



Minnesota News Council
Mock Hearing Project

Hearing Preparation Materials

University of Minnesota
Women's Studies Department

v.

Star Tribune

Council Member Materials

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Council Member Materials

Acknowledgments

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THANKS

The Minnesota News Council salutes the courage and integrity of the many individuals and newspapers who have made the mock hearing project — and the work of the Minnesota News Council — possible. The News Council developed the mock hearing project for use in the classroom, with the participation of News Council staff. We have expanded the project to include a teacher’s handbook, allowing the cases to be presented in any classroom and facilitated solely by the teachers and students.

We thank the Target Corporation for a grant in 2003 to make the materials for the mock hearing project widely available in its online form.

The newspapers involved in these cases demonstrated a willingness to meet their readers face-to-face, to grapple with complex ethical issues in public view, and to strive to uphold high ethical standards.

It’s not easy to appear before the News Council to have one’s work publicly reviewed. The papers that agree to do so demonstrate that they are willing to be held accountable for their work. The Council believes that accountability and trust go hand in hand.

The News Council thanks the Star Tribune, then editor Tim McGuire and then managing editor Pam Fine, for granting us permission to use two cases in which they appeared. We thank the Women’s Studies Department at the University of Minnesota and Professor Naomi Scheman for their very able presentation of a most complex case. We thank the St. Louis County Assistant County Attorney for engaging the media in an area of perennial difficulty: fair trial versus free press.

We thank the Duluth News Tribune and its then-editor, Vicki Gowler for the permission to use the Rachael Martin case. We thank Rachael Martin for her permission and assistance in preparing this case.

We thank the unnamed small-town paper in the Incest Survivor case, which appeared before the Council only once, in what was perhaps the most difficult and emotionally challenging case the Council has ever heard. The openness and willingness of the editor to listen and learn was exemplary, and their willingness to let us use this case is greatly appreciated. We particularly thank the anonymous 17-year-old incest victim who truly showed courage in coming before a panel of 24 strangers to plead her case.

The News Council thanks the Society of Professional Journalists for allowing us to reprint various checklists from their book, “Doing Ethics in Journalism.”

Last, we thank all the News Council members, past and present, who dedicate their free time and so much energy in giving careful consideration to the complex issues that come before them.

Quality journalism doesn’t just happen; it’s a joint effort. It requires the support of management, which allocates resources and upholds expectations of excellence. It requires the dedication, energy, talent and high ethical standards of each individual journalist. And it requires a literate and demanding audience that won’t settle for anything less than excellence.

Council Member Materials

Introduction

Anyone who wants to report and write news is in for a stimulating career: finding out what's going on, writing about it in an appealing and dramatic way, seeing the fruits of your labor make a difference in your community.

Besides that, there's the pressure of time under which journalists work. They do well to keep in mind the great New York Yankees catcher, Yogi Berra, who was told by his manager to think in the batter's box. Berra replied, "I can't think and hit at the same time." Berra was playing a game; journalists are working at a trade where people's reputations are at stake, so they must think and write at the same time.

Journalism produced without thought or without conscience can produce ethical lapses. Not only can journalists be sued for libel, they may have their integrity questioned. Without integrity, journalists lose public trust, and without public trust, news outlets cannot do what a democracy needs them to do: report accurate, useful information thoroughly and independently.

The scenarios in this handbook challenge you to consider the ethical questions raised by complaints against news outlets. They are actual cases consid-

ered by the Minnesota News Council to promote fairness in the news media by helping the public hold news outlets accountable for their work.

You are asked to read the background material, just as News Council members have done before you, and to work your way through a public hearing process. First, the complainant and respondent present their cases. Then you and other Council members ask questions of the parties to clarify the issues. Next, with the parties silent, you and your fellow Council members deliberate the issues until someone makes a motion to uphold or deny the complaint, in whole or in part. Finally, you vote.

After you reach your determination, you can compare it with the one the Minnesota News Council reached. If you've reached a different determination, you may feel strongly that yours was the wiser one, and you may be right. Like everyone else, the News Council makes mistakes. But the vote is not as important as the discussion. That's because the purpose of the process is to generate a public discussion, so that people will begin asking news outlets what their standards are and begin holding news people to those standards, or perhaps insisting that they raise them.

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Case Background

In early 1994, philosophy professor and former women's studies professor Christina Sommers published her book "Who Stole Feminism?" In it she criticized women's studies departments generally, and the University of Minnesota's in particular, calling them, "unscholarly, intolerant of dissent and full of gimmicks. In other words, they are a waste of time." The *Star Tribune* used Sommers' criticism as a framework for examining women's studies at the University of Minnesota, publishing a series on July 21, 1994.

As part of this series, the *Star Tribune* sent Anne O'Connor, a part-time reporter for the paper and a full-time journalism student at the University, to participate as a student in the class "Women: A Sense of Identity." The course was offered through the Continuing Education program; it was not part of the regular curriculum of the Women's Studies Department but it can be taken for credit in that department. O'Connor used her true name during the course, but did not disclose to anyone that she was working as a reporter covering the course.

After the course ended, O'Connor told her professors and classmates that she was writing a story for the paper and asked for permission to quote them. Further, other members of the Women's Studies Department were asked to comment on O'Connor's story. Their responses were included in the series, which was co-authored with staff reporter Maura Lerner.

'U' classes are focus of feminist feud

By Maura Lerner
Staff Writer

For Christina Sommers, it all started when she came to the University of Minnesota in 1988, just itching for an argument.

Sommers, who taught women's studies at Clark University in Massachusetts, had been invited to give a talk at an academic conference here. And she decided to criticize some of her fellow feminists for showing, in her view, too little respect for the family.

When she finished, Sommers, a philosophy professor, expected the usual rough and tumble debate

that she always found at academic conferences.

That, she said, was strange.

Instead she was met with icy silence. The women's studies professors at the University of Minnesota refused to talk to her, she said.

But the next time she gave the talk at a philosophy convention, people started shouting. "They were cursing, hissing, —hissing!" she said. "And I thought, my God, this is not your

usual lively raucous philosophical debate— I have committed some kind of religious heresy. But I didn't know there was a religion we had to adhere to."

Since then, Sommers 43, has turned into a crusader of her own. She's one of a new wave of women who have lashed out at women's studies in America, and at the University of Minnesota in particular, saying they've turned into islands of radicalism, rigid thinking and —sometimes—the ridiculous.

Such criticism is nothing new to supporters of women's studies, who have been fighting off some of those same accusations for 25 years.



Are the critics right about women's studies? We sent reporter Anne O'Connor for an inside look at the University of Minnesota. See page 18A.

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Women's Studies — Story 1, Page 1 (reprinted with permission and formatted to fit this handbook)

'U' was a pioneer; it's now a target to some

Continued from page 1A

But they're stung by the fact that some of the harshest critics are not Rush Limbaugh conservatives, but women who call themselves feminists.

Sommers, for one, has written a new book, "Who Stole Feminism?" in which she calls most women's studies classes "un-scholarly, intolerant of dissent and full of gimmicks. In other words, they are a waste of time."

And she singles out the University of Minnesota as one of the most "extreme examples" of what's gone wrong.

"A parent should think very carefully before sending a daughter" to a program such as Minnesota's, she writes in a chapter called "The Feminist Classroom."

In fact, she suggests that Minnesota, along with Wellesley College, Mount Holyoke and a few others, post a warning on their women's studies bulletins:

"We will help your daughter discover the extent to which she has been in complicity with the patriarchy...She may become enraged and chronically offended. She will very likely reject the religious and moral codes you raised her with. She may well distance herself from family and friends. She may change her appearance, and even her sexual orientation. She may end up hating you..."

Prof. Jacquelyn Zita, a prominent member of the university's women's studies faculty, shakes her head at the criticism. "It's a cartoon," she says.

And Julia Davis, dean of liberal arts, says it's the same kind of fear mongering that some people have used against universities in general. "That woman has really gone off the deep end her," she said. "That's what a university is... It exposes them to things they have never been exposed to before." In fact, she said, "We have not done our job if we don't make them think and question some of the things that they have simply taken for granted all of their lives."

Says Janet Spector, one of the founder's of the women's studies department: "It reminds me of the early 70's—it's trivializing what we do to see that we don't get funding."

But the critique has "taken on a new fervor as we've become more successful," said Spector, who is now an assistant provost and chairperson of the university's Commission on Women.



Christina Sommers criticizes the University of Minnesota in her book "Who Stole Feminism?"



Jacquelyn Zita, a professor of women's studies at the "U," views such criticism as "a cartoon."

"I do think," she added, "if a white man had written that book, he wouldn't have been taken seriously."

Yet Sommers isn't alone. At least four other books by female authors criticizing feminism and feminist studies are in the works, including one called "Professing Feminism: Cautionary Tales from the Strange World of Women's Studies, and even a liberal magazine Mother Jones, has published a scathing attack on the field.

Shaking up academia

When women's studies first started, as an offshoot of the women's movement, the University of Minnesota was among the pioneers. It started a women's studies program as an experiment in 1973-74, and now bills itself as one of the "oldest and most respected" departments in the country, with 170 undergraduate majors, including a few men and about 85 graduate students. The registrar's office says the department has granted 105 degrees since 1975.

The idea was to shake up academia and fill the gaps in the traditional fields of study, such as history and literature, by asking the question, "where were the women?" And the early scholars set out to find them.

At first, there was barely any written material to use. Most of it was, in Zita's words, "fugitive literature," unpublished manuscripts. And all of it fit in one "very small file box."

All that's changed in the past 20 years. The field has given birth to an explosion of research, journals and classes at more than 600 colleges and universities. This fall alone, the Univer

sity of Minnesota will offer 21 courses in women's studies, including "Feminist Thought and Theory," "Women and Language," "Women's Life Histories," "Sexuality and Self-Image," and "Contemporary Women's Short Fiction."

That explosion in scholarship is one of women's studies proudest achievements — along with the rave reviews from many students.

But from the start, they've been dogged by skeptics and outright enemies.

"People said, 'You're angry, you're lesbians,'" said Spector, a former chairperson of the department. People asked: "Why do we need this?"

And they would answer: "This isn't about man-hating. It's not about brainwashing." If not for women's studies, they say, women's contributions would still be ignored.

'Angry political forum'

In 1989, the debate flared anew when Michael Olenick, a student who considered himself a feminist, wrote a story in the Minnesota Daily about his experience in a class called Introduction to Women's Studies. The story was headlined "Victim's Stud-

ies."

"When I signed up for a women's studies class I expected to learn about feminism, famous women, women's history and women's culture," he wrote. But instead, "I found lectures on the attributes of being gay and bizarre theories about world conspiracies dedicated to repressing and exploiting women."

He added: "It seems difficult to justify the university spending money on a class that serves as an angry political forum."

The story prompted a flood of letters to the editor, both pro and con. One woman accused him of "sexist ravings." Another was appalled. "He missed the point. It was a pretty realistic study of oppressions."

Several women, though, cheered him on. One said that in her class, "we were instructed on what political party to join and whom to vote for." Another woman wrote that, in a different women's studies class, "I was made to feel as though I were dependent and weak for preferring men to women as sex partners."

Olenick's article shocked his teacher, Lisa Albrecht, a popular associate professor who won the university's most prestigious teaching award in

1990.

She said she was disappointed that Olenick had misunderstood what she was trying to do: raise a critique about society, not "cram it down anybody's throat."

"I don't think I teach from the front of the room and say, 'You have to accept this view of the world,'" she said. Since then, she has used Olenick's critique in other classroom discussions.

Does it belong?

Last fall, Mother Jones magazine fired a shot that is still reverberating through women's studies departments. A feminist writer, Karen Lehrman, wrote that she had visited women's studies classes at four colleges and universities — Berkeley, Iowa, Smith and Dartmouth — and was flabbergasted by what she found.

"In many classes, discussions alternate between the personal and political, with mere pit stops at the academic," she wrote. "Sometimes they consist of consciousness-raising psychobabble."

The typical class, she wrote, had few men, if any; everyone sat in a circle, and students would talk about almost anything they wanted to, "no matter

how personal or trivial."

Some women might need that, she wrote, "But does it belong in a university?" After her story appeared, students from Berkeley protested outside the offices of Mother Jones.

In fact, some of those same techniques are used at the University of Minnesota. According to a course outline for Introduction to Women's Studies, all students "sit in a circle to promote feelings of open communication." And they're required to keep an "idea and attitude log" about their reactions to the class, "noting any changes in your own ideas and attitudes."

Another class this spring, "Woman: A Sense of Identity" did the same. In that class 40 percent of the grade came from keeping a journal, in which students were required to "show evidence that you are integrating the materials available from this course into your life experiences."

Sommers derides that as "Me Studies."

"They become complete authorities on themselves. It's preposterous," she said. "It is not taking women seriously. I believe in a feminism that accords women the respect that we have the capacity to think and study..."

Continued on next page

and not to sit around and talk about their menstrual cycles. And too much of that is going on.”

But Davis, the university’s dean of liberal arts, says that’s nonsense. “I’m not going to say to you that there’s absolutely no instance in which a course is taught here that might be questionable.... But no, overall this is a rigorous program. . . It’s treated like any other academic program and the teaching is done by scholars in their field.” In fact, she said, all the courses are reviewed yearly, just as in any other department. “So to just take a brush and say this is not rigorous is not accurate.”

Helping women speak

One of the reasons they’re criticized, women’s studies professors say, is because some people don’t understand their style of teaching. In some classes, students talk about their own personal experiences, and they tend to have livelier, more impassioned classroom discussions than in other fields.

“Our classes are not places where people sit around and make each other feel better,” said Zita. But the personal involvement is key to what the teachers call “active learning.” It is also what makes women’s studies unique, said Spector. “In a lot of

those very traditional classes, women didn’t speak generally. Very few people spoke,” she said. “I do think we’ve been concerned from the beginning that women can gain some intellectual self-confidence, and that does mean speaking.”

Some say they’ve got their priorities wrong. “Increasing self-esteem is a wonderful goal- of therapy,” said Paula Tuchman, a graduate student in political science at the “U” and a critic of women’s studies. “I feel sorry for anyone who’s majored in women’s studies, because she’s going to be really handicapped compared with men who have been taking serious classes... A steady diet of this for four years is not a college education.”

But Suzanne Denevan, who graduated with a women’s studies major from the university two years ago, says the curriculum was demanding enough to prepare her for graduate school in business. “There probably are people out there that think it’s the equivalent of basket-weaving,” she said. “For me, I didn’t experience women’s studies as non-intellectually demanding... It was a highly intellectual and rigorous program.” And she says women’s studies have been unfairly singled out. “I feel like the reason for the criticism is politically

motivated... that there are slough-off areas of the university that don’t get this attention.”

Another graduate, Rae Randolph, a Minneapolis attorney who got her degree in women’s studies in 1981, says some of her courses were gimmicky and militant. (Once, she said, a teacher called her “a parasite of the women’s movement.”) But “they were in the minority,” she said. Overall, “it was a wonderful educational experience.”

Randolph, who now has her own law practice, admits she was worried that a degree in women’s studies might be held against her. “But it certainly didn’t make any difference once I was in law school,” she said. “Since I’ve been going out, my clients only care about being represented well.”

Some don’t fit in

Even the critics admit that some women’s studies classes deal with serious issues. “Yes, some of them are scholarly,” said Sommers who has studied hundreds of course plans and attended conferences on feminist teaching. But the problem, she said, is that they’re often one-sided. Teachers talk endlessly about the oppression of modern women by “the patriarchal system,” she writes, and of-

fer no dissenting views. “That, to me, is a serious betrayal of academic ethics,” she said.

Defenders say that’s just not true, and insist there’s “no party line.” Yet they admit that some people clearly wouldn’t fit into the department.

Spector, for one, said she couldn’t imagine “that somebody who really has a conservative political agenda would be interested in teaching” the courses in women’s studies.

And most agree they have no “anti-feminists” on the teaching staff. “Would there be a creationist teaching (evolution) in a biology department?” asked the department chairperson, Amy Kaminsky.

Says Sommers: “They don’t even see what they’re doing. They’re so carried away with their own agenda they can’t see they’re in the grips of just a stultifying conformity.”

In many ways, the debate has been painful for both sides.

But Zita, of the women’s studies department, sees a bright side.

One of the signs of this backlash, which has gone so public, is that we’re being taken seriously,” she said. “People are beginning to see that we do have an impact.”

PRO

“I think the feminism that’s taught at the University of Minnesota runs the gamut anywhere between extreme and not, and basically people can take what is natural for them to take... I certainly don’t feel like I’m being brainwashed at all. Not one bit.”

-Pamela Balabuszko, 27, women’s studies major, University of Minnesota

“I think that there is and there should continue to be a strong connection to the women’s movement in women’s studies. That seems to be what it’s about. That is overtly political and that does politicize things. That is part of the purpose.”

-Eric Grumdahl, 21, women’s studies and philosophy major, University of Minnesota

“In a number of classes I’ve actually wished that professors would be more open with their views, that they would be more free with their personal experiences... I’ve really been amazed at the objectivity that the professors that I’ve encountered do have.”

-Elizabeth Bastian, 22, biology major with minor in women’s studies, University of Minnesota

“I just think that women’s studies, because it is relatively new, is really being examined under a microscope at times... I think people don’t want to accept that it’s a valid discipline.”

-Susan Muskat, 33, women’s studies major, University of Minnesota

CON

“I don’t think it’s worth it academically to take a women’s studies class. I think women’s studies needs to exist for women, but not the way it’s going right now.”

-Kim Johnson, 25, social work major, University of Minnesota

“A lot of stuff I felt I could have done in a women’s group somewhere else. I wouldn’t say that (women’s studies) shouldn’t be a major, but it needs to be worked on.”

-Ellen Shulman, 23, African-American studies major, University of Minnesota

“I think the same overarching philosophy tends to motivate all of these classes... It really is about developing the proper attitude- a radical feminist attitude. There can be no dissent, or no really meaningful dissent.”

-Kathy Kersten, conservative feminist and vice chair, Center of the American Experiment, Minneapolis

“I don’t see the difference between this and thought reform. It doesn’t seem there’s a body of information that’s being conveyed.”

-Paula Tuchman, graduate student and board member, Minnesota Association of Scholars

Christina Hoff
Sommers, author

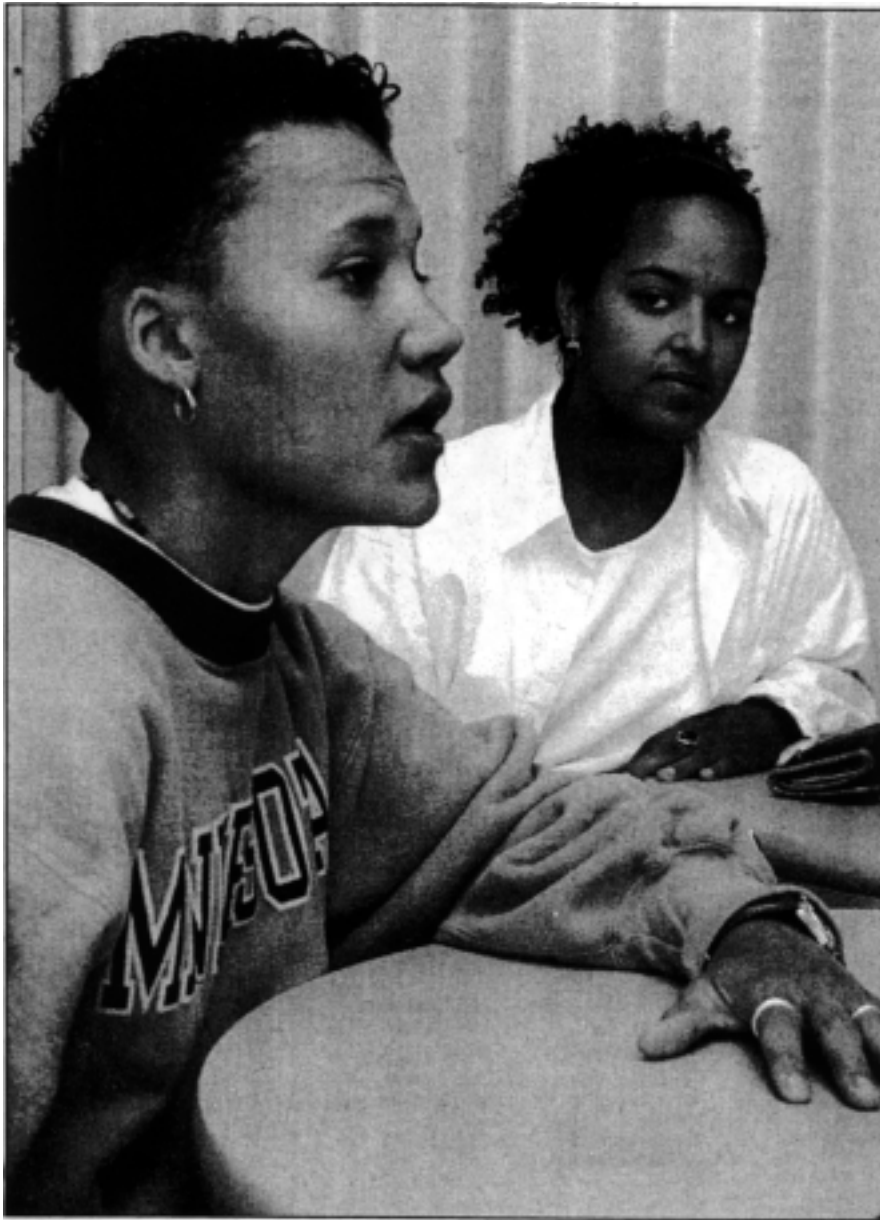
Women’s studies are “unscholarly, intolerant of dissent, and full of gimmicks.”

Jacquelyn Zita,
women’s studies
professor

“Our classes are not places where people sit around and make each other feel better.”

Women’s Studies — Story 1, Page 5 (reprinted with permission and formatted to fit this handbook)

It was a class for college credit...



"I never knew what they were grading — if it was your writing style, your grammar, your ideals," said Kim Johnson, left. She and Ellen Shulman were students in the class "Woman: A Sense of Identity."

By Anne O'Connor
Staff Writer

I'm sitting in a room with about 25 other women. Some of them are lying stretched out on the floor. Others slump with their heads on their desks, eyes closed.

The woman leading the group stands in the center.

"Imagine yourself standing naked in front of a large full-length mirror," she reads aloud, "completely alone with time to take a good look at yourself.

"Take a few moments to look at yourself. What's your general feeling as you study your body? Do you feel generally good about your body?... Perhaps a little self-conscious?"

She asks us how we felt and what we did the first time we got our periods, or wore a bra. She finishes. Everyone opens their eyes, sits up and we talk about how we felt during the "guided imagery tour."

I feel like I'm in therapy. But I'm not.

I'm in a graduate-level class in the women's studies department at the University of Minnesota. The class, "Woman: A Sense of Identity," was offered this spring, as it has been almost every year for the past 20 years.

This exercise is pretty typical of what we do every week. We talk about our personal space, how we feel about being women, how we deal with our romantic relationships.

I took the class as a full-time student, but also as a reporter.

The Star Tribune assigned me to enroll in the class because women's studies programs have been criticized, both here and around the country, for being too soft on academics and too strong on politics. We wanted to find out whether any of that was true at the University of Minnesota, which has one of the nation's oldest women's studies departments. It also has

Women's Studies — Story 2, Page 1 (reprinted with permission and formatted to fit this handbook)

been singled out by critics as one of the more radical women's studies programs in the nation.

We selected this particular class because it had some of the features that critics have attacked- such as a heavy emphasis on personal journals and support groups.

To see the class in its most natural setting, we decided not to tell the students or the instructors that I was reporting on it until it was over. At the same time, we decided not to use the names or experiences of any individual students unless they gave us permission to do so in interviews after the final class.

What we found, for \$300 and four academic credits, was the equivalent of 10 weeks of consciousness-raising and assertiveness training. It was a class where students spent most of the time talking about their own lives and no time at all discussing reading assignments. And both students and teachers expected everyone to get an A.

At the first class, Dorothy Loeffler, a professor of educational psychology who's taught the class for about 20 years, tells the students: "We don't have tests, since we don't base this on learning a lot of facts. It's more about learning about yourselves."

"We're here, and you're here, for each other," Sue Eckfeldt, the other instructor, who is also a psychologist, tells us. "We kind of want you to work on some goals."

It's the first day of class and we sit in a circle, 28 women, most of whom have never met each other. We're taking time to 'get acquainted.'" The instructors ask if the students have apprehensions about the class. Have we been encouraged to take the class? Discouraged? One woman says her friends are afraid she'll be brainwashed by a bunch of feminists. A few women laugh; they sound apprehensive.

It's very realistic that some of you have

fears," Eckfeldt says. "It is not our intent to brainwash, nor do I think we could."

The instructors hand out 5-by-8 index cards. They tell us to write our names in the center of the card. We're also to finish the sentence, "As a woman, I feel good when I..." Then, we use the language of weather forecasters to describe our mood today. (I feel partly cloudy, but am expecting sunshine and warmer temps tomorrow.)

We walk around the room and use the cards to introduce ourselves. I feel strange handing my card to someone instead of just saying hi.

Choose your learning

From the beginning, we are told that this class is different from others.

"Because the focus of this class is on individualized and experiential learning, you will have considerable freedom to choose the path your own learning will take," the course packet says.

"Hopefully in 10 weeks you're going to gain some real awareness about things around you," Eckfeldt tells us. "You kind of get a different perspective on some of these things you might have just let slide before."

There is no midterm, no final. Instead, we keep journals. We have a packet of readings, a collection of poems and articles, mostly from women's magazines and newspapers. Loeffler tells us to write about how "I, as a woman, respond to this. This is how I can use this is my life." This counts for 40 percent of our grade.

We can choose one of two books: "Self-Assertion for Women" by Pamela Butler or "The Assertive Woman: A New Look" by S. Phelps and N. Austin. We are also to choose a book from the list of 175 authors, all of them women. We'll do a book report on one book, two if we're taking the class for graduate credit.

In addition, the packet explains, gradu-

ate students "are expected to prepare and present a five-minute topic of interest to women (preapproved by instructors.)"

Almost every week we're supposed to fill out some kind of worksheet: an assertiveness quiz one week, a Life Planning Sheet" the next. Every week we're supposed to set a goal and achieve it before the next class period. One goal, for example, is to pick a situation where we can be assertive.

We have to complete a project that, according to the course packet, should provide a "personal growth experience for you" and "information, help, resources, etc. to other women." It lists as one example a student who surveyed members of her aerobic dancing class about how increased fitness affected their lives.

Our self-grade, evaluating our class participation and personal growth, counts for 10 percent of our grade. The instructor's evaluation is 5 percent.

This class is not typical of other women's studies classes, according to students and professors in the department.

"We ask you to do more personal things," Loeffler tells the students. "It almost has a feel like therapy, but it's an educational experience. It's true that a good education can be very therapeutic, but it is not our intention."

Practicing behavior

For most of each class period, we talk. Class starts every week with a 20-minute "check-in time, where we discuss anything we want. We move on to the topic of the week

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

and usually do an exercise related to the topic- the guided imagery tour came during the week we discussed body image. Class concludes with a half-hour “support group” that the syllabus says is designed to “become a positive support to each other, exploring and changing your own behavior.”

Loeffler tells us that she wants this to be a safe place to talk, and asks us not to talk about what other people reveal in the class.

We sit in our circle, all staring at one another, and sometimes long minutes pass before anybody says anything. The newspapers and talk shows like Sally Jessy Raphael provide a lot of fodder for check-in discussions. We talk about catcalls and how to deal with them and about whether we should call ourselves women or girls. We talk about the kinds of things women, or girls, talk about. The second week, the instructors bring up how we learn our behaviors. Our objectives are to learn about aggressive, passive and assertive behaviors. We are to practice all three. We break into small groups, and we practice yelling at each other, being meek and indecisive, and finally- correctly- being calm, collected and firm.

“We as women have often been shut up,” she said. “We’ve so often become viewed as invisible. We’re ignored or not paid attention to. So we become ‘shy.’ Can you understand how so many women become ‘shy?’”

“She has us practice saying Loeffler’s magic sentence.” It is “No, I don’t want to.” She suggests we tape it by our phones to read the next time we get a sales call.

It’s time for our support groups. Today, a woman in our group confides that she has been eating almost nothing this week. “I’ve been eating one little half-cup of dry Life cereal every day,” she says. The rest of us are not quite sure how to respond. She says her goal for the week is

to eat meals every day.

“What do you mean your goal is to eat?” one student asks her. The woman explains that she still struggles with an eating disorder she developed in high school. She says it’s not as serious now. We tell her we’re worried about her. We all agree that she’d better keep her goal this week.

Where grades come from

Loeffler stresses that the journals are our personal reflections of the readings, the class discussions and whether we achieved our weekly goals.

“This is all focused on yourself,” she said. “It’s all ‘I.’ If you ever learned to keep the ‘I’ out of your writing, now’s the time to put it back in.”

I use my journal to criticize parts of the class: “I just feel like we’re going through silly exercises and I wonder if this stuff isn’t better dealt with in therapy or in life with family and friends.

“Like this journal, for example. Why do you want us to write journals? Better yet, why do you want to read them? How do you ‘grade’ my life? My reactions to what I’ve read or seen in class? If I disagree with you, does that mean I haven’t ‘earned’ the right thing? How do you look at them?”

The questions go unanswered. When I get my journal back, Loeffler has written: “This class must be a huge pain for you and you seem to find many women’s issues silly and bothersome. What, if anything, are you getting?”

I’m surprised; I hadn’t criticized women’s issues. I had criticized her class.

The grading of journals puzzles a lot of us. We turn them in twice in the 10-week quarter, and we get them back marked with checks, pluses and minuses. We don’t know what the symbols mean, and many of us don’t know what the grades will be based on.

Kim Johnson says she asked Loeffler di

... but to many who attended, it sure felt like therapy

rectly about the journal grading: “I asked her what these checks and pluses mean, and she said checks are C’s and pluses are A’s. I said why don’t you just write that in there.... Nobody in the class knows what these checks are.

“And then I said, ‘Well, what are you grading?’ She takes the journal and she’s pissed. She’s pissed you can see it in her face, she’s pissed. She grabs my journal—‘I’m going to take it home with me.’

“Well, when I get it back, there are these big bold checks all over it. She never got back to me on it. I asked her when I got my journal back. I said, ‘Well, what are you grading?’ She said, ‘Well, I’m in a hurry right now; I can’t tell you that.’ So, I never knew what they were grading— if it was your writing style, your grammar, your ideals.”

When asked later, Loeffler says she doesn’t remember the conversation with Johnson.

Report card on class

Support group time. Nobody in my group knows what the weekly goal was, but it really doesn’t matter. We don’t usually talk about the goals anyway. We take our session out on the lawn in the sunshine. We munch on kiwi fruit and talk about the men in our lives. Our conversation turns to the self-grade we are going to turn in.

“Of course I’m going to give myself an A,” one student says. “And I’m putting down that I did 30 hours of work (on the project).” We laugh because we know it’s an exaggeration. “They probably think all women should get A’s anyway,” someone says.

By the last few weeks of class, some of the women still seem enthusiastic, but a small group of dissenters is forming. A few women don’t take the class seriously anymore, and are more and more obvious about it.

One week during check-in, a student tells us she’s getting married. She asks what

other people think her married name should be. Should she keep her name, take her fiance’s name? The discussion goes on for 15 minutes, and the woman sitting next to me leans over and whispers, “I just don’t care about this.” I urge her to say that, but she shakes her head “no way.”

The last day of class, we turn in our “self-grade.” Most of the women in my small group give themselves A’s. We also turn in a personal class evaluation. Looking through the class evaluations later, it seems the class is a hit.

“Really great class,” one student wrote. “I appreciate your concern and interest for my individual needs. My awareness increased so much.”

“This class really helped me grow as a woman,” another student wrote.

“Excellent class!” from another. “It really helped me to put my life in perspective.”

But when I call some students later and tell them that I’m writing a story about the class for the Star Tribune, I hear another side.

“It was too personalized,” said Liz Abene, 25. “It was too much of a therapy session, and that’s not what it’s supposed to be.”

Ellen Shulman, 23, said she thought Loeffler and Eckfeldt were trying to impose a certain philosophy on the students. “(They were) giving us a cookie-cutter idea of how women need to act in everyday life. Why would every woman want to be the same way?” she said.

Some students who rave about the class admit that it doesn’t seem academic. “It was 10 weeks of therapy session, but that’s what I wanted and needed,” said Pat Darling, 46. “I can’t afford a therapist. It’s 40 buck an hour. This 10 weeks of therapy for 300 bucks.”

Another student, Erin Weber Seel, 24, agreed that this class is out of the ordinary. “But it’s given me something so

much more valuable than I could get in a regular class,” Weber Seel said. “I wish I could get my family and friends to take it because that’s how valuable I thought it was.”

But how do you grade such a personally focused class, other students wondered. The grading of the journals, which count for 40 percent of the grade, was questioned most often.

“I heard a lot of people got C’s — how can they grade your feelings as average?” said Ericka Mollner, 19.

In an interview with both instructors after the class, Eckfeldt said they “try to be real clear about what our expectations are.”

“We are not grading content,” Eckfeldt said. “It’s how she takes the stimulus... and how she integrates it into her life. One of the things we asked folks to do is look at where they’re at and where they want to be.”

Everyone should get a good grade, Loeffler said. If students do all the “analytical thinking, analytical writing,” and finish the project, she says, there shouldn’t be any reason a student wouldn’t get an A. “When Sue and I start the class we say, ‘We hope this is an all-A class,’ “ she says. “Everybody in there, theoretically should get an A.”

Loeffler and Eckfeldt were angry and disappointed that a reporter was in the class without their knowledge. At the same time, Loeffler said, they wouldn’t have done anything differently had they known. She’s comfortable with the class evaluations and with the class. She meets former students years later who tell her how much the class has helped them. She thinks, in fact, that the university should offer more classes like this one.

The class is not therapy, Loeffler said. And she isn’t looking for a specific outcome in her students.

“That would just defeat the purpose of the whole class if we had the right an

swer, rather than our goal being to facilitate their finding their own right answers. If something has happened with this class that is not being communicated, it's a surprise to me and I'm very disappointed."

Rather, she said, the class is meant to make women aware of options.

"I wouldn't begin to try to change someone who feels that everything is just fine," she said. "It's not as though you have to go out and change your life. We're giving you the opportunity to look at it."

Eckfeldt thinks the criticism comes from the fact that the class is based on "action learning" for women.

"It's much more about the stigma... that women's stuff, or women's way is not OK, and I don't believe it," she said.

Anne O'Connor, a full-time journalism student at the "U" and a reporter for the Star Tribune, got a C in the class.

GRADES

Students who took "Woman: A Sense of Identity" were graded on the following criteria

• **Journal (40% of grade)**

Journals consist of 1) personal reactions to class sessions, 2) personal reactions to assigned readings, 3) descriptions of weekly personal goals and whether they were accomplished and 4) a short summary "that integrates all of what you have learned in the class to date."

• **Project (40%)**

Students are required to complete an action-oriented project that provides 1) a new learning experience for you and 2) expands the awareness of other women on a topic of interest or concern to women.

Some examples:

Debbie worked with the police department to start a "neighborhood Watch" program.

Joan wrote and shared several original poems that described her feelings during a period of major transition in her life.

Sandra put together an eight-session body image class for junior high girls and met with the principal and school nurse to get it into the school program.

• **Class participation and personal growth (10%; self-graded)**

At the end of each class, give yourself a grade for 1) class participation 2) participation in support group and 3) personal change and growth.

• **Book reports (5%)**

• **Instructors' evaluation (5%)**

Evaluations will be based on 1) class participation and attendance 2) willingness to risk and share and 3) willingness to consider new options, ideas, behaviors.

Source: From class packet

Supporters defend academic integrity of 'U' program

By Maura Lerner—
Staff Writer

Are women's studies classes at the University of Minnesota really more about consciousness-raising than academics?

Prof. Jacquelyn Zita has heard that question before, and she replies without defensiveness. "I think we might have one or two like that, which are (partly) defined by that particular objective," she said.

And one of them is "Woman: A Sense of Identity," the class that's examined in today's Star Tribune.

The department defends the class, which has been taught at the university for about 20 years, as entirely appropriate.

But professors such as Zita say it's not at all typical of women's studies classes. And they say it would be unfair to judge the entire department by just one course.

"It would be ridiculous," said Zita. "It's an unusual and exceptional course for us."

It's unusual, faculty members say, in part because it focuses on students' personal growth, with lessons on assertiveness, body image and empowerment. It's also offered through the extension service, which means its open to students who may or may not be seeking a degree. And although it's labeled as a women's studies course and offered for both graduate and undergraduate credit, it's taught by instructors from the educational psychology department.

In women's studies, most of the classes are highly academic, according to chairwoman Amy Kaminsky. They're either

about a specific body of knowledge (such as "Biology of Women") or theory ("Feminist Thought and Theory").

A 1992 review, by three women's studies professors from other universities, said the department was "among the very best centers for feminist teaching and scholarship in the country." And it called the program "academically rigorous and in heavy demand."

Many students agree. "Women's studies have been some of the hardest and most academically challenging classes I've ever taken," said Pamela Balabuszko, 27, a women's studies major. "They are not light classes. They are a lot of work."

Still, the department says there's a place for classes like "Woman: A Sense of Identity." It's "a skill building course," said Janet Spector, a former department chair who now heads the university's commission on women.

Julia Davis, the dean of the college of liberal arts, said the course belongs right where it is, in continuing education. She said the course has a place in a big university, where a variety of courses are offered. But because of the lack of tests and other standard academic techniques, she said, she "might be concerned if this were a core course in a curriculum that leads to a degree."

The class' two instructors, Prof. Dorothy Loeffler and Sue Eckfeldt, are both licensed psychologists. And their goal in the class, said Loeffler, is to help students "get a clearer sense of themselves as women... more ability and power to take action in their own behalf, on behalf of other women."

Asked if they set out to change their stu-



Janet Spector helped start women's studies at the University of Minnesota. "It reminds me of the early '70s," she said of the criticism.

dents, Eckfeldt replied: "Well, education is change, you have to be honest about that." But she said the students decide whether to change or not. "There's no requirement that you have to be much more feminist in some way, other than being aware of what's going on and all your choices," she said. "You can still choose to be totally passive if you want to."

The class itself has passed numerous review sessions within the department. And the instructors say there's no question it's a valuable course that students should be able to take for academic credit.

"We've had about 4,000 women through this class, and typically the responses have been just powerful," said Loeffler. "I think that you'll find that (for) the women who have taken this class, it's been a learning experience. And it belongs in a university."

From July 26 to August 12, eight letters were published about this series of stories. The following four letters are reprinted here by permission of the letter writers. Of the remaining four letters, one was negative, one was humorous and two supported women's studies as an academic discipline.

Letters from Readers

July 29, 1994

Women's Studies

I'm disappointed that the Star Tribune would give an entire spread to an obvious hatchet job on the nationally respected women's studies department at the University of Minnesota.

Anne O'Connor admits she took the particular class she did because, of the many courses offered by the department, it seemed best to fit the criticisms made by Christina Hoff Sommers and her ilk (who, incidentally, seem to be finding it easier to make a name for themselves in academia by attacking the intellectual contributions of others rather than making any of their own). If, as everyone cited in the July 21 articles agrees, this course is not typical of women's studies classes, why didn't reporter Maura Lerner pick one that was? Or did she do so, only to discover that it didn't meet her preconceived notions and thus didn't give

her a story to write about?

A glance at the course descriptions and assigned reading lists of even a few other women's studies classes would indicate how rigorous they are. Departments don't earn accreditation and faculty don't get tenure by teaching courses devoid of content, as any academic of any political or intellectual stripe will tell you. Indeed, the scholarly work of feminist scholars is considered the intellectual cutting edge in many fields, including literary criticism, cultural analysis, history, philosophy, science and film studies, to name just a few.

Likewise, the implied attack on classroom practices commonly found in women's studies courses demonstrates a simple ignorance of accepted tenets of pedagogy. Sitting in a circle discussing ideas is called a seminar; it is the basis of most graduate study in the liberal arts and is considered the highest, not the lowest, form of intellectual discourse and learning.

Jeanne Barker-Nunn, St. Paul, managing editor, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*

If there is a place in University coursework for a pass-no pass grade, surely "Woman: A Sense of Identity" is it. How can the instructors even pretend to assign an objective letter grade in a class based so heavily on the kind of internal experience usually found in a psychotherapy setting? The only fair grade is one that separates those who do come to class and turn in assignments from those who don't.

Come to think of it, isn't the whole practice of assigning objective letter grades just another form of oppression at the hands of the linear-thinking, end-product oriented, cut-throat, competitive, notoriously insensitive patriarchal system?

The obvious solution is for the fields of academics and psychotherapy to merge, so that if your identity as a woman is only good enough to pull

a "C" in the class, you can get some support from the sensitive folks in your physics lab, for example. Your prelaw seminar can conduct a guided imagery tour, encouraging you to re-experience the traumatic event in a safe environment.

Do away with the unreasonable expectation that students learn something external to themselves, and the grueling business of earning a degree can be just as warm and fuzzy as a freely given hug from someone who really cares about you as a person.

Nan Booth, Minneapolis

August 6, 1994

Women's Studies — Letters, Page 1 (reprinted with permission and formatted to fit this handbook)

Letters from Readers, cont.

Women's studies is an honest, rigorous academic discipline

We were deeply disappointed by the Star Tribune's July 21 indictment of one women's studies course and, by faulty implication of the women's studies department at the University of Minnesota and feminist scholarship in general. In representing the department by one class and one teaching style, the Star Tribune's report was unbalanced. Your reporter demonstrated questionable journalistic ethics in attending a course without disclosing her identity and motivation, and we regret that the Star Tribune supported this kind of dishonest investigation.

As students in the graduate minor program of the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies at the University, we take advanced graduate courses in women's studies and teach some undergraduate women's studies courses. We come from a wide range of departments, and are very familiar with academic standards and teaching styles across the University. In our experience, the women's studies program offers challenging intellectual opportunities, encouraging

students to question assumptions in the best tradition of the academy.

An exciting variety of teaching styles and theoretical perspectives is what makes women's studies at the University so strong. Women's studies courses offer a variety of ways to learn, which means that students with diverse backgrounds can benefit from and contribute to women's studies courses. We would like to see every department at the University be able to claim as much.

Certainly there should be room within all University courses for students to be critical of what is happening in the class and to receive clarification of grading policies. Of course, not all courses and not all pedagogical approaches are right for every student. Clearly, the course "Woman: A Sense of Identity" was not right for your reporter. Under real circumstances (that is, if she were a student honestly enrolled for the educational experience) your reporter certainly should have exercised her choice to drop the course, which was not required, and find a course that better fit her interests.

At the very least, your reporter should have been honest with instructors and

other students from the start about the fact that she was in the course as a reporter, bringing to the course a specific political agenda. Her hidden identity and motivation were bound to affect negatively both her own learning experience and that of other students.

There is room within feminist studies for honest disagreement, but not for the deceit and duplicity that your reporter demonstrated.

Cynthia Richter, Minneapolis, and six others at the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies—Graduate Student Organization

August 12, 1994

Ill-founded criticisms

Three days before your July 21 articles on women's studies appeared, I was a guest during the final session of an Introduction to Women's Studies course taught by Prof. Jacqueline Zita at the University of Minnesota. This session focused on activism, or ways to put feminist theory into practice, especially as people encounter unjust institutions. The course syllabus I'd been sent outlined a heavy schedule of reading and rigorous expectations for individual writing and class participation.

The class was a wonderful experience: The students' questions were probing, their responses thoughtful, and the teacher's facilitation inviting and insightful. I'm envious of this generation of students for the chance to engage in courses that value women's leadership in historical and contemporary contexts. I hope that the ill-founded or opportunistic criticisms in your article will not discourage potential students.

Carol Masters, Minneapolis

Women's Studies — Letters, Page 2 (reprinted with permission and formatted to fit this handbook)

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Women's Studies Department Complaint

On July 21, 1994, the *Star Tribune* published articles concerning the Women's Studies Department at the University of Minnesota. Our complaint concerns both the content of the articles and the manner in which the information in them was gathered.

Unethical Reporting Method

Much of the material in the main article was gathered by a reporter who registered for, attended and completed a women's studies extension class. At no time during the quarter did she identify herself to the instructor or to the other students as a reporter. Undercover reporting in such circumstances violates the ethical standards meant to govern it: clandestine reporting is not the only way to learn about what goes on in classrooms, nor is the information uncovered in this way of such public value as to overrule the *prima facie* wrongness of deception. Furthermore, in this case, there is the additional consideration that the instructor made it clear to the students that personal material would be discussed and was to remain confidential. The accompanying article, by *Star Tribune* reporter Maura Lerner, occurred under circumstances that also suggest lack of fully informed consent. Jacquelyn Zita, then acting chair of the Department of Women's Studies, was asked for an interview under the pretext that the newspaper was going to do a special report on the Women's Studies/Center for Advanced Feminist Studies anniversaries. The interview was agreed to before she knew about the undercover reporter. Professor Zita's sense is that the Department members at the interview were very much manipulated by the press at that interview. Fully informed consent as a good faith measure was lacking.

Unrepresentative Nature of the Course

The reporter chose the class specifically to confirm the hypothesis with which she started: that women's studies classes lacked in serious intellectual content. She began attending another class, one taught by a

philosopher of science, and abandoned it for one that better fit her preconceived ideas. The class she chose, "Women: A Sense of Identity," in fact predates the department and is not part of the regular curriculum. However, as a course designed to help women begin to address their place in society and to develop the personal, interpersonal, and intellectual skills to critically question that place, "Women: A Sense of Identity" is an important course for the University to offer, and the department is pleased to provide an administrative home for it. For the reporter to imply that the course is representative of the women's studies curriculum is a travesty. Our curriculum is intellectually demanding and rigorous, from the introductory level through doctoral courses, and there was no attempt in the articles to say anything about any of it.

Courses taught by full-time women's studies faculty were not reviewed. The teaching and academic records of core faculty and department were not reviewed. Continuing Education for Women, which runs this course, does not represent the Women's Studies Department. Nevertheless, the Department endorses the teaching methods used in this course as standard state-of-the-art teaching techniques (interactive learning, journaling, introspective and experiential projects) for a course of this nature. These are also techniques used in other courses at the University that are experientially based. The reporting revealed a lack of expertise in understanding contemporary pedagogical methods and their relation to content.

Uncritical Use of Sommers' Book

The intellectual framework for the articles was provided by the writing of Christina Sommers, who was quoted at great length and wholly uncritically. After the *Star Tribune* articles appeared, the *Minnesota Women's Press* published an excellent article exposing both the right-wing funding of Professor

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Women's Studies Department Complaint

Sommers' work and the pervasive distortions and inaccuracies in it. Certainly it is appropriate that her criticisms of women's studies received some attention, but that attention needs to be knowledgeable and critical, and the use of her work in these articles was neither. Rather, a particular class was deliberately chosen to illustrate her critique, that class was observed clandestinely and unethically, violating the trust and the rights of other students registered in it, and the reporter's conclusions about it were irresponsibly generalized to an entire department. The vast majority of letters and opinion pieces responding to the articles spoke to the strength, intellectual rigor and excellence of the Department of Women's Studies, the importance to individuals of the specific class attacked, and the inaccuracies and unfairness of this skewed "coverage" of women's studies at the University of Minnesota.

Respectfully submitted,
The Women's Studies Department
University of Minnesota

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Newspaper's Response

Unethical Reporting Method

Reporter Anne O'Connor attended the graduate-level class, "Women: A Sense of Identity," under her own name. Everything she said and did in the class was truthful. She did not use any comments that students made in class without getting their permission in interviews after the course ended. It is important to point out that there was no contract or agreement to keep what happened in class secret. In fact, it would seem totally inappropriate to expect the students to do so, because the University is a public institution open to public scrutiny.

Reporter Maura Lerner said she told Jacquelyn Zita, then acting chair of the Women's Studies Department, that she wanted to talk about both the accomplishments and criticisms of women's studies. She did not tell the staff that O'Connor was enrolled in the class because the teachers were to be told first, after the course ended. Formal interviews were requested with both instructors after the course ended. One, Dorothy Loeffler, said she would not have changed anything about the conduct of the course if she had known there was a reporter taking notes for a story. Also, a point was made to call other women's studies faculty after the class to interview them specifically about the points in O'Connor's article.

Unrepresentative Nature of the Course

The class was chosen to determine whether some controversial components of women's studies programs at other institutions were present at the University of Minnesota. Those components included students sitting in circles, concentrating on personal feelings and behavior, and keeping journals. O'Connor sat in on two classes, and observed some of the controversial features in "Women: A Sense of Identity." She elected to stick with that course. The complaint alleges that the article implied that the course is representative of women's studies at the University, with "no attempt to say anything about"

the program's "intellectually demanding and rigorous curriculum." In fact, reporter Lerner quoted Julia Davis, dean of the College of Liberal Arts: "I'm not going to say to you that there's absolutely no instance in which a course is taught here that might be questionable. But, no, overall this is a rigorous program. It's treated like any other academic program and the teaching is done by scholars in the field."

An accompanying article discussed the context of the class within women's studies, quoting Zita as saying the class is "not at all typical" and that it is "an unusual and exceptional course for us." Finally, editors were aware that this course was offered through Continuing Education, but concluded that the course was a valid one to observe because it is offered for both undergraduate and graduate level credit in the women's studies. Most important, the teaching methods are clearly endorsed by the Women's Studies Department.

Uncritical Use of Sommers' Book

Lerner's article was not a first-person account, but a report on the debate that has erupted nationwide, and locally, about women's studies. Christina Sommers is part of that debate, and she was quoted accurately. At the same time, the article did contain criticism of Sommers' book by Zita and other members of the Women's Studies Department. The stories also included many positive comments about women's studies in general and from students in the class reporter O'Connor attended.

The editors believe the management of the project and the reporting of O'Connor and Lerner represents responsible journalism. No confidences were broken. All parties were given an opportunity to comment. No inaccuracies have been charged.

Respectfully submitted,
Pam Fine
Managing Editor

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Issues to Consider

Journalists themselves disagree about the use of deception in reporting. Some believe that deception in any form is wrong. Others believe the use of deception is justified when the information is important for the public to know and it cannot be obtained through straightforward reporting.

In this case, the reporter registered for the class in her own name, completed class assignments and said she expressed her true opinions in discussions. The Women's Studies Department claims she was working undercover because she did not disclose up front that she was a reporter working on a story.

1. Was O'Connor, the full-time student and part-time reporter, working undercover?
2. Could the newspaper have gained comparable information in a more straightforward way?
3. If you agree with the department that the reporter engaged in deception, was the information gained in this manner important enough to justify the use of deception?

It is not unusual for instructors to ask students participating in classes involving discussions of highly personal matters (as this class certainly did) to keep the classroom discussions confidential. Managing Editor Pam Fine argued that it would be inappropriate to ask students to do so because the university is a public institution open to public scrutiny. Students, however, are private citizens.

4. What do you think about Fine's argument? Is it appropriate to ask students to keep personal information gained in a classroom setting confidential? Do students enrolled in a public institution lose their right to privacy? What should students' expectation of privacy be when entering the classroom?
5. Clearly, the *Star Tribune* gave consideration and went to great lengths to safeguard the privacy of individuals before publication. The reporter told each student, as well as the professors, that she was writing a story and asked each if she could quote them. Was that adequate to ensure privacy?

Reporter O'Connor said that she did not misrepresent herself and she participated in all class discussions.

6. How does that square with the journalistic principle of detachment? What are the benefits and risks of reporter participation in an event?

The newspaper said the series was meant to be, "a report on the debate that has erupted nationwide, and locally, about women's studies."

7. Was it adequate for the paper to examine one class at one institution for a report on a nationwide debate? Further, was it fair for the paper to choose a class that was not part of the department's regular curriculum, though the department endorses the teaching methods used in the class?
8. Was it fair for the paper to frame this story in terms of the critics of women's studies and then ask the University's Women's Studies Department to respond? Did that unfairly put the department on the defensive?
9. When a news organization covers an event or a controversy in a community that it does not regularly cover, does it have a responsibility to provide additional information that will provide the audience with context about the community? Or, does the standard definition of fairness – was the story accurate, did the story present the views of both?

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Excerpt from the Society of Professional Journalists' Handbook, *Doing Ethics In Journalism*

Deception Checklist

What does it mean to lie? Ethicist Sissela Bok wrote an outstanding book on this subject, called *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*. In that book, she says lying is one form of deception. "I shall define as a lie any intentionally deceptive message which is **stated**." The act of deception, Bok says, can be much broader. "When we undertake to deceive others intentionally, we communicate messages meant to mislead them, meant to make them believe what we ourselves do not believe. We can do so through gesture, through disguise, by means of action or inaction, even through silence."

In an effort to determine when the use of deception at whatever level might be justified by journalists, the participants in an ethical decisionmaking seminar at The Poynter Institute for Media Studies created the following criteria:

When is deception by a journalist justified? What are the criteria for a "Just Lie?" **To justify a lie or deception one must fulfill all of the criteria.**

- When the information sought is of profound importance. It must be of vital public interest, such as revealing great "system failure" at the top levels, or it must prevent profound harm to individuals.
- When all other alternatives to obtaining the same information have been exhausted.
- When the journalists involved are willing to fully and openly disclose the nature of the deception and the reason for it to those involved and to the public.
- When the individuals involved and their news organization apply excellence, through outstanding craftsmanship as well as the commitment of time and funding needed to fully pursue the story.
- When the harm prevented by the information revealed through deception outweighs any harm caused by the act of deception.
- When the journalists involved have conducted a meaningful, collaborative, and deliberative decisionmaking process in which they weigh:
 - the consequences (short- and long-term) of the deception on those being deceived
 - the impact on journalistic credibility
 - the motivations for their actions
 - the deceptive act in relation to their editorial mission
 - the legal implications of the action
 - the consistency of their reasoning and their action

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Voting Questions

1. Did the *Star Tribune* distort the reality and hurt the image of the Women's Studies Department by featuring a course that was unrepresentative of the regular curriculum?
2. Did the *Star Tribune* commit ethical violations in the way it gathered information for the stories:
 - a) by using a full-time student, part-time reporter;
 - b) by using comments collected from the class experience?
3. Was the *Star Tribune* unfair to use Christina Sommers' criticisms of women's studies as a framework for the story, without looking critically at her arguments or at who funded her work?

THE AUTHORS

Leslie MacKenzie developed the materials for the Mock Hearing Project while on staff at the Minnesota News Council. Christine Tomlinson revised the project for online distribution.

Karen Ernst, a Minneapolis/St. Paul middle and high school English teacher, contributed preparation notes and oversight in the preparation of the mock hearing materials. Kellie Sagmoen-Scales, an Apple Valley high school journalism teacher, provided oversight in the preparation of worksheets and project activities.