

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

**TAPE LOG**

Dr. Anne Boylan is Professor of History with a joint appointment with the Women and Gender Studies Department at the University of Delaware. Retired now, she was at UD from 1986 until 2015.

Name of person(s) interviewed: Anne Boylan

Other people present: No one else present

Interviewer: Marie Laberge

Date of interview: January 29, 2014

Location of interview: In Dr Boylan's office in the History Department, Munroe Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE

Special conditions (noise, interruptions, etc.): Phone rings twice, interview is paused.

General description of contents: Discussion of background information; Early teaching experiences in Minnesota, New Mexico, Texas; Arrival in Delaware, teaching in History department; support for a line in History Department; Relationship with Women's Studies; early work in Women's Studies; Women's History Film series; teaching women's history graduate seminar and experiences with harassment of students in her class; Service in Women's Studies Program and the Commission on the Status of Women; Discussion about changes in Women's Studies since late 1980s; debate about departmental status, graduate certificate efforts; supporters of Women's Studies at UD discussed, faculty and administrators; discussion about issues of diversity; Visiting Distinguished Scholars series; conflicted feelings about moving to departmental status discussed; changes that have helped the process; discussion of change in the name to Women and Gender Studies; impact of Women's Studies on field of History; successes in Women's Studies at UD; discussion about what still needs to be addressed including impact of retirements that are not being replaced and decline in students taking courses; relationship between Women's Studies and Office of Women's Affairs and importance of the Women's caucus; impact of Women's Studies on the students; discussion about her own research and retirement; reminder to keep documents and value of women's history.

Recording Format and disc number: Video

Total Running Time: 1:27:22 min

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**TOPIC SUMMARY**

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00:00 Background information: Parents immigrated from Ireland when she was 10, spent early years in Thurles, Ireland, two brothers and two sisters. Migrated to Chicago where family members were. Attended

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Catholic schools through college, attended Mundelein College, Catholic women's college, graduated 1968; Graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

00:01:07 University of Wisconsin Madison was not very welcoming for female historians. Less than 15% students were female, faculty heavily male. No real interest in women's history, although some students attempted to do women's history, were discouraged but ended up doing dissertations on women's history. Her background was in intellectual history. Didn't start women's history until first job at University of Minnesota, 1973 - 1976. No turning back.

00:02:01 Spouse had a job at University of New Mexico, moved to Albuquerque, taught for year in program for Native American students on reservations. "Fabulously interesting. Not sure I taught them anything. They taught me a lot." One semester, taught at two Pueblo reservations, second semester at two Navaho reservations. Had to fly into Alamo, NM; group of 3 faculty in 4 seater plane on a dirt airstrip. Taught US history, others taught English, Art. Fascinating trying to teach American history to Native Americans. Students were high school graduates, getting AA degrees in Education, working in high schools as teacher's aides, to be certified as teachers. They had no interest in learning about the Puritans, or Transcendentalism. She decided had to find way to learn their history and get them to do projects on it. Discussion of projects; oral history, family histories, art project with family pictures. Some pictures from 1930s were taken when doctor would visit. Created book with interviews and images. Some interviews in Navaho, were transcribed and used to practice writing in English. "One of the most fascinating experiences of my entire life."

00:05:28 Worked at University of Texas in El Paso (1977-79), commuted from Albuquerque to El Paso. Then taught at University of New Mexico for 5 years on part time, one year contracts. (1979-85). Most typical job was teaching four sections of the U.S. history survey course. Did teach Family History, but not Women's History. Had taught it in Minnesota but did not teach it again until arrived at UD.

00:06:23 Spouse got job at UD in 1985, History Department promised she could teach at least one course a semester and could teach Women's History. Carol Hoffecker was chair at the time and didn't have time to teach the course which she had introduced earlier.

00:06:52 Arrived in 1985; started teaching Spring 1986. Taught women's history and US history survey course. Taught on a course by course basis. Sandra Harding, "my introduction to Women's Studies", met with Hoffecker and pointed out that she was teaching two courses, which was equivalent to a half time load, suggested she should have a half time contract, which allowed her to get benefits.

00:07:37 After three years, Hoffecker, Harding and others went to Dean, said they needed someone to teach Women's History on regular basis, and already had someone with credentials. First book was coming out, pressed for a line to be created for her. Was a Target of Opportunity, Affirmative Action hire. No search, went to Department, fierce argument, but they got the 2/3rds vote to appoint her Associate professor without tenure and then had three years to prove herself. Proud to have been a beneficiary of Affirmative Action. Was clear if line was not approved for her, then department wouldn't get it. At the time there were only two women in the Department out of about 30. Became the third woman in History Department.

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00:09:20 Discussion of relationship with Women's Studies; started with teaching the 300 level "Women in American History" course which Carol Hoffecker had been teaching. Was a big demand for the course. Discussion of Sandra Harding's support when she first arrived, "she boosted my confidence." Discussion of invitation to University of Delaware Women's Committee comprised of "faculty wives." Had never before been identified as faculty wife, had been faculty. Describes how Sandra (Harding) helped her connect with resources. Began teaching for Women's Studies immediately in spring of 1986 and met other faculty in Women's Studies, Kathy Turkel, Leslie Goldstein, Marian Palley, Barbara Gates: "a fantastic ready-made cohort of people who I could talk to and they didn't think of me as a faculty spouse."

12:51 Was part-time in early years. Primary way engaged with Women's Studies was meeting people, teaching courses, attending events such as Research on Women talks. At the time everybody went to the talks and met a number of people through it: Bonnie Scott, Nancy Brickhouse, Karen Rosenberg, Carole Marks. The first year, she wanted to have a film series for women's history month. Jessica Schiffman had not yet been hired, Nancy Wingate was the administrative assistant. Placed material - images, photographs and captions - in the window display in Smith Hall for women's history month with Kathy Turkel. Started talking about the film series with Kathy Turkel, recruited Donna Tuites, assistant in the Office of Women's Affairs, and a couple other people. Guy Alchon, History colleague, was involved, because he occasionally taught a section of women's history. Film series has been going strong since. Decided to use documentary films only, eventually taught it as a one credit course History 291 ("Women's History through Film") in 1991. Discussion of early mistake in scheduling five weeks in March and not realizing the fifth week was spring break, so had to get the doors unlocked. Gail Stanislaw from the History Media Center helped get the door unlocked. Has been hugely successful.

16:54 Came to Women's Studies "kind of indirectly" and then once she was put on a tenure-track in 1988, asked for and got a joint appointment with Women's Studies.

17:15 Question about how the History Department reacted to her involvement with Women's Studies. "There was resistance to hiring me." Some had opposition because they wanted a search, did not find resistance to her teaching and having a joint appointment as long as she did all of her service teaching and obligations to the History Department. Discussion of courses she taught, including teaching the first graduate seminar in women's history. Now History 617, first taught in 1989(or 1990) came about because the student pressure. At that time, were more female graduate students ( about 60/40 male-female)

19:07 A group of graduate students "marched" on the chair's office and asked for a graduate course in women's history. The first time course was taught four white male graduate students harassed the people in the course. Was a big course, 17 students, one male, all history students, though later it attracted students from other departments. They hung outside the classroom and harassed the students before she arrived. Also harassed the male in the class, making jokes about him being "sensitive New Age guy." It started to escalate when one Saturday night, they had been hanging out at the Deer Park and they began phoning women in the class and telling them they were discussing their physical attributes and telling them their ranking in terms of their physical attributes. She found out about it and another male graduate student found out about it. Independently both went to the chair Jack Ellis about it. Question was what to do about the behavior which was creating a hostile climate for these young women. She asked that it be taken to the

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Executive Committee, to come up with a policy. Recalls a member of Executive Committee saying nothing could be done, it was a question of academic freedom. Others spoke up and said that there is no right to interfere with people going to class or harassing female students to create a hostile atmosphere. Eventually a resolution was developed that Department did not allow harassment of other students on the basis of sex or race and they began addressing these issues directly in teaching assistant training. The four students were talked to and the issue went away. A mark of how significantly things have changed is how she describes experience at the end of the semester today and students are aghast, do not believe that it could ever happen in the department. It created an opportunity within the department to discuss academic freedom as well as people's right to pursue an education without being harassed.

24:41 Discussion of when she came up for tenure. Her first book was not in women's history, was on the history of American Sunday schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and published with a well-known press. She was not coming up to tenure on the basis of women's history. Didn't face some of the hostility or questions that others who work directly in Women's Studies faced.

25:52 Discussion of service in Women's Studies and effort to develop a major. Did double service, service in own department and service in Women's Studies. Service in Women's Studies was always a pleasure, always interesting things going on. Was involved in the effort to develop a major through discussions in Women's Studies, addressing curricular issues and also attending Faculty Senate to show support for the major. Remember the interview process for hiring Jessica Schiffman for the job for Program Coordinator, recalls thinking how fantastic she would be for the job. She was meticulous in her preparation of paperwork for establishing the major: there were questions at Faculty Senate but no enormous opposition to the major.

28:05 Was also involved with the Commission on the Status of Women. Served on it in from 1989 to 1992; also served with Maggie Andersen on the Faculty Caucus of the Commission, working very hard for a "stop the tenure clock" policy for faculty and a guarantee of parental leave. There was a lot of questions and hostility toward the "stop the tenure clock" policy, discussed. Was harder to establish parental leave as a right, discussion about the debate. Once the policies were put in place, they have been enhanced and improved. Also served on the Executive Board of Women's Studies.

30:10 Question about the significant changes in Women's Studies during her time at UD. The major was a biggie. Getting departmental status, which was discussed and debated many times over the years, has been a huge change. Discussion about many meetings to get a graduate certificate in Women's Studies. Many other schools had it, and students would come here to study history and want a certificate in Women's Studies. Remembers going to meetings with graduate students at Bonnie Scott's house in the early to mid-1990s to talk about the graduate certificate program. Certificate programs such as the Domestic Violence certificate, and creation of the specialty in Global Women's Studies could not have been imagined when we were talking about getting a major and making sure could field the courses for it. At the time, some departments would not guarantee specific courses would be taught. History never was an issue, women's history was taught consistently. The main issue for the History Department was that the person teaching the course was qualified. History Department supported her developing new courses and teaching them as cross listed courses. But it was a challenge in other departments. Recalls when Sandra Harding left, the Philosophy Department was resistant to teaching the Feminist Theory course.

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33:32 Question about biggest supporters in Women's Studies at UD. By the time she arrived, the first group of scholars had fought a lot of important battles: Maggie Andersen, Bonnie Scott, Barbara Gates, Sandra Harding – in early 70s when they were trying to get one course team taught and get a program established. They were crucial key people who fought some of those fights and were allies in different departments. In the English Department had Jan de Armand, Bonnie (Scott), Gloria Hull, (Akasha Hull), Sandra (Harding) in Philosophy; in Sociology Maggie Andersen, Elizabeth Higginbotham and then Carole Marks. By the time she was hired, this network was already in place. (Dean) Helen Gouldner was pretty supportive although she didn't have much interaction with her. Other deans, Mary Richards was supportive; in recent years George Watson has been very supportive. A lot of variation at the level above the college. Recalls a peculiar meeting with Russell Jones when he became president of the University. He was invited to meet Women's Studies faculty at a meeting in Hullahen Hall. He asked a most peculiar question about Women's Studies students: "When they come in, are they wearing their student hat or their women hat?" It didn't seem peculiar to him but everyone in the room was surprised. At that level, people needed to be educated.

37:04 When Art Trabant was president, he was very supportive; Mae Carter was unbelievable, in the work she did in the early 70s and later on. When Trabant came back after Jones left, there was a sense of support at the top level. David Roselle was sort of hands-off, was supportive of the arts and history but did not have a clear sense of him. He attended the Commission on the Status of Women meetings. When the commission created a subgroup called WISE (Women in Science & Engineering) which Pat DeLeon, Pam Cook and Sandy Carberry helped to create, they would bring in a big name female scientist once a year to meet people in different departments and Roselle would go to that. But he always seemed disconnected. At the Provost level, Dan Rich was supportive but Byron Pipes was not. Recall feeling he hadn't done much to help us. By the time she got here, there are people in departments, who had tenure who are supportive of Women's Studies, so never saw those early challenges. Did see it at Minnesota when she was there in her early years.

40:08 Question about how effective Women Studies has been in addressing diversity. Women's Studies students are among the people who taught me about diversity; recalls a student who spoke to her and told her she lectured as if all women were straight. "It was a lightbulb moment. I really was not paying the kind of attention I need to pay to the history of lesbians." Many colleagues in Women's Studies were ahead on the issues so they taught her by scheduling talks on African-American women's history, Latina women's history, Gay/Straight history. Taught her about intersectionality. People in the Women's Studies program pulled the rest of us along.

42:20 Recalls around 1991, 1992, Sandra Harding got the Dean to agree to three yearlong Visiting Distinguished Scholar Programs. She convinced Electa Arenal, Darlene Clark Hine and Ronnie Steinberg, to spend a year as Visiting Distinguished Women Studies Scholars. Discusses how Darlene Clark Hine shared herself on campus, and through her learned a lot about resources of African-American women's history.

(Phone rings - interview paused)

44:10 Visiting scholars had huge impact, energizing, exciting, made a difference in teaching. Women's Studies played an important part in ensuring diversity of women's experiences is represented in curriculum

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45:10 Question about the impact of the move to departmental status. She has always had mixed feelings, was always someone who felt that the advantages of remaining a program were strong; could draw from departments and get a lot of buy-in from faculty whose appointments were in other departments. Feared there was energy and commitment that would get lost. May have been related to experiences with Women's Studies in New Mexico (1979 – 1985) which was very insular and unwelcoming, a very severe gay/straight split so worried that would happen here. Once it was clear the Dean was supportive and there were enough people across campus who were cross – listing courses, joint appointees.....

(Phone rings again – Interview paused)

47:08 Has not 100% changed mind about program versus department but a couple things are different from the early 1990s. The 75/25 appointments are key because then you do have a commitment from other departments to the courses the Department needs. Going to Department status does make those with lines in other departments maybe feel less involved. For example, she does not attend faculty meetings as much as she used to. As a Department, with a strong core faculty and good leadership, it has been, for the most part, a good move. The next challenge will be as people retire and as students feel less of a need for the courses. It's not clear it will be able to grow. Current Dean does support the 75/25 appointments for both Women Studies and Black American Studies. Recalls conversation with Maggie Andersen, about something similar to NYU with the Department of Intellectual and Cultural Studies. 40 years and anniversary.

49:52 Question about the change of the name from Women's Studies to Women and Gender Studies? Recalls discussion about the name change and variations about what it should be. Believes it's important to have women in the name; as long as women have separate and identifiable experiences as women, paid less for the same work as men, not recruited into the high-paying professions, they will have a different history, sociology, psychology, and legal experience. If it's just gender, then it's too easy to erase women from the picture and talk about gender rather than real people. Discussion of some work in Race Studies which is often just about "race" rather than the study of white people and black people. It's important but can be a dangerous trend. Happy with the name change to Women and Gender Studies

51:37 Question about the impact of Women's Studies on the field of History. History was one of the first disciplines that people turned to when they were began doing Women's Studies. It is had a huge impact in history, studying women in all of their variety and diversity, which is interdisciplinary. May still be members in Department who can teach course without referencing women's experiences but students ask and any textbook today is quite attentive to variations on the basis of gender and intersections with race, class, religion. The discipline of History has changed substantially. Look at conferences, hiring. Recalls serving on search committees where members would say we don't need to hire this candidate because they work on women and we already have someone on women. Would respond with comparisons between hiring someone who works on medieval history and nuns versus someone who works on medieval history and priests. Has been a big change; search committees are open to a variety of approaches and a variety of gender topics within a field. However some search committees still carry that in the back of their heads, they would not bring four white males for a job search but may not consider someone who is clearly doing gender if they have a particularly defined field they are searching for. It still matters a great deal who you put on a search committee. Discussion of work with Pam Cook on the Advance grant to improve the

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recruitment and retention of female faculty in the STEM fields. A lot of the work addressed how you recruit can cut out great people simply because they are women and minorities. Importance of mentoring.

57:28 Question about the successes of Women's Studies at the UD. It's such a different place - what's being offered as courses, what students can pursue as topics for research, dissertation projects, poster projects. Even people who don't work on women who are female are being mentored, encouraged to do research projects and present the material. It's a huge difference with people's comfort level, having women as colleagues, having Women Studies as part of the curriculum, having courses taught that cover a wide range of women's experiences in an interdisciplinary way. Examples of the numbers, the courses, the integration of gender in a number of different fields. People routinely do gender work but do not necessarily cross list a course with Women's Studies. The speakers, the intellectual content that has been churned up at the University that deal with women's lives. Example of the Women's History Month Film Series. Students talk about the films and the speakers. Departments do realize they have to include a token woman on the different speaker's series.

1:00:56 Question about what still needs to be addressed. A big challenge is that several in her cohort are retired or about to retire (several listed). Has to be an institutional commitment to replace the fields taught and to pay attention to number of female faculty in departments. Example of History department and numbers of women in it. Still a mismatch between the proportion of female students and female faculty to mentor them, especially for women of color. A huge challenge to simply pay attention to what's happening to the gender numbers in the departments. Example biology. Another challenge is so many women faculty still in continuing non tenure track positions; less job security, less commitment to lines. Unclear if retirees will be replaced with tenured faculty. Also Humanities and some Social Sciences seeing students take fewer courses, which may mean we have to beat the bushes for students. May just be cyclical but if administration encourages competition amongst departments for resources, it can be a problem. There has to be a commitment to the Humanities and Social Sciences as fundamentally important ways of learning about the human experience. That's where a lot of work in Women Studies is concentrated. Also continuing challenges to meet the needs of our students.

01:05:53 Question about a list she drafted of material she wanted to cover. One thing that was not yet emphasized the amount of outreach that was done as faculty and department. Involved with the Visiting Scholars Program of the Delaware Humanities Forum to give talk at local schools. Reflecting on all of the wonderful women that have come to campus to talk, was important. Departmental priorities in hiring have shifted in a number of departments because feminist scholars pointed out the work that is being done and the need for a hire. Mentoring is also important -when you have women available or sympathetic, feminist men available to mentor students, it is important. Student population is 60% female and they need to find people more sympathetic to them.

01:08:22 Discussion of close relationship between Women's Studies and the Office of Women's Affairs. Discussion of coordination on programming, celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women's suffrage and programming at Delaware State. Is thrilled that the Women's Caucus is carrying on the work of the Office of Women's Affairs and the Commission on the Status of Women. Without someone carrying the work, it's easy to ignore the issues. The last report and the data were very important.

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01:11:36 Question about the impact of Women's Studies on our students. It changes their worldview. Students have taken 201 "Introduction to Women's Studies" will ask different kind of questions in my history courses. They are the most articulate responders about what you do with Women's Studies major. It's exciting to see students taking what they've learned in their Women's Studies courses and using it in new contexts like a job. History students often come back to her to ask for resources on different materials that they will need in their own classes.

1:14:56 Discussion about her own research. Dissertation was study of American Sunday schools in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Women ran Sunday school associations. Was interested in the history of religion and popular expressions of religion. Second book was *The Origins of Women's Activism*, study of women's associations from the Revolution to the 1840s, looking at how women created organizations. That book reflects training in Women's Studies because it is attentive to race and class as factors that separate women and give some women power over other women. Tried to show how the best financed, most privileged of these groups set the agenda. More recently, working on two projects. Another book on women's rights in the United States, which is a narrative with embedded documents, to look at the ways women sought rights, won rights and lost rights since the colonial era. Book is impacted by intersectional theory and the greater awareness we have of the global nature of women's connected history. Other project is an article on popular understandings of women's history. Had a lightbulb moment in 1995 when realized most students learned about history from movies, television, songs, video games; was interested in how people produced videos, slideshows on women, exploring which women and how they explored it, focusing on the radio.

01:19:35 Question about her retirement and whether her position will be replaced with a women's historian. Discussion about her retirement plans and how the department will have to make some decisions. There have been a number of different retirements, including Susan Strasser and there does not appear to be any replacements. Out of five retirements, there has been one replacement, historian of China. Would like to believe the department will continue to teach women's history and the course continues to draw students. A number of faculty do address women and gender in their classes. Unclear how History 300 (Women in American History) will be taught in the future.

01:22:00 Any other topics but not discussed? One last item is a reminder to keep your documents, make videos, put them in the archives, do not assume that material is trivial. Discussion of a student senior thesis on the American Association of University Women in Newark because they donated their archives. Still believes there are people who think women's history is trivial. Recall discussion about women, technology and housework. Technology shapes every body's lives. Also there are still people who believe women should be able to follow the same career path as men, and do not acknowledge the importance of parental leave and gender differences in their experiences. The notion that there's only one way to do a career and that you can't balance work and family still affects some individuals. Discussion of female CEOs. Also still many people don't get the difference between individual behavior and policies that affect all women.

01:27:22 – End of video