speaking of the 'rape' of Kuwait, are conceptualizing a weak, defenseless country as female" (page 9, as recently faxed to North American Universities). This conception of Kuwait allows President Bush to declare before a group of National Religious Broadcasters that "the use of force is moral" because Saddam Hussein "raped and pillaged Kuwait". But - "to reinstate 'the legitimate government of Kuwait' ... means reinstating an absolute monarchy, where women are not accorded anything resembling reasonable rights, and where 80% of the people living in the country are foreign workers who do the dirtiest jobs and are not accorded the opportunity to become citizens" (Lakoff 11).

Women appear also in the mass media. Our role is, as in previous wars, to "keep the home fires burning". The U.S. networks featured, in the first week of the war, "cameo" shots of the "woman on the street": these women plead with viewers to support the troops. This became the "rallying cry" of Canadian politicians: "support our troops". But - as citizens of the world (and this is not pacifist sentimentality; this is a term our legitimate political leaders have used) we are collectively responsible for this war. Women could conceivably be willing to accept a different responsibility - that of the creation of a world society in which war is simply not part of the agenda, though conflict always will be. A sixties slogan "war does not create peace, peace does" might be the dominant women's voice. Or as one unknown 1991 protester put it "just as we care about all peoples of the world, we support our troops ... that is why we want to bring them home".

Stereotypically - as "weak"; as "mother" where mother is linked with savagery (Saddam's "Mother of All Battles"); as the beneficiaries of the killing, who passively wait for "our boys" to sacrifice their lives to make "our" world safe (or, conversely, marginalized as overly emotional "peaceniks" when female emotionalism does not serve to support the war) - these are some of the LAST ways I think most women want to be involved in this crisis.

Women, themselves, must create a women's participation in writing the history of these critical times ... and we must, ourselves, legitimize that participation; that voice ...

The debate is not, and particularly at this time should not be - do women speak with 'one voice' - the concern is: where are the voices - let us speak as women - and then, we can see what we are ... and what we can offer the world.

TAG

Women students might find a forum for their concerns in the present crisis within the group which is forming on our campuses for the purposes of supporting and articulating "alternative voices". This group will hold an informal organizational session this Saturday, meeting at 1 p.m. in the cafeteria of St. Thomas University.