



# Women's Studies Newsletter

AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY

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## Austin Peay Celebrates 10 Year Anniversary of Performing 'Vagina Monologues'

What's the rage this year at Austin Peay? Vaginas. That's right, Austin Peay is celebrating ten years of bringing Eve Ensler's production "The Vagina Monologues" to its campus. Not familiar with this life changing experience? Austin Peay offers both a "Vagina Monologues" course as well as a performance, so even if you are not enrolled as a student you can still enjoy the benefits of Vaginas.



"Vagina Monologues" began as an off-Broadway play based on several interviews Ensler conducted with women about such taboo topics as rape, abuse, violence and women's sexuality. This brilliant play has budded into a worldwide celebration that donates its proceeds towards the awareness and prevention of violence and abuse against women.

In 2001 Austin Peay began to prepare for its first performance of the "Vagina Monologues." Dr. Jill Eichhorn, coordinator of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Austin Peay, has helped guide and influence "The Vagina Monologues" every year Austin Peay has been involved. When asked how she became involved, Eichhorn said that "Eve Ensler once said something to the effect of

'It chose me' and that's exactly how I feel." After hearing a Women's Studies student, Ashley Robison, talk about a "Vagina Monologues" performance she had seen in San Francisco in 2001, Eichhorn knew she wanted to be involved. Ever since then, she said, the experience has been continuously "rewarding...to observe students transform. To offer students a positive way to engage in changing today's culture is a meaningful experience," Eichhorn said.

Students involved in the "Vagina Monologues" at Austin Peay are equally as excited to rave about their experiences. One Austin Peay student, Bryanna Licciardi, who has been both director and performer, said that she was "overwhelmed by how awesome" the "Monologues" turned out to be. Licciardi said that "Before participating in the 'Vagina Monologues' I was embarrassed to talk about my period, about my vagina, about the parts that make me a woman. Now I feel proud to talk about my vagina and willing to talk about my period to anyone who will listen."

Lee Gray, a Women's and Gender Studies instructor, has been involved in with the "Vagina Monologues" at Austin Peay for nine years and has no complaints about repeating the show each year "because the stu-

dents are always changing the performance each semester," making it "always refreshing and different." Gray marks her initial involvement with the "Monologues" as the first time she was ever able to "experience bonds between women-in the same way I've seen men bonding my whole life." Again, even if you can't take the course, Gray stresses that being in the audience "Gives you a chance to watch women and become a part of something that wouldn't normally be discussed."

One of Austin Peay's alumni, Jamie Farmer, was given a chance to participate in a performance of "Vagina Monologues" outside of Austin Peay and reports that "It just wasn't the same. It became a show and not an experience." Farmer found the experience at Austin Peay to be "cathartic, therapeutic and warming," one that left her with "a feeling of family, bonding, sisterhood and peace."

"Vagina Monologues" has changed the perspective of many lives over the past decade and will continue to influence audience and cast members of all ages in years to come. As Holly Lanham, former director and performer of "Vagina Monologues" at Austin Peay has suggested, hopefully the success of "The Vagina Monologues" will help open up the pathway for Austin Peay to feature more of Eve Ensler's works and more venues for women's support.

## Congratulations 2011 Graduates!



L to R: Samantha Pohlot, Dr. Jill Eichhorn, Caitlin Purdom-



L to R: Holly Lanham, Dr. Jill Eichhorn, Meg Simpson

WELL  
BEHAVED  
WOMEN  
SELDOM  
MAKE  
HISTORY—

Laurel  
Thatcher  
Ulrich



## Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance News

The Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance has been very busy this semester with several events and talks.

This past March the FMLA organized and hosted Condom Day in the Morgan University Center. Condom Day was the FMLA's first event hosted in cooperation with other organizations on campus. Organizations included: the Secular Humanists, The Gay Straight Alliance, the Sociology Club and APSU Health Services. Amidst the flurry of food and free condoms, each organization concentrated on the different political aspects of condoms, their usage and history. The FMLA focused on educating students about the need to eliminate and reform public sex education policies and abstinence only education. Condom Day was

such a hit with students and faculty that it is bound to become an annual event! Special thanks to APSU Health Services, Planned Parenthood, and Clarksville Health Department for donating resources.

On October 25, Samantha Pohlot hosted a talk, "Crisis Pregnancy Centers Unveiled." Clips and videos from [feminist.org](http://feminist.org) were screened and a short discussion followed. It had a turn out of 20 people and representatives from Clarksville's local Hope Pregnancy Center were also in attendance. Representatives from HPC contested the statistics and interviews in the film screening and offered a further interview and tour of the facility.

On February 26, Jessica Axley, Vice President, helped organize the Nashville Walk for



Choice supporting Planned Parenthood by organizing activists in Clarksville to attend the walk. The Walk for Choice was created in response to the House's HR 1 and 3 bill that would cut health care services including family planning and deny women access to abortions. Reporters from the Tennessean and Fox 17 came out to the demonstration.

-Samantha Pohlot

## Women's and Gender Studies Students Go Abroad: Virginia Woolf and Literary London

This summer, our vigilante director and nine undergraduate students from Austin Peay, Mississippi State, Murray, and UT traveled across the pond to study Virginia Woolf in her native country.

The summer abroad trip to London was like nothing I had ever experienced in a college course. The material in the classroom held just as much weight as our experiences outside the classroom. For once, we were able, and even encouraged to share what we were doing in the London scene. Virginia Woolf's work put me in the moment and let me engage the city. Objectively, I experienced Shake-

spere's Globe production of Anne Boleyn, and Jane Austen's grave like any other tourist. I was overwhelmed by the culture, the history and the people. I was

doing all I could to keep up with the field trips, excursions and class reading. However, somewhere within those four weeks of fantastic mental and physical

exhaustion I started to appreciate London for more than a continuous photo op. I was in the moment. Only in London could Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* make me turn and look at myself. Funny how when I was surrounded by the energy of the city and thousands of years of history, art and architecture that I examined how I existed in the world more than ever before.

Virginia Woolf's perception of London and recreation of time made the city more than just another spot on the map. I felt a part of the city, a part of the change.

-Samantha Pohlot



Front row: Samantha Pohlot, Tia Johnson, Hannah Scruton, Holly Cornelius, Kelsey Marx; Back row: Ted Kitterman, Heather Carbal, Candice Rauch, Caitlin Purdom, Dr. Jill

## ALUMNI CORNER

The Women and Gender studies program is more than just the readings and discussions in a classroom setting. The program gives you the unique opportunity to express yourself as an individual and allows you to give back to the community. During my time at APSU, the program gave me a voice on campus that might have been lost without it. The lessons I learned and the memories I made are invaluable to this day.  
--Amanda Abbott



## Alumni Vagina Monologues 2011

Women's Studies opened my eyes to a world of feminism I didn't know was out there. I loved the minor so much that I took enough classes to have qualified for the a Women's Studies major had there been that option. The classes always made me think about topics differently. For example, during my Women and History course, I began to question why so many great women weren't in the textbooks before college. College is the place to expand your horizons and I encourage every student to take at least one class that challenges their way of thinking.  
--Rebecca Fisher b

Being in the Women and Gender Studies at Austin Peay was truly life changing. I didn't take a Women's Studies course until my junior year but after that I was hooked; I became a Women's Studies minor at the end of the semester and immersed myself in Women's Studies classes every semester following. These classes are completely different than typical academic classes. You learn about social equalities that are pertinent to your life right now. These classes help you see things through a different lens. The best part of these classes is that they validate your own experiences and perspective.  
--Nikki Tomaszewski



## National Young Feminists Leaders Conference 2011

"Your generation is on the front lines. We are behind you, but they are firing at you." It was a powerful sentiment, and one that was echoed by many of the speakers at the initial session of the National Young Feminist Leadership Conference in Washington D.C. this March. Students from across the country gathered to hear the urging of many of the nation's most prominent feminists. Among them were Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority Foundation, and Terry O'Neill, president of the National Organization for Women. Smeal's welcome was warm and encouraging, reassuring the primarily undergraduate crowd that we had the support of those brave women who went before us. In contrast, O'Neill's words rang across the auditorium like a battle cry as she led a chant of, "Whose House? OUR

House!" And this was only the first hour of the conference.

Over the course of two days, young feminists learned about the issues facing society today in a wide-ranging series of panel discussions headed by experts in such fields as reproductive rights, crisis pregnancy centers, homophobia on college campuses, and sustainable living. Representatives from Planned Parenthood were present to underline the importance of getting involved with local legislation and the national removal of Title X funding. These discussions were far from lectures. They were engaging, personal conversations welcoming lived experiences by every participant who wished to share their story. Many of the sessions ran over the allotted time, but often no one noticed because the dialogue was so captivating.

On the second day, several regional caucuses were held to identify and address key topics relevant to different parts of the country. The southern caucus, led by FMF regional coordinator Sarah Shanks, was particularly exciting. Many of us had never met as many proud feminists as we saw in that room. We bonded over difficulties in recruitment and retention, and the backlash many southern feminists face every day. Still, there was a sense of renewed vitality and kinship in this room full of strangers. For the first time, many of us felt like we were not alone.

Walking around this unfamiliar city, I felt strangely at peace. In Clarksville, my guard is always up when I wear something signifying my feminist leanings. But in DC, I got high-fives for my "this is what a feminist looks like" t-shirt .

All around the conference people were utterly unafraid to be themselves, to connect with strangers because we all knew why we were there. We realized that, though we are on the front lines of battle, we are not alone. There is much work to be done, but there are many hands to do it. Most important- feminism is far from dead. We are growing, we are evolving, and we are ready for whatever comes next.

-Jessica Axley



# Women's Studies Newsletter

AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY

## Women's Studies

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The Women's Studies Program introduces students to an interdisciplinary framework with the lives and experiences of women as its focus. Students learn to analyze and assess the impact of the multiple layers of identity women juggle—for example, gender, ethnicity, class, disabilities and sexual orientation—as they study the fields of human history, creativity, economics, society and social sciences. As statistics continue to show more women pursuing higher education and more women in the work force, this program prepares students to negotiate conflicts in the workplace and in their personal lives.

Women's Studies students learn to understand the impact of gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and ability on their lives and the lives of people in the past. Synthesizing the subject of women's lives with skills in critical thinking, the program seeks to create active and informed citizens, workers and parents, guardians or stewards of children.

## Clothesline Project 2011

This year's Clothesline Project was a success! Students from all over campus came to see women air their "dirty laundry" and raise awareness against domestic, sexual, physical and emotional abuse. Unfamiliar with this event? The movement to "break the silence" began in Cape Cod in 1990. Now, for over two decades women have been sharing their stories of abuse via t-shirt designs which are displayed on a clothesline, making it impossible to ignore female victims of abuse any longer.



ARE YOU A WOMEN'S STUDIES ALUM?  
WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!  
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Alexa Doran, editor

## Director's Notes

### Greetings to Students, Alumni, Friends, and Colleagues

This has been a year of visible activity with the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, student accomplishments, and some new programs on campus. Read from FMLA President Samantha Pohlot in the newsletter about FMLA's events this year. Six students presented their Women's and Gender Studies Research projects at the capstone symposium in December. Students presented the following projects: Jessica Axley, "Redefining the Beast: Disney's Most Defiant princess 20 years later"; Samantha Pohlot, "Just Above a Whisper: What Does Sex Really Sound Like"; Claire Hicks, "EveryBODY is Beautiful to SomeBODY"; Shauna Silverheart, "Taking Back the Goddess: Reclaiming Equality for Women"; Meg Simpson, "Wedding Daze: The History, Industry, and Message of the Modern Western Wedding"; Shannon Beasley, "Get Your Own Damn Sandwich: Changing Attitudes on 'Women's Work' in the Home"; Caitlin Purdom, "To Shave or Not to Shave: The Construction of Femininity and the Beauty Ideal"; Maria Lones, "Expressing an Impossible Life Wish: Suicide as a Form of Communication in *Madame Bovary*." These eight students experienced formulating their own research question and undertaking the journey to answer it. The public forum was a proud event for the Women's & Gender Studies Program.

WGS partnered with the African American Studies Program, African American Cultural Center and Student Affairs to bring in a one-woman show March 1 based on Melba Patillo Beals' autobiography, *Warriors Don't Cry*. This show, produced by the Tennessee Women's Theatre Project, tells Beals' compelling story of surviving as one of the nine African American Students who integrated Central High School in Little Rock, AK in 1957. Performed in Clement Auditorium, the event was well-attended and offered the audience an accurate picture of the history of racial relations in the South. Additionally, I served on a panel in March addressing "White Privilege" with guest speaker, Tim Wise, nationally recognized for his community activism in addressing white privilege.

The Women's and Gender Studies Program is proud to offer its first Women's Studies section to study abroad with the Cooperative Center for Study Abroad (CCSA). Ten APSU students will be investigating Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, *A Room of One's Own*, and travel essays as we explore how gender constructs place and authorship.

In this issue, readers will find stories about FMLA's activity, and our tenth production of Eve Ensler's "The Vagina Monologues." We always love to hear of your adventures and accomplishments. Please contact us and let us know what you are doing.