WOMEN'S STUDIES DEPARTMENT

FALL, 1993

MARILYN MACDONALD
Lec: Thursday, 13:30-15:20
Tut: Thursday, 15:30-16:20

W.S. 310-3

WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

From Creation to death, humans are involved intimately with their surroundings (environment), and have devised many strategies to justify and perpetuate that involvement. In our post-industrial society, the relationship between women and the environment is often problematic. This course is centered on two aspects of that relationship.

Women, when differentiated from men by their ability to be the environment (i.e., to bear an embryo/fetus), can become coessentialized with nature (in its sense of the vital force of life on Earth/Ocean). In a society centered on science and technology, and with an emphasis on the control of creativity, women/nature and the virtues of womanhood/wilderness often are viewed at best as inappropriate, and at worst as dangerous to the public good.

Women, as the source of half of human genetic makeup, and of most of early childhood development, are more easily located as the moral source from which both individual and societal reform should spring. At the same time, that reform can be viewed as putting economic progress at risk.

In this course, we will look at how these two aspects interact with some of the issues that are developing around the concept of sustainable development; and identify strategies for a feminist environmental worldview.

Week 1 Definitions of nature, the environment, and place. Risks of essentialism: if man is to culture as woman is to nature....
Week 2 The agricultural revolution and global climatic change: conceptions of women, men, and nature.
Week 3 The industrial revolution and the roots of environmentalism: women and the "age of light, soap, and water"
Week 4 The "green" professionals: gender-based segregation of public and private environmentalism
Week 5 Scientism and acceptable risks: the feminine virtues of the New Environmental Paradigm
Week 6 Social movements and social contracts: have women failed to evolve?
Week 7 Violence against nature: king/warrior/magician/lover and man the natural alien. Ecofeminism and radical environmentalism
Week 8 Homework and consumerism: thinking globally and blaming locally
Week 9  The paradox of sustainable development: women and global change in production and reproduction
Week 10  FIELD TRIP
Week 11/12  Class presentations
Week 13  Environmental utopias

EVALUATION:

Midterm  15%
Final Exam  20%
Research Essay  20%
Class Presentation  10%
Environmental Code  5%
Case History Analysis  15%
Attendance & participation  10%
Workbook Completion  5%

REQUIRED READING:

A package of readings supplemented with readings from reserved materials. Average 50 pages per week.

This course may be applied to the Certificate in Liberal Arts.