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

**TAPE LOG**

Kathleen Turkel is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Women and Gender Studies.

Name of person(s) interviewed: Kathy Turkel

Other people present: No one

Interviewer: Marie Laberge

Date of interview: June 18, 2013

Location of interview: Kathy Turkel's Office in Women and Gender Studies building 34 West Delaware Ave Newark

Special conditions (noise, interruptions, etc.): Interview was interrupted when the camera equipment malfunctioned. Video was restored and interview continued on another memory card in case memory card was corrupted.

General description of contents: Dr. Turkel discussed briefly her childhood and educational background and then discusses how she came to teach in Women's Studies at UD. Various topics addressed include her work as Program Coordinator, teaching Women's Studies; discussion of half-time positions and work to get them to full-time; outreach activities of WOMS; importance of UD Women's Studies in early years of the field; recent changes in WOMS, why women's studies important to students.

Recording Format and disc number: Video interview

Total Running Time: 55:58 min

**TOPIC SUMMARY**

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00:10    Background information; grew up in Wilmington DE. Attended Catholic school. Parents adamant that she would go to college, but she has no recollection of wanting to work in University arena. Very traditional gender expectations. Brother is six years younger, relationship discussed. Very different gender experiences.

3:23    Didn't think a lot about college growing up, but was assumed she would attend UD. Started in 1969, as a History Education major, planning to teach high school history. Eventually became double major in Political Science and Art History and a Minor in Philosophy. Discussion of undergraduate work and public opinion research.

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5:28 Was not really involved with women's movement, but was active in anti-war movement. Was aware of women's movement and changes relating to women's status but not aware of what was happening at UD.

6:26 Started Master's work around 1976 in Political Science; PhD in Urban Affairs and Public Policy focus on policy and planning theory, in particular health policy and women's health. It was at this time that she began to work with Women's Studies at UD, teaching course on Women and Health in the early 1980s.

7:53 Does not recall hearing anything about the development of Women's Studies as a student until she began to interact with Women's Studies. Maggie Andersen influential in drawing her in. Early involvement was teaching Women and Health course. Later added to list of people who were teaching Intro to Women's Studies and she submitted a syllabus. Was also teaching some courses in Political Science. Differences between the courses and in the students.

11:00 WOMS Students in early years were far more engaged in material than they are now. It didn't fill any requirement, wasn't a major. It was just a really engaged population. Women's Health course very engaged.

12:40 Discussion of how she became Program Coordinator. Work discussed: scheduling courses, contacting people to teach courses, organized the dinner seminars. Also worked on Women's History Month Film Series. Other than the director, there were no people in WOMS, there were either cross-listed courses or S-Contracts, so involved a lot of legwork, could not assume any specific courses would be taught. WOMS taught a lot of courses that way but had to redo it every year. Intro courses usually S-Contract, by graduate students. Served as Program Coordinator for two years.

17:42 Teaching in WOMS, taught for one semester after she was coordinator on S contract and then was hired as one of the two half-time faculty with Sue Cherrin. Does not recall effort to get positions. Was a huge leap forward for WOMS to have the positions, because meant that you could count of four courses specifically in place for WOMS. It was the beginning of the program becoming more established.

19:26 Discussion about WOMS major, was not involved in process. Jessica Schiffman and Sandra Harding worked on that. Took a long time to get to the full-time positions. Was fought for constantly. Directors arguing for more established positions and what they should look like. When Marian Palley was director, she made the argument that the half-time positions should be converted to full-timer and it happened. There had been people in administrative positions who did not think Women's Studies should be any more established than it already was. Some in administration were adamant that it shouldn't be a Department.

22:50 UD was one of first and most visible Women's Studies programs when Women's Studies programs and departments were being established. Others went on to become departments and we never did. Now as others are losing their programs we are continuing to grow, become a department, tenure lines. The people who were involved in early years were people who were visible in their own disciplines and made establishing the program a career priority, both on UID campus as well as in Women's Studies as a field. [Technology problem – video jumps and some material repeated] People instrumental in establishing WOMS at UD were also engaged in the wider community, ie Maggie Andersen working with others to

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establish women's studies on other campuses. Our program was on par with others, they went ahead and we did not because we didn't have resources. We always had students, were extremely cost effective.

26:40 Would have very popular courses, even when we only taught the Intro to Women's Studies class.

27:20 Other forms of outreach, i.e. Penn Seminars discussed (similar to our dinner seminars). Led to lot of interaction with UD faculty and others in the region.

29:16 Impact of the development of the major, helped legitimize the program in a new way. One promise we made when we got the major was that we would not ask for more resources, so we didn't ask for them for a while. We had resources that people provided without any material reward. A lot of students wanted a major.

31:04 New concentration in Global Studies and minor in Gender and Sexualities minor discussed. Reasons for them. Work of curriculum committee discussed. Claire Rasmussen's work on Curriculum committee.

35:20 Discussion of issues related to diversity in WOMS classes at UD both in course content as well as student participation. Issues rose about how to address diversity classes when classes do not have a diverse student body. Faculty not that diverse and has been discussed.

37:30 Discussion of the move to departmental status. Makes WOMS more visible and a legitimate entity on campus. Makes more work for faculty. Makes a difference for students as well.

39:45 Discussion of the change of name to Women and Gender Studies Department. Reflects what goes on in Women's Studies. Enables us to incorporate the Gender and Sexuality Studies courses more wholly into the Department. In terms of teaching, have ability to look at things differently. Happy about the transition.

41:36 Evolution of field of women's studies over the last 40 years. Have had a huge impact. Classes taught about women and gender across disciplines and departments now. Still have huge numbers of students and more courses than we taught before. For many of those students it may be a requirement they are fulfilling so you may not get the same level of commitment across the board. You will get some interested but the more routine we become it may not have the same meaning as it did 40 years ago. Interdisciplinarity in University

44:51 Still have critics that say women's studies not a discipline. But it may be because they don't know what it is we do. Students often blindsided by the whole set of literature, theories and concepts and there is something very substantive and broad based.

46:00 Areas still to address: global focus and gender and sexualities need to grow. Issue of diversity, tho it is not something we can handle on our own.

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47:00 Response to question what has enabled us to grow while others have shut down? May be because we grew so slowly working with very little resources, has made us more of a fixture in the university. We are a substantive part of the University and are visible.

48:50 Next 5 – 10 years? Hope for more tenure lines to help cement the movement of Department. Have four CNTT lines but need to have tenure lines. Yet saying it at time when there is a line of departments that have lost lines.

49:50 We also need to keep up our majors. Minor and Concentration in Domestic Violence services and Prevention is a really important for students to be able to get work, and funding opportunities. Help maintain our visibility on campus and in community. Would love to see it broaden to include sexual assault.

50:58 Discussion of efforts to develop graduate certificate. Had been talked about for 20 years at least. Were able to get it approved and then had no student interest. May need to go a different way with it. May do it as a 4 + 1 Master's degree. It is a great setup the way its proposed but not sure about student interest.

52:50 What do we provide students in a WOMS major? Most of our students are very directed. (recent graduating class) Question that constantly comes up from others is what do you do with a women's studies degree. Most of our students have a planned and that is not necessarily true for other students in university. Maybe our students are drawn to social work or law and come to us with some directions but also has to do with the amount of guidance that the students get. They can have as much access to faculty as they want.

55:40 Anything else? No. Thank you.