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

TAPE LOG

Margaret D. Stetz is the Mae and Robert Carter Professor of Women's Studies and Professor of Humanities at the University of Delaware, with secondary appointments in English and in Material Culture Studies. She has taught in Women's Studies at UD since 2002.

Name of person(s) interviewed: Margaret Stetz

Other people present: No one

Interviewer: Marie Laberge

Date of interview: June 20, 2013

Location of interview: Office of Margaret Stetz in Women and Gender Studies building, 34 West Delaware Ave. Newark

Special conditions (noise, interruptions, etc.): There was a phone call interruption and occasionally trucks going by interrupted the conversation.

General description of contents: Dr. Stetz discussed her background briefly, her academic career and her commitment to Women's Studies as a field. She describes her involvement at different universities, including the University of Delaware as UD's first named professor in Women's Studies, her activism on the issue of Korean comfort women, as well as her interdisciplinary research and public presentations. She raises issues related to the current status of women's studies and concerns about funding at this time, also discussion about multicultural courses and their impact on Women's Studies at UD, the importance of the category "woman" and recent changes in the Women and Gender Studies Department.

Recording Format and disc number: DVD of Video interview

Total Running Time: 54:18 minutes

TOPIC SUMMARY

Page 1 of 5

Counter No. Contents

00:00 Margaret is the Mae and Robert Carter Professor of Women's Studies and Professor of Humanities. Came to UD as Visiting professor in 2002 and started in current position in 2003.

00:33 Came from working class background in New York City. Also a feminist background. Both parents read *The Feminine Mystique*. Identified as a feminist since she was 16. Started college at age of 16, first at Bard College and then Queens College CUNY, joined a consciousness raising group, but left because wanted to have more engagement with what was happening on campus. Majored in English, focused on women's

TOPIC SUMMARY CONTINUED

Page 2 of 5

Counter No. Contents

literature. Went to Sussex University in England for Masters Degree in Nineteenth Century Studies worked on feminist related topics. PhD in English American literature at Harvard.

03:14 First teaching job at University of Virginia in 1982. 1983 joined advisory board of the women's Studies Program at UVA. Active in Women's Center there as well as on Editorial board of IRIS. Moved to Washington, DC in 1986 where she was full-time adjunct faculty (visiting professor) and then back on tenure track position at Georgetown University in English Department, also teaching for Women's Studies. Began teaching Women's Studies there in 1987. Left Georgetown after getting tenure and promotion, crafting the first official joint appointment in Women's Studies and serving as first faculty advisor to Women's Studies when climate began to be one of harassment from right wing conservatives in D.C. and feminists were targeted. Came to UD in 2002. Discussion of the creation of the permanent named professorship in Women's Studies. Was first offered split appointment with English, but wanted it to be based completely in Women's Studies.

6:41 Activism in women's issues continues. Discussion of her involvement with the Comfort women redress movement which developed out of her work for class on women and war. Went to Japan to look at Japanese women's involvement in war and became involved in the discussion about the "comfort women." Involvement at Georgetown on the issue and continues today. Discussion of involvement with different marches in D.C. where she lives on weekends.

9:48 Discussion of changes in Women's Studies as a field with the increased activism of women of color and working class women. Greater importance of gay and lesbian issues in women's movement impacted the field as well as increased attention to concept of gender as complicated category has had an impact on Women's Studies.

10:58 Impact of involvement in Women's Studies on career. Was never warned off the field especially if they knew her. Faced harassment at Georgetown, described different incidents. Reason finally left Georgetown was after going to EEOC office to say she and others were being harassed and was told it would take someone dying.

13:00 Impact of Women's Studies classes were enlightening for everyone. Involvement in a feminist theory reading for faculty and PHD students at UVA described which included a long list of prominent feminist theorists, scholars and activists.

14:40 Started at UD as a Visiting Scholar in Women's Studies, and also taught in English Department. Continues to cross-listed. Also claimed by Material Studies.

15:45 Discussion of name change to Women and Gender Studies. (phone call interruption) Wasn't convinced we needed to change name but wanted to not create a name that extracted women from the study. Discussion of loss of women's experiences and the importance of the category of women.

TOPIC SUMMARY

Page 3 of 5

Counter No. Contents

17:07 Concerned about the erasure of women from several office at the University of Delaware such as loss of Office of Women's Affairs, the Office of Equity and Inclusion does not focus on women or gender as its primary area of service. And also we no longer have and lack of funds to bring women to lecture here or send women graduate students to conferences.

18:11 Discussion of the reason Women's Studies does so well here at UD while other departments across country are floundering is because of the requirement of multicultural requirement here as UD which WOMS fulfills. [Large truck goes by] We would be smaller department if we did not have that. Students come to get the multicultural requirement and then stay because they find courses exciting, intellectually stimulating, revelatory and so well taught by committed pedagogically innovative faculty they want other classes and become minors and majors.

19:00 Another thing that has helped the Department is our donor, who is particularly and committed to support Women and Gender Studies and we have Mae Carter. She has been a supporter since the beginning.

20:24 Decline of enrollments in Humanities across the U.S. and decrease in support for the humanities including from the federal government which is disadvantaging both the Arts and the Social Sciences. While Women's Studies and women and Gender Studies are interdisciplinary, they are more often associated with the Arts and Social Sciences and therefore they are under threat here and at other universities. What makes WOMS unique and important is that it has been interdisciplinary from the beginning which is why so many early scholars were interested in the field. Discussion of what interdisciplinary means.

23:40 Discussion of issues of diversity in WOMS at UD. Most who teach here are white or Latina. Pleased we will have African faculty joining us next year, but it means we need to make conscious effort to ensure we have discussions of diversity in our classes

24:44 Discussion of importance of tenured faculty on department. It is a matter of status as well as a matter of permanence. Discussion of her own work, publishing and speaking, so she is able to get the name of UD out there. Tenure lines across the whole University system seem to be disappearing. Discussion of reasons why. Will be hard to get new lines.

26:55 When asked about what she would say to those who say Women's Studies not a serious discipline she commented that she was not allowed to use bad words.

27:25 Discussion of Feminist pedagogy, and core values of collaborative research, lateral learning, attending to individual voices, looking for the silenced voices and empowering students to use own voices as well as listening to other voices. Will never hear me stand up and lecture in a class. It's effective because students need to exercise their own critical faculties and pick apart an argument and make their own arguments, and to write and communicate. It happens through discussions, writing, feedback and revisions.

29:37 Discussion of why it's important for students to learn to think outside of themselves and understand and embrace difference. Discussion of student's evolution in thinking about feminist issues and the different ways they get there. Appreciates when students tell her they are sharing the class materials with others.

TOPIC SUMMARY

Page 4 of 5

Counter No. Contents

33:42 Does not define her work as English literature, does interdisciplinary work in English Studies, working in material culture, Fashion History, Women in Warfare.

35:06 Impact of becoming a department. It will give us status and permanency but hard to know if it will impact us in terms of resources.

35:58 Discussion of changes for women at UD since she arrived include the disappearance of a number of programs related to women. Describes how a former student won the GEIS prize and was invited to meet with the President of the University yet has seen no such efforts on part of new President.

37:26 Discussion of change in name from Women's Studies to Women and Gender Studies Department. Was resistant and continues to be concerned that Women stays in the name and does not change. Her own title does not change, she is a Professor of Women's Studies. Gender Studies discussed. Cannot recall a time when we did not already do work on masculinity. It is what we have been doing all along. Discussion of new course and how it relates to this.

40:18 Was most proud at Georgetown of having created first joint appointment between Women's Studies Program a department and to help create and find support to run the Women's Center. Tried to get a Women's Center here at UD, and count that as a failure. What she is most proud at UD is her own public outreach, through exhibitions and conferences she has helped to sponsor here, doing interdisciplinary scholarly work that helps bring people to the University.

42:50 Discussion about difficulty related to developing a Women's Center at UD, related to lack of funding.

43:30 Discussion of why Women's Studies at UD successful here and not other universities, related to the multicultural requirement here at UD.

44:50 Discussion about the women's studies graduate certificate program and ambivalence about it due to lack of employment opportunities for people at this time. It is important for students and faculty to do high level research and new kinds of work. Challenges working with other departments.

46:35 Discussion of Domestic Violence Advocacy Program and issues related to finding. Unless we can find other ways to target money it will be hard to maintain.

47:13 Discussion of the future and issues that still need to be addressed. Things roll back if to you are not pushing forward. Disheartened by women students who are unaware of their own history and the importance of activists work and frightened to speak up. Discussion of students experience and how women are being reduced to their body and we need to continue to address it. Concerned about lack of consciousness about global issues and injustices, as well as students who cannot see outside their own race and class. Remains a question about whether or not we will have the resources to continue to do this work.

TOPIC SUMMARY

Page 5 of 5

Counter No. Contents

51:02 Discussion of why women's studies is still needed, using analogy of the United Nations. Just a global politics means the UN will never become unnecessary, so women's studies will never be outmoded. These problems get solved again and again.

53:00 – 54:00 Why do I study women's studies? Because I am a woman, it means things differently for different women but how you are defined as men and women will determine those experiences. We should be doing women's studies everywhere.

54:00 Any other issues? No.