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**WOMEN AT THE CENTER:  
HISTORY OF WOMEN'S STUDIES  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE**

**TAPE LOG**

Dr. Marie Laberge is an Assistant Professor in the Women and Gender Studies Department at the University of Delaware.

Name of person(s) interviewed: Marie Laberge

Other people present: No one else present

Interviewer: Anna Asher

Date of interview: July, 9, 2013

Location of interview: Interview took place in office of Marie Laberge, 34 West Delaware Ave, Newark in Women & Gender Studies building

Special conditions (noise, interruptions, etc.): Motorcycle went by at one point

General description of contents: Discussion about back ground, education, some work history and research interests, including working ion ERA campaign. Arrival in Delaware, teaching courses for History and Women's Studies, and hiring. Teaching and what she wants students to get out of the classes. Changes in program since arrival. Importance of connections across the University for women's studies. Discussion about why UD WOMS successful while others have been shut down.

Recording Format and disc number: Video interview

Total Running Time: 33:50

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00:00 Discussion of personal background growing up and gender roles. Grew up in New England, interest in reading. Undergraduate studies at Simmons College, double major in Communications and History. Work after college. Join effort to ratify the ERA in early 1980s. Studying the woman suffrage movement while working on ERA campaign, decided to go back to school for History degree after ERA was defeated. University of Wisconsin –Madison, Ph.D. American women's history, discussion about research. Continue to be politically active. Came to Delaware while still a graduate students when partner got a three year job, moved when she was pregnant with son and finished PhD. Started teaching history classes, including History 300 Women in American History which led to work with Women's Studies.

7:48 Taught for Women's Studies as adjunct, got a one year position, then another one year, then a three year and then another one year position, until put on as continuing non-tenure track position in Women's Studies. Discussion about course she teaches. Discussion about the courses Women's Studies teaches, several hundred

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courses. Women's Studies courses are cross-listed with a wide range of classes. Have faculty across the university that teach Women's Studies courses. WOMS is interdisciplinary and the cross-listed courses fit.

11:10 Question about what main goal is as a women's studies professor. (motorcycle sounds) Discussion about getting students to think about the world from a women's studies lens and see the world around them through this lens. Importance of thinking about our gendered experiences. Need to be conscious of the social constructed gender systems around us. Difficulty with this practice in the Women and Religion class, and ability to look critically at our own religions. Importance of being able to get students to question the world around them.

15:44 How are you impacted as a teacher in the classes? Teaching makes me constantly have to question what is happening around us, constantly changing the way we think and the terms we use. Have to be consciously aware of how we have changed our thinking about the issues. It is a field that is very current and contemporary.

17:24 How has Women's Studies changed since you arrived? Have really expanded both students' involvement but also expanded the faculty, with Margaret Stetz, Alvina Quintana and Pascha Bueno-Hansen. The changes have been important to enable us to cover variety of areas such as international and transnational Women's Studies, as well as Sexuality and Gender studies. Have also moved into the new building. Was actually one of the buildings where Women's Studies was located in the 1970s. The move to Departmental status has been significant, ongoing battle for over 20 years. Important for recognition by the university.

20:32 Discussion of the Domestic Violence Prevention and Services concentration has been important for our students, with concrete training and experiences. Helps combine advocacy and service. Hope to expand it to address rape and sexual assault prevention. Structural changes helped solidify Women's Studies at the University.

21:50 Question: As you have been going through all the history about WOMS, has anything shocked you about the information? Still trying to understand why UD WOMS was able to make the move to Department while other women's studies programs have been shut down. For other programs, it has often been about funding. Encouraged that it hasn't happened here. Women's studies have always done things on a nickel and a dime, people committed to the services, teaching and creating the program and department. A lot of energy put into WOMS by people spread out across the university, which enables us to sustain ourselves. Our ability to persist has been about the commitment and passion about our work and students comment about it.

24:46 How is UD Department different from other places? Not sure we are that different. The field has been going through growing pains, addressing different issues and making sure we incorporate diverse experiences, as well as trying to address transnational issues. Discussion about the "Delaware way," small state where people try and have those political conversations across party lines, and you see that at the University where there are a lot of conversations between disciplines. What women's studies is good at is interdisciplinary work. Have faculty working collaboratively across disciplines and that can help people understand what we do and we are not isolated. Our faculty are committed to service so we have presence in the University and are seen as engaged with it.

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27:30    Discussion about student involvement in classes and engagement with students, providing them with a different way of thinking about the world.

28:00    What is women's studies to you? Response to what about the men question. Women's studies defined. Place women at center of analysis and examine how we see the world from that perspective, and develop new ways to do research. How have women and men been gendered in their lives that shape who they have become. With a critique of race, class, sexual orientation, develop a kaleidoscope that you look at the world through.

31:00    Why the oral history project? Discussion of work in graduate school oral history project on the founders of the women's movement with Midwestern women. When we started thinking about our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the realization that our founding mothers were ageing, we began the project. So the oral history project began, thinking about why women's studies and how did it come about. Importance of oral history to get peoples stories, and also yet it's also an encapsulation of people's understanding of their history. Important to have women's voices recorded and let them tell us the story.

33:50    End of interview