Women's studies to offer degrees

By Anne Scott
Emerald Contributor

The University will offer the state's first graduate-level certificate in women's studies beginning next fall.

The formal announcement for the new certificate was made at a reception on April 15.

Marsha Ritzdorf, Women's Studies Program acting director, said she gives credit for the certificate to Barbara Pope, director of the program from 1976 to 1991. Pope, who currently heads the University's Honors College, worked with several women's studies groups in designing the current program and the certificate.

Candidates will be able to choose from three options for the certificate: a free-standing certificate for unclassified graduate students, a complement to an individually designed interdisciplinary master's degree, or as an enhancement to a master's degree with another discipline.

Students must be fully admitted to the University Graduate School to be eligible for the certificate. Students with bachelor's degrees should apply to the graduate school for graduate post-baccalaureate status.

Students with master's degrees can apply for graduate postmaster's status. Ritzdorf said that although no one will be turned away from the certificate program, students without prior experience in women's studies will be encouraged to work as facilitators in introductory women's studies classes.

Pope said the program is limited only by its resources and has always had the constituency and enthusiasm of students and faculty.

Carol Silverman, professor of anthropology and folklore and chairwoman of the Women's Studies Committee, said the graduate certificate is a landmark decision that is "well due."

Silverman said she hopes it will motivate faculty from all departments to incorporate women's issues into their curriculum, especially at the graduate level.

"We need to target some departments that offer no classes on gender," she said.

Silverman said the history department is large and has many qualified people, but there are no gender classes at the graduate level.

"Now that we have this certificate, perhaps we can bargain with them more effectively," she said.

Lisa Leimar Price, who co-teaches the Introduction to Women's Studies courses, said she believes the certificate will benefit the University in several ways.

"It will provide a feminist perspective that can be applied [in the] interdisciplinary [studies], thereby broadening our intellectual tradition," she said. "The certificate will show that the student has gained a certain level of expertise in women's issues, it gives the student credentials."

Jo Trigilio, who also teaches Women's Studies, said she thinks gender studies is definitely becoming increasingly important at the University.

"It will attract a lot of women to the school and [will be] helpful for women who are already here who realize that they want to do work in gender studies," she said.

For more information on the graduate certificate call Marsha Ritzdorf, director of the Women's Studies Program, at 346-5529.

Conference to reassess Columbus' arrival

On the 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyage to the New World, the University is sponsoring a conference assessing the colonial implications, racial consequences, indigenous perspectives of conquest, and the bridging of cultures associated with Columbus' "discovery."

Titled "Confrontation and Construction of a New World," the conference, running today through Saturday, will include presentations by four historians and ethnohistorians.

The speakers will address aspects of the historical legacy left to America and the world by Columbus, his European followers, the indigenous women and men they confronted and the African peoples brought to the Americas in chains.

The intent of the conference is to commemorate — not celebrate — an event of unprecedented and lasting significance, said Matthew Dennis and Robert Haskett, University assistant professors and conference organizers.

"Recent studies have challenged the myths associated with Columbus' voyage of 'discovery' and called attention to the darker side of colonization," they said. "Speakers and participants will consider the colonial legacy in light of these challenges and seek to substitute critical history for myth or counter-myth."

The University history department, the Gaston Bequest Committee and the Oregon Humanities Center are among the sponsors for the free public event, which will occur at several campus locations.

Speakers for the three-day conference are Gary Nash, a UCLA history professor; Stephanie Wood, a University adjunct assistant professor of history; J. Jorge Klor de Alva, a Princeton University anthropology professor; and Karen Ordahl Kupperman, a University of Connecticut history professor.

Today at 3:30 p.m. Nash will speak on "Africa in America: The Racial Consequences of 1492." In the same session, Wood will discuss "Uncomfortably Close Encounters: Sexual Assault in the Conquest of Latin America" in the Gerlinger Alumni Lounge.

Friday at 3:30 p.m. Klor de Alva will discuss "Religion Among the Nahuas (Aztecs) in the Sixteenth Century: From Spiritual Conquest to Cultural Conversion." Kupperman will end the Friday session with a talk on "The English Confrontation with America: The Lessons of Colonization" in room 128 Chiles.

From 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday in Room 330 Gilbert, visiting lecturers and audience members will participate in a colloquium on the conference theme, "Confrontations and the Construction of a New World."

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