

What is Women's Studies Really About?

By Laura FANNING

Recently I had a conversation with another student who expressed some concern over the Women's Studies program at UPEI. She felt that the focus of the program was "aggressive" and even "intimidating" and did not feel like -- at least in the class she participated in -- people were allowed to express their real opinions unless it agreed with the feminist perspective being discussed. Since I only began the taking Women's Studies courses a year and a half ago, I can relate to her concerns. I thought it might be interesting to share a journal entry I wrote after completing my first Women's Studies course. Hopefully this will help others understand a little better what the purpose of these courses is really about. Enjoy my insanity!

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more accepting and have a better understanding of my own choices for the direction I want my life to go, and seem to be more comfortable sticking to my decisions and opinions. For the first time in my life

I don't feel the necessity to always agree, or get along with people (especially men) and I find that I have a renewed sense of freedom and choices. I am no longer afraid of losing-out or suffering for the sake of my opinions (or being called, heaven forbid... a FEMINIST), and have gained a self-confidence to speak up about things that I feel need to be addressed, or are derogatory or degrading towards women. I've stopped laughing off degrading comments, I no-longer avoid intimidating men, and I don't swallow my so-called pride, and ignore discriminatory treatment (towards me or other people). More importantly, I have gained a better understanding of the choices that other women make for their lives, and realize that although their choices may be different from mine, that we all share many common experiences.

I have a greater respect for women that do unpaid work their entire lives. I have realized and gained an appreciation for the work that these women do in order to allow men the freedoms to pursue careers outside the home, but that also allows me to do the work that I enjoy and pursue outside the home. If not for these women that run the Home and School Programs, organize and volunteer their time to community events, and take care of other peoples' children, I would not be able to do the things I want to do either. I may not be married to a stay-at-home mom, but I benefit from their work as well. Women's unpaid work effects the entire community that they are a part of, and we need to recognize this in a more respectful and appreciative manner.

I get involved in my community, and volunteer my time to various organizations throughout the year. I coach soccer, and help out at hockey and church suppers as well. But I am no where near as reliable or consistent as the other women that are involved. I do as much as I can within the busy schedule that I already have, but these women devote their lives to taking care of others, and maintaining the programs and events of which we all may take advantage.

I think that the most important thing I have learned from this Woman's Studies course is awareness, and with that comes knowledge and understanding. I realize though, as I stand in the shower shaving my legs

(which I haven't had time to do for three weeks), that I still have a long way to go. I still catch myself making mental check lists of what I did, who I did it for, and whether it warrants me doing something

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extra for myself. In the past four days I have attended four classes at the university, written a paper, and finished a web page, met with seven clients, taught two exercise classes, done a volunteer presentation for TOPS, gone on a date with my partner (which admittedly often gets neglected), held a birthday party for seven nine-year-olds, made a gingerbread house with my children, and played the 'space-ship rocket game' with my three year old. So why am I feeling guilty about going to the symphony with a friend... I have no idea after writing all that down! Whew! Seems I need to do this more often!

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