

# Dr. Linda Kerber speaks about history from the pink margin

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Contributor

During her visit to Penn State Harrisburg (PSH) on Sept. 17, Dr. Linda Kerber spent a class period speaking to students taking Women's Studies 315, taught this semester by Dr. Rie Gentzler.

The meeting provided an assorted group of students and faculty with the rare chance to engage in conversation with a noted historian.

Dr. Kerber shared a brief overview of her involvement in the establishment of Women's Studies as a viable course of study. She described herself as a member "of the first wave of the second wave of feminists".

Kerber's description refers to the feminist activists of the 70s as the "second wave:" most of them were white, middle class women who had graduated from college.

The "first wave," she said, were the suffragists who led the prolonged campaign for women's right to vote that culminated in the ratification of the nineteenth amendment on August 26, 1920.

Members of the "third wave" comprise the current ranks of activists

whose focus is wider than their predecessors: this group attempts to represent a philosophy of inclusion. Kerber said third wave activists emphasize the importance of a global movement that strives to include women of all races, classes, ages and sexual orientations and to address their unique concerns.

Kerber explained the parallel between the periods of women's intense political activity (the three waves) and the corresponding demand for retrieval of their history.

She noted that prior to 1970 the most recent books to focus on women and their position in relation to cultural institutions were published in the 30s.

Kerber went on to describe the period from 1945-1968 as a prolonged lull during which women's political roles were defined solely in service to men; she stressed that women were denied access to both historical and contemporary role model of political autonomy.

To further amplify that point, she relayed anecdotes that colleagues had shared with her regarding their frustrated attempts to examine women's issues

in their graduate programs; the students were advised by their professor to abandon those plans as they did not reflect legitimate scholarship. The young historians were also cautioned that no publisher would publish such "trivial topics."

While some academic scholars continue to view Women's Studies as a temporary phenomenon, Kerber points to her text's four revised editions as proof of the permanence and validity of her work.

Unlike many history books that present an exclusively male perspective with an accompanying emphasis on national entities, wars, and conquests; Linda Kerber and her co-author, Jane Sharron De Hart have assembled a text, "Women's America," that examines the inter-relatedness of politics, economics, ideology, and biology in women's lives.

Each successive edition has included new research and provides more examples of the uniqueness of women's historical perspective, she said.

In the most recent work, the authors reveal the double standard of immigration laws that existed from 1907-1930s; immigrant wives of native born men were

automatically accorded full citizenship, while native born women who married immigrants were automatically deprived of their citizenship.

For women, the personal is indeed the political when power derives from gender experience, but the historian repeatedly reiterated her and her co-author's commitment to demonstrating the strength and resilience of women in dealing with the inequities they encounter rather than portraying them as passive victims.

Linda Kerber closed by stating that feminist historians write history differently than most of their colleagues because they eliminate the absolute divisions of "we" and "they". Since their consciousness of their position of "otherness" has already placed them outside the cultural center, they are more inclined to deconstruct the obvious and explore the hidden agendas that underlie political realities.

Certainly, she validated my girlish perception that women had been banished from the cultural center featured in my history books and that somewhere beyond the main stream I would find them in the pink margin.

Dr. Linda K. Kerber, president of the Organization of American Historians visited PSH Sept. 17. In addition to meeting with students in the women's studies class, she also lectured at 7 p.m. in the Gallery Lounge, where she presented, "A Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women, Citizenship and Military Obligation." This event was presented by The American Studies Program, Humanities Division, and Office of Student Activities.



Photo by Sherry Bartush

Dr. Linda K. Kerber (center) with Deb Bice, Pctc Fabricy, Kristie Chambers and Christena Bowman.

### From Election pg. 1

members explained the voting procedure, handed out summaries of the candidates' platforms and encouraged passing students to participate in the event. According to SGA members, this approach was difficult to ignore and most students took the time to fill out the somewhat complicated form.

Fewer than 300 students officially voiced their opinions regarding the candidates for Junior Senator at Large, Junior Senator of Public Policy and Junior Senator for the School of Business. Those that voted elected Paul Feenstra, Kristen Lynn McGlennen and Mike Smith.

Junior Senator at Large and business management major Paul Feenstra says he will represent the entire junior

student body. In his published platform he highlighted his ability to "examine the needs of the part-time and adult students, as well as the traditional students."

As a night student, Feenstra says he will be exposed to those non-traditional students who often feel ostracized from the rest of the University community and hopefully he will be able to encourage more of them to participate in campus activities.

The new Junior Senator of Public Policy, Kristen Lynn McGlennen, cited her prior experience with the SGA at Delaware Valley Community College (DVCC) as a leading advantage.

"I have many ideas for the program regarding Public

Policy/Criminal Justice such as getting more students involved in this program," said McGlennen in her submitted platform. A former President of the Criminal Justice Club at DVCC, McGlennen says she brings knowledge of student organizations to her new PSH position.

The final position was that of Junior Senator for the School of Business which Mike Smith will be filling. A marketing major, Smith described himself as "a compassionate individual seeking to interact with student government."

During his term, Smith says he hopes to raise the levels of student consciousness and responsibility.

There remains one opening on the SGA Board which is the position of Secretary. In the absence of a candidate, the SGA accepted write-in votes for this seat. Seven votes are required for any one individual to be declared the winner in this manner.

Although she was not permitted to identify the student, Woodley did state that one individual had received multiple write-in votes, but less than the required seven.

The SGA is accepting applications for this position and anyone interested should immediately contact Woodley at 948-6137.

The SGA will then screen all applicants to evaluate their qualifications and announce its decision at a later date.

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