



A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE WORLD

The Barnard Women's Center is a new program for an old need: the dignity, autonomy, and equality of women. More than a place, more than a project, it symbolizes the way in which a college may gather its energies on behalf of women. It is Barnard's way of reaffirming its commitment to educate women to take their place in the world — the very premise on which the College was founded.

For too long, society has held to be true a number of myths about women, some of them destructive myths. Especially destructive to colleges, particularly women's colleges, was the notion that women were less rational and less capable than men, so that educating women was less useful than educating men.

Replacing myth with fact is, of course, the responsibility of everyone. The Women's Center hopes to contribute, first, a dialogue about the problems, the place, and the potential of women in contemporary life; second, new bonds between a college and women away from college; and third, fresh insight for undergraduates about what it means to be a woman in modern America.

The Center will draw upon the Barnard faculty, which now teaches perhaps the most versatile group of Women's Studies courses in the nation; upon Columbia University and its resources; upon New York, where so many women of diverse talents and skills live; and upon Barnard alumnae.

Our aims are high: We want to interest a broad spectrum of women. We want to create a solid body of knowledge about women. We want to free women to use their education as fully as possible. We plan, as part of our program, a permanent series of seminars on Women and Society that will systematically bring women of varied experience, alumnae and others, to talk to undergraduates. We plan a committee of Barnard alumnae who are lawyers to explore cases of discrimination.

How will we finance all this? It seems most fitting that the income from the bequest of Helen Rogers Reid '03, a former Board Chairman and life-long crusader for women's rights, will be used to launch the first programs of the Center.

Women's Studies at Barnard

The inclusion of courses on women has been in keeping with Barnard's academic traditions and standards. They are the result of strong faculty and student interest in a field that has too long been ignored — the special experience of women.

There are now eleven Women's Studies courses in the regular Barnard curriculum. They are given in a variety of disciplines, with no major planned at the moment. Each course has to stand on its own merits and meet the same stringent criteria that apply to all Barnard courses.

The courses range from History of Women in America, Images of Women in Literature, and the Role of Women in Modern Economic Life, to Female and Male, a joint offering of the departments of Anthropology, Biology, Psychology, and Sociology.

In placing the whole "women question" within many scholarly perspectives, our students will become aware of the variety of roles women have played, of the social and economic necessities that prompted them, and also of the characteristic dilemmas women have faced and the resources they have called upon.

Barnard's Research Collection

As with any academic program, the sine qua non in the field of Women's Studies is a research library.

In addition to offering an impressive number of books by and about women, the Barnard library houses the Overbury Collection, which includes among its nineteen hundred volumes unique editions of books by American women writers and nearly a thousand related manuscripts and letters.

The bequest of the late Bertha Van Riper Overbury of the Class of 1896, the Collection ranges from a second American edition of the poems of Anne Bradstreet, America's earliest female poet, to first editions of such present-day authors as Pulitzer-prize winning novelist Jean Stafford, who delivered the first annual Spring Lectures at the College in 1971.

The Overbury Collection is the nucleus of a distinguished research library on women, which we are seeking to expand.

Women and Work

An important function of the Women's Center will be to implement career planning — to help students and alumnae think seriously about the full range of careers, make appropriate plans, and go on to achieve their vocational goals.

The Women's Center will encourage frequent seminars and career conferences, bringing in women, often alumnae representing different fields and different life styles, who are prepared to talk informally about the satisfactions and problems they face as working women. In this way, the Center will take advantage of one of Barnard's great resources — successful alumnae who often express a willingness to share their experiences with undergraduates.

It is expected that the Center will also encourage research on vocational activities of women both for our own use and for periodic publication.

We hope these brief remarks will show what the Center is, why it came into being, and what it may become — a place of study, a place for alumnae, and a place where thought and action nurture each other.

THE
WOMEN'S
CENTER

BARNARD
COLLEGE

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