

# SABBATICAL REPORT

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It is with great pleasure that I submit this detailed report of coursework completed during my fall 2015 sabbatical. I am extremely grateful to the Sabbatical Leave Committee for granting me this opportunity for professional development and I look forward to implementing much of what I have learned in these courses into my own teaching. During the fall 2015 semester, I completed three online courses at the University of Central Missouri (UCM) in order to complete the remaining requirements of a graduate certificate program in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) which I began during the spring 2015 semester. I completed five, three-unit courses in total, including: Directed Readings in Sociology (Fall 2015); Feminist Theory and Methods (Fall 2015); Sexuality across the Lifespan (Fall 2015); Critical Questions in Gender and Sexuality: Women and Leadership (Spring 2015); and The Body (Summer 2015). Each course was very challenging and demanded extensive reading, research, and writing. I earned an A in each course. A summary of coursework completed in each class follows, as well as a description of how the WGSS graduate certificate will provide both personal and institutional benefits.

## Summary of Coursework

**Feminist Theory and Methods (WGS 5250):** For this particular course I read three books:

*Feminism is for Everybody* (2000) by bell hooks; *Feminist Queer Crip* (2013) by Alison Kafer; and *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis and Activist Research* (2003) by Nancy Naples along with countless journal articles in feminist theory and research methods.

This was a rather small class made up of seven graduate students. Each week we were expected to post at least three responses to the weekly readings on the class discussion board and write a reflection paper analyzing the readings for the week. In addition, forty percent of the grade in

the class was earned by developing a feminist activist research project. I used this opportunity to develop a proposal for a Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies program at El Camino College. Of the five courses completed for the graduate certificate in WGSS at UCM, this course provided me an excellent opportunity for program development with this very practical assignment. The practical application of this assignment will be discussed further in final section of this report.

**Directed Readings in Sociology (SOC 5558):** Under the direction of Karen Bradley, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of Women's Studies, I read and analyzed six books. The collection of assigned readings provided excellent exposure to classic texts in late twentieth century feminist scholarship as well as more contemporary scholarship on gender and sexuality in addition to feminist pedagogy. Required readings for the course included:

*Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993) by Susan Bordo; *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (1991) by Naomi Wolf; *The Purity Myth: How America's Obsession with Virginity is Hurting Young Women* (2010) by Jessica Valenti; *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School* (2012) by C.J. Pascoe; *Transgender History* (2008) by Susan Stryker, and *Transformation Now! Towards a Post-Oppositional Politics of Change* (2013) by AnaLouise Keating.

I wrote a total of six papers in this particular class ranging from 10 to 15 pages. For each of the assigned readings, I was expected to not only write an analytic response to the book, but I was expected to discuss the book with someone and analyze their response to the material. This proved to be a very useful component of each assignment as it gave me the opportunity to see how I might incorporate the readings into my own teaching and respond to students'

understanding or misunderstanding of the information. In addition, I consulted several book reviews for each book which were also incorporated into the written analysis of the text. This course was very demanding, yet very rewarding. It gave me the opportunity to read both classic and contemporary feminist scholarship as well as hone my analytic and writing skills.

I was especially inspired by AnaLouise Keating's approach to feminist pedagogy; I have incorporated much of what she recommends in all of my classes. I have always considered my approach to teaching to be very student-centered, but Keating has inspired me to intensify this approach. By employing a number of creative literary techniques, Keating invites, rather than persuades, readers to envision new ways of theorizing and engaging in activist work both inside and outside the classroom. As an educator, I am constantly looking for creative ways to connect with my students as well as increase participation in class discussions; in addition, I want to inspire my students to think critically but also to be compassionate human beings who work towards social justice. Keating asserts that she is able to effectively establish a classroom climate of generosity and respect by employing relational, connectionist thinking with pedagogies of invitation. This is now the approach that I am committed to achieving in my own teaching. In order to establish a classroom climate of generosity and respect rooted in rational and connectionist thinking, I developed a new assignment to be completed in each of my five classes during the second week of the Fall 2016 semester. Each student was expected to write a 250 word "mock" personal statement to be submitted to the college of their dreams. This allowed students to not only articulate some of their accomplishments and their goals for the future, but it provided an opportunity for me to learn something somewhat personal about each one of them, a task that is often very difficult to achieve in a classroom of 50 students.

**Sexuality across the Lifespan (CFD 4220):** This is an upper division undergraduate course which addresses human sexuality from a life course and cultural contextual perspective. The course included four exams, weekly posts to the discussion board concerning assigned readings, and four research projects. For my projects I chose to research gender non-conformity among children; abstinence-only education and teen pregnancy rates; the social construction of virginity and the policing of female adolescent sexuality; and gender socialization of adolescent males in American society. While this course was the least academically rigorous of the five that I completed for the WGSS graduate certificate (given that it is an undergraduate course, while the other four are graduate level courses), I found it to be very beneficial. Topics covered in the course included female and male sexuality anatomy, physiology, and response; sexual dysfunctions and sex therapy; as well as variant sexual behavior. The information that I learned in this class will certainly enhance material that I cover in many of my own classes at El Camino College, namely The Family (SOC 102) and Introduction to Women's Studies (WMST 1).

**Additional Coursework completed prior to Fall 2015 Sabbatical:** I completed two additional courses as part of the WGSS graduate certificate prior to my sabbatical: Women and Leadership: From Presidential Politics to Popular Culture (Spring 2015) and The Body (Summer 2015). Both of these courses required extensive reading and writing and provided exposure to a broad range of challenging, yet interesting scholarship, including works by Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Donna Haraway. The papers I wrote for these two courses in particular were especially beneficial for the work that I do at El Camino College as they provided a wonderful opportunity to learn more about topics that I cover in many of my classes. The research that I

conducted in order to write *The Social Construction of Menopause: Medicalizing Women's Bodies in the United States*; *Reconceptualizing Childhood Gender Non-conformity through Shifts in Language, Care, and Policy*; and *Brenda Clubine: An Unlikely Leader* was both fascinating and enlightening. I was especially honored to interview Brenda Clubine as part of my research. As a survivor of domestic violence, Clubine is featured in *Sin by Silence*, a documentary about women who have been incarcerated for killing their abusive partner. Clubine single-handedly organized Convicted Women Against Abuse (CWAA) while she was incarcerated and was able to gather enough support from lawmakers to pass significant legislation in California recognizing battered woman syndrome in domestic violence court cases.

### **Personal and Institutional Benefits**

The personal benefits of my Fall 2015 sabbatical are immeasurable! It had been 18 years since I was a graduate student, a time when online classes were in their earliest years of development. Being a student again was an interesting adjustment, to say the least! And while I missed being in the classroom teaching, I thoroughly enjoyed having ample time to devote to research and writing. I was able to research topics of personal and professional interest that I otherwise would not have had adequate time to commit.

For many years I have wanted to develop a women's studies program at ECC. The most practical assignment that I completed during my sabbatical coursework was developing a proposal for such a program. As a result, I met with Dr. Gloria Miranda, Dean of Behavioral and Social Sciences, on February 17, 2016 to discuss my proposal. In my proposal I recommend that the program at ECC be titled Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies (rather than women's

studies) to reflect the evolution of feminist scholarship across college campuses in the United States and abroad. We have now scheduled a meeting for March 22, 2016 to form a steering committee of interested faculty to develop the WGSS program by creating a program description, articulating PLOs, outlining course requirements for the major and implementing curriculum development in order to offer a broad range of courses in areas such as art, psychology, and sexuality to fulfill degree requirements. Several faculty have already expressed an interest in participating on the committee and have begun the curriculum development process.

I was hired for a full-time tenure track position at El Camino College in 1999. It is hard to believe that I have been here that long and grateful that it has been an incredibly rewarding career thus far. Having the opportunity to take a sabbatical during the fall 2015 semester was beneficial personally and professionally in numerous ways. The coursework that I completed provided exposure to current scholarship in sociology and women's studies which has certainly enhanced my teaching and the sabbatical allowed for time outside of teaching to develop a much needed women's studies program at El Camino College. I am incredibly grateful to have had this experience!