

PEMBROKE CENTER

Associates Newsletter

More Work to Do: Women in the Academy

“Tenure for an academic is the Holy Grail, or the golden snitch, if you will,” said Nancy L. Buc ’65, ’94 LL.D. when introducing the Pembroke Center Associates’ commencement forum, “Tenure She Wrote: Women in the Academy,” held in Pembroke Hall on Saturday, May 23, 2015.

The American Association of University Professors defines tenure as an arrangement whereby faculty members, after successful completion of a period of probationary service, can be dismissed only for adequate cause.

“Critics of the Academy think that tenure is the end of your career, but faculty will tell you that it is meant to be the beginning of a secure period in their lives when they can do what they set out to do in the first place,” said Buc.

Chancellor Professor of Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, Judith Sims-Knight ’65 spoke about the challenges of getting a tenure-track position. “I got my doctorate at the University of Minnesota, from the Institute for Child Development, which at the time was one of the best programs in the country. I also acquired a husband and he had a job at Brandeis. The Psychology Department [at Brandeis] wanted to hire me but the President said no on the grounds of nepotism,” recalled Sims-Knight.

“I ended up at Wheaton College,” she continued. “My career path changed from one of a top-level researcher to primarily teaching and doing research



(L-R) Nancy L. Buc ’65, ’94 LL.D., Mary Renda ’81, Ph.D., Sangeeta Bhatia ’90, M.D., Ph.D., Louise Lamphere, ’15 LH.D., Judith Sims-Knight ’65, Ph.D.

on the side.” At Wheaton she was denied tenure because her research was “collaborative,” so she moved to UMASS Dartmouth where she was tenured and has had a positive experience.

When asked if the process is better at a women’s college, Mary Renda ’81, professor of history at Mount Holyoke College, shared her experience: “When I arrived at Mount Holyoke I did a kind of history that was political history but also very informed by an emphasis on culture. Some of the older men in the department didn’t really think it counted as history.”

“Who gets to define the discipline?” asked Renda. “The discipline was moving with

me, but these older men had a different idea of what history was, and they were working hard to make trouble for me.” Despite the challenges, Renda did get tenure in 2001.

Buc observed that Renda’s difficulty had to do with defining disciplines, the same issue that confronted Louise Lamphere when she was denied tenure at Brown in 1974. Lamphere filed a class action lawsuit for sex discrimination that had a dramatic impact on the number of women faculty at Brown. See the exhibit: <https://pembrokeexhibits.squarespace.com> to learn more.

Lamphere, now Distinguished Professor

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From the Director

Commencement is a special time at Brown, not only because we celebrate the graduation of our undergraduate, graduate, and medical students with their families, but also because we welcome alumnae/i back to campus for Reunion. The weekend was even more significant as the University awarded an honorary degree to distinguished anthropologist Louise Lamphere, whose activism was the subject of our exhibit *The Lamphere Case: The Sex Discrimination Lawsuit that Changed Brown*.

During Commencement weekend, we asked our undergraduate grant and prize recipients to present their research projects to the Pembroke Center Associates Council. The students provided Council members and guests with a window into their varied and intellectually rigorous projects. Presenting were:

Chanelle Adams '15.5, Science and Technology Studies

Linda Pei Undergraduate Research Grant
"Gender, Health, Commodity, Power: Mapping Medico-Botanical Knowledge in Northern Madagascar"

Leila Blatt '15, Africana Studies

Ruth Simmons Prize in Gender and Women's Studies

"From the Shadows of Choice: Activism, Power, and Black Women's Struggle for Reproductive Justice"

Patricia Ekpo '15, Gender and Sexuality Studies, American Studies

Helen Terry MacLeod Research Grant
"Everyday Utopia in Virtual Spaces: Tumblr, Depression, and Queer Futurity"

Elaine Hsiang '15, Health and Human Biology

Barbara Anton Internship Grant

"Mapping (Un)Safe Spaces: Trans Health and the Affordable Care Act"*

Bennett Knox '15, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Biology

Joan Wallach Scott Prize

"Damaged Brain or Damaged Rhetoric: A Critique of Biological Conceptions of Depression"

Charlotte Lindemann '15, English

Ruth Simmons Prize in Gender and Women's Studies

"Visions in Vertigo and The Turn of the Screw: A 'Reading-Adventure'"

Esme Ricciardi '15, International Relations

Steinhaus-Zisson Research Grant
"Islamic Immigrations, Sex Trafficking, and the Media: The Implications of Racialized and Gendered Trafficking Discourses in the Netherlands"

View their presentations here: <http://www.brown.edu/research/pembroke-center/videos> and thank you for your continuing support of the Pembroke Center and its scholars.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg
Director

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of Anthropology, Emerita, at the University of New Mexico, observed that minority faculty are facing similar tenure problems. “There are a number of cases where minority women who come up for tenure have been denied. . . . It is the same issue of marginalization. ‘Black history doesn’t count,’ or ‘the kind of work you are doing in literature is marginal to the discipline.’”

Biomedical Engineer and John J. and Dorothy Wilson Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sangeeta Bhatia ’90 spoke about her experience in a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) field.

“When I joined the faculty at the University of California, San Diego, I was one of two women in a department of twenty,” said Bhatia. “I was thinking about starting a family and very conscious about when I would plan my children relative to tenure. I was offered to go up early for tenure, which academically was not a good idea, but I really wanted to have my kids on the other side of tenure. So I let them put me up early.” Bhatia was granted tenure.

“I really benefitted from all the work you all did because they knew that they had to treat me well. I was the only woman in the department except this one senior woman who already had tenure,” said Bhatia. “When I got tenure I was treated very well, so I thought, ‘What is the problem?’ But now I have very few senior colleagues; very few women on the board of directors with me. So, the problem has shifted and my realization is that we are not done.”

Buc presented data showing that at Brown, the percentage of the tenured faculty who are women had increased dramatically since the Lamphere case, but that women are not 50 percent at any rank and that the percentage of full professors who are women is significantly lower than the percentage for associate professors. Bhatia’s data for MIT showed that women make up less than 25 percent of the faculty (combined from all ranks), with the trend definitely upward. Renda and Sims-Knight said that their institutions had better

percentages than Brown and MIT.

“We have to break this out as well in terms of experience across race. The experience in academia is very different for white women,” observed Renda. “African-American women in particular, but other women of color as well, are up against a different set of expectations about what kind of woman you need to be in order to be acceptable and respected. So the numbers are very different when we start looking there. Racism and sexism operate together to exclude women of color from positions.”

The panel also discussed the challenges of serving on committees, the benefits of having good mentors, their efforts to achieve work-life balance, the progress women have made, and the ongoing under-representation of women on faculties as a problem still to be addressed.

Watch the video: <http://www.brown.edu/research/pembroke-center/videos>

Louise Lamphere Receives Honorary Degree

Brown University awarded Louise Lamphere an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters during the University Commencement ceremony on May 24, 2015. The text of the citation follows.

Renowned anthropologist, professor, and feminist scholar, your actions early in your career paved the way for positive change at Brown University and fairer hiring and tenure practices for Brown faculty. You sacrificed energy and resources to pursue a class action lawsuit against Brown at a time when the University’s women faculty members numbered just 25 in total. Thanks to your perseverance, the University revamped its policies and over the course of the subsequent 15 years increased the number of tenured women professors fivefold. In addition, you made gender issues a permanent aspect of your scholarly work, co-editing one of the first volumes to address the anthropological study of women’s status. As president of the American Anthropological Association, you pushed for more research on poverty, health, and family evolution, in order to have a greater impact on current societal dilemmas. Your contributions to both academia and public service during your time at both Brown and the University of New Mexico have inspired the next generation of anthropologists and ensured that there is greater understanding of the ways in which societal changes affect women, both in the home and in the workplace. For your courage in standing up for equity and fairness for all faculty and your exemplary examinations of urban anthropology, healthcare practices and gender issues, we honor you with the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa.

This spring, Pembroke Center explored Lamphere’s feminist activism with an exhibit and public events that re-examined *Louise Lamphere v. Brown University*, the landmark class action case that she initiated. The exhibit may be viewed at: <https://pembrokeexhibits.squarespace.com>.



PHOTO CREDIT: FRANK MULLIN

Pembroke Center Student Prizes



Leila Blatt '15



Charlotte Lindemann '15



Bennett Knox '15



Erin Krafft AM '11, Ph.D. '15

The Pembroke Center awards prizes each year for outstanding undergraduate and graduate student research. We are pleased to announce our 2015 prize recipients.

Due to the exceptional nominations and projects submitted, the prize committee took the unusual step of awarding the Ruth Simmons Prize in Gender and Women's Studies to two students. **Leila Blatt '15**, a concentrator in Africana Studies, and **Charlotte Lindemann '15**, a concentrator in English, shared the honor.

Leila Blatt's thesis is titled "From the Shadows of Choice: Activism, Power, and Black Women's Struggle for Reproductive Justice." Through SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, Blatt explores the interplay between activists, the state, and biomedicine as they contest the boundaries of black women's reproduction. Her project seeks to illustrate the complex negotiations between theoretical conditions of women of color solidarity in relation to the praxis of anti-black violence. In considering the boundaries of reproductive self-determination, Blatt's thesis imagines the possibilities for creating capacities for daily and intimate rituals of reproductive freedom.

Charlotte Lindemann's thesis, "Visions in *Vertigo* and *The Turn of the Screw*: A 'Reading-Adventure,'" is a meditation on the relationship between vision and interpretation. Lindemann explores the two very different works' shared preoccupation with their haunted heroines. Both built around determining first impressions that unfold to disastrous conclusions, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* are studies of subjectivities that evade vision's fixed image of female identity.

The Joan Wallach Scott Prize is awarded to a student who has completed an outstanding honors thesis in Gender and Sexuality Studies. **Bennett Knox '15**, a double concentrator

in Gender and Sexuality Studies and Biology, received the prize for his thesis, "Damaged Brain or Damaged Rhetoric: A Critique of Biological Conceptions of Depression."

Knox examines rhetoric that insists on the biological etiology of depression, questioning its nuance and effectiveness for addressing discrimination and stigmatization. Through comparison to similar discourses surrounding sexuality, and by drawing on theories from feminist and queer studies, he suggests a rejection of the "social vs. biological" debate in depression etiology as a basis for more complex re-imaginings of depression.

The Marie J. Langlois Dissertation Prize honors an outstanding dissertation in areas related to gender studies or feminist analysis. The Pembroke Center awarded the prize to **Erin Krafft AM '11, Ph.D. '15**, a graduate student in Slavic Studies for her dissertation "Reading Revolution in Russian Women's Writing: Radical Theories, Practical Action, and Bodies at Work."

Weaving together literature, historical texts, and Russian and international feminist theories, Krafft follows the development of the tradition of Russian women's writing and fictional depictions of the everyday from the 1830s to the present. This tradition, examined on its own terms and outside of the literary and historical canon, reveals social and cultural shifts and revolutions that are often positioned as footnotes in the larger master narrative of Russian political and literary history.

