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Feminism central to women's studies

By Lisa Millegan
 Emerald Reporter

In one class, a woman discussed an abortion she had at 16. In another, the teacher invited students to evaluate feminine hygiene products.

Welcome to the women's studies department where class topics are personal, discussion is intense, and emotions run high.

"It's not about grades, it's about learning about yourself, and that's more difficult than anything, really," said Mara Velasco, a junior history major who has taken two classes in the department.

In the Introduction to Women's Studies class alone, students talk about subjects such as eating disorders, media images of women, pornography, lesbianism and reproductive rights.

"It's one of those classes that, to me, is one of the apexes of academics," Velasco said. "(The class) really changes your life because you can never look at the world in the same way again."

Since its inception in 1974, the University program and women's studies programs around the nation have been about political transformation — their mission is to replace society's sexist structure with a more egalitarian one.

"(Women's Studies programs) are considered the academic arm of the women's movement," said Barbara Pope, current Honors College director and first head of the University program. "When it began, that was what we all understood."

In an early department leaflet, women's studies faculty wrote, "We try to understand

the conditions that have held women back so that we can change those conditions, if necessary, and give women the same kind of vocational, professional and familial choices that men take for granted."

The first women's studies classes in the nation were taught in the late 1960s. According to *Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology* by Nannerl O. Keohane, Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Barbara C. Gelpi, more than 150 programs were founded between 1970 and 1975. Today, 413 programs exist nationwide.

However, getting a women's studies program at the University was not an easy task. Many male professors rebelled at the notion the study of women merited a separate academic discipline.

University sociology Professor Joan Acker said she was accosted by two irate male professors at the Eugene Saturday Market shortly after discussion of a women's studies program at the University began.

"One of them shouted at me across the street finally, after a close-up, acrimonious encounter, 'Well if we're going to have women's studies, we might as well have dog studies,'" she said. "He really lost control there."

Although women's studies programs were initiated by students at other universities, the roots of the University program were in a group of women professors who began to question the University's male-centered structure around 1970.

In a 1984 locally-produced video about the University women's studies program history, Acker talked about the dissatisfaction some women facul-

ty had at the time.

"There was (a problem) at a deeper level that had to do with the necessity of working within a whole frame of reference and interpretation of the world that essentially leaves women out," she said.

In 1970, Acker and two other professors conducted a study of the status of women at the University. They found there were few women faculty members and they were paid less than their male counterparts.

'It's one of those classes that, to me, is one of the apexes of academics (The class) really changes your life because you can never look at the world in the same way again.'

— Mara Velasco

Eventually, professors proposed a 21-credit certificate program, in which students would take a variety of classes in different disciplines.

The program had to be approved by the curriculum committee, Faculty Senate, University Assembly and finally the State Board of Higher Education before it could be implemented.

A women's studies program was finally ratified by the University in 1972 and approved by the board in 1974. A minor was added in 1985.

Pope was hired to design the first Introduction to Women's Studies course at a time when many students were worried about how the class would be taught.

In response to this anxiety, Pope said she immediately met with a group of particularly concerned students to discuss the class' format.

She and the students eventually agreed on a discussion format, still used today, with small group discussion sections led by undergraduate and graduate facilitators.

Pope also helped design the women's studies curriculum. She studied other universities' programs and sent her course syllabi to the feminist press Know Inc., which published outlines of women's studies classes.

"Part of the ethics of the feminist movement was that you should share what you have," she said. "The only way (women's studies) was going to survive, is if we helped each other."

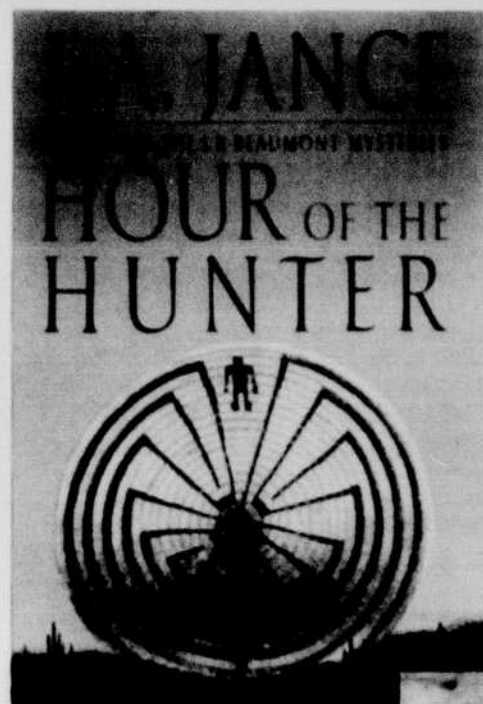
Other women's studies classes at the University include "History of Women in the United States," "Self Defense," "Women in Health Care" and "Women Writers."

Today, both the women's studies minor and certificate programs require 24 credits of course work. The certificate program course requirements are specific whereas the requirements for a minor are more flexible.

No women's studies major is offered at the University or any other college in Oregon. But other institutions around the country which have women's

Turn to **WOMEN**, Page 7

BOOK SIGNING



J.A. Jance is the author of nine novels featuring J.P. Beaumont. *Hour of the Hunter* draws on the five years she spent as a librarian on an Indian reservation in Arizona. She now lives in Seattle.



J.A. JANCE
 WILL BE SIGNING HER NEW BOOK

HOUR of the HUNTER

AT THE
UO BOOKSTORE
 IN THE GENERAL BOOK DEPT.
SATURDAY, NOV. 23
2:30-3:30 p.m.

J.A. Jance's new novel, *Hour of the Hunter*, marks a departure for this highly-successful mystery writer, creator of the Seattle-based J.P. Beaumont series. This new work takes place in Arizona, and captures the feel (and many of the social dilemmas) of the Southwest.

The novel involves Diana Ladd, a writer whose husband Garrison had committed suicide six years ago. He had been accused of the murder of a young Indian girl, and both Diana and her son Davy have suffered for Garrison's involvement in the killing ever since. Now Andrew Carlisle, who had been imprisoned for his role in the murder, is free—with a twisted sense of retribution, and a psyche going steadily out-of-control, he has begun stalking the Ladds, and killing along the way.

Soon Police Detective Brandon Walker (who had once loved Diana) is involved, as is Davy's nana Dahd, Rita Antone, an Indian whose ancient knowledge and mysterious powers come to the Ladd's aid. The story climaxes in a final confrontation with Carlisle, who's determined to let nothing deter his frenzied revenge.

Jance's new thriller also examines the vast (and sometimes tragic) differences between American and Native American cultures. *Reviewed by Richard Chandler.*



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