

On the Road in Eugene

CSWS celebrates Women's History Month by taking its Road Scholars program to the 4J schools—after a competition among graduate students.

CSWS played an active community role in celebrating Women's History Month in March by sending UO graduate students and professors into the Eugene School District 4J classrooms. The scholars spoke to the 2010 theme of the National Women's History Project, "Writing Women Back Into History." A team of CSWS scholars selected the graduate student presenters from a pool of applicants.

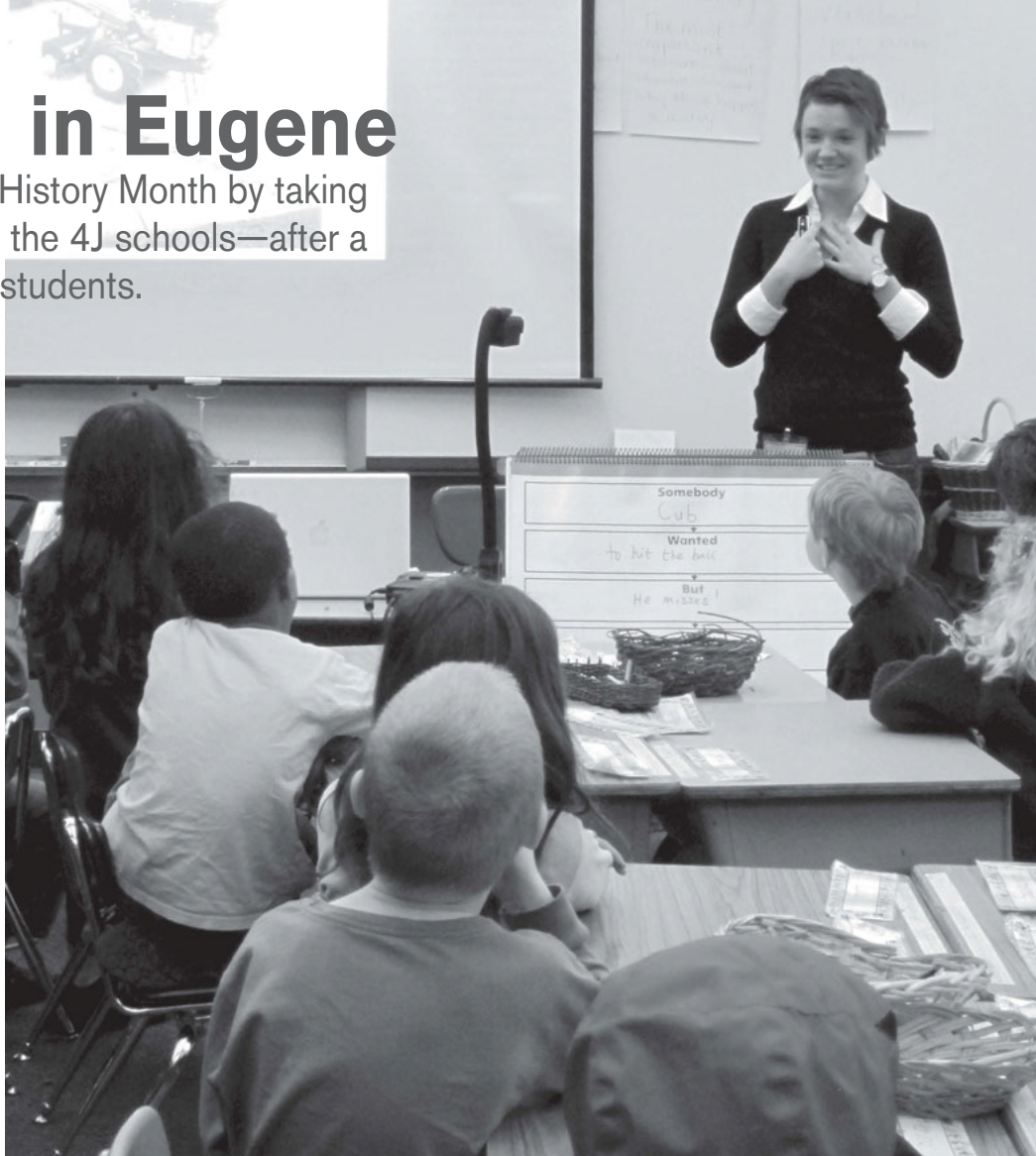
The presentations were held at two elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school, on subjects as varied as women's roles in agriculture, contributions of women composers, manipulation of body images in the media, and women's political activism on the international stage.

Michele Aichele, a graduate student in the School of Music and Dance, visited a group of fourth and fifth graders at Adams Elementary. Aichele played classical works written by women and talked about "Women as Composers: Writing Women Back into Music." She also presented her talk to two classes of eighth graders at the Arts & Technology Academy at Jefferson Middle School.

Two classes of first graders at the Charlemagne French Immersion School learned about women as farmers and inventors of tools in "Women Are Great, Women are Good, Now We Thank Them for Our Food: Women's Contributions to Agriculture" when Megan Burke visited. Burke is a graduate student in the Department of Philosophy.

4J's International High School sponsored a joint presentation at South Eugene High School featuring graduate student Christina Mitchell from Conflict and Dispute Resolution, School of Law, and documentary filmmaker Gabriela Martínez, assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Communication.

Mitchell completed her undergraduate internship in 2009 in Cape Town, South Africa. She talked about the anti-apartheid struggle from a feminist perspective in her lecture "Clinging to Mandela: Exploring the Gendered Discourse of South African Apartheid Resistance History." Mitchell



Philosophy graduate student Megan Burke talks about women's roles in agriculture to a class of first graders at the 4J French Immersion school in south Eugene (photo by Alice Evans).

discussed the role that women played in anti-apartheid struggles, a role largely overlooked in subsequent accounts.

Martínez showed her documentary film "Political Economy of Memory: Women and the Oaxaca Uprising," about a political uprising and media takeover by indigenous women in Oaxaca, Mexico in 2006. The presentation emphasized the importance of having women involved in media production and how their standpoints affected what was covered during the uprising.

"Fact and Fiction: Body Image in the Time of Photoshop" was a slideshow and talk Mickey Stellavato presented to seventh and eighth grade students at the Arts & Technology Academy at Jefferson Middle School. Stellavato, a Ph.D. student in the School of Journalism and Communication, taught ways to deconstruct the images we consume by introducing a critical perspective and training

students to see with critical eyes. "This presentation is meant to be, ultimately, a dialogue where we discuss some of the deeper meanings and ramifications of our visual world and what those images might mean for our self-identity and voice in the world," said Stellavato.

After an article appeared in the Eugene *Register-Guard* newspaper, Stellavato had numerous invitations to speak throughout the 4J District, including a request from a Kiwanis group.

CSWS is expanding the graduate student program for the 2010-11 academic year, again choosing speakers via a competitive process. Presentations that focus on women's rights are being given preference, in keeping with CSWS's year-long Lorwin Lectureship on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties—Women's Rights in a Global World. ■

—by Alice Evans, CSWS

STUDENTS EXAMINE NATURE OF BEAUTY

A VIDEO ON HOW ADVERTISING SHAPES SELF-IMAGE IS AN EYE-OPENER FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

When the neck of a woman was stretched longer using computer imagery software, her eyebrows raised and her cheeks pulled in — to make her “beautiful” — several of the seventh and eighth grade students in a science class at the Arts and Technology Academy at Jefferson Friday were stunned.

“Oh, man,” several students said.

“Whoa,” said seventh-grader Tyler Anderson, 12.

Mickey Stellavato, a University of Oregon doctoral student, played the video — part of Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty — during a lecture on “Fact and Fiction: Body Image in the Time of Photoshop.”

The “Real Beauty” campaign strives to challenge the ideals of beauty in society, according to Dove, which makes soap and other hygiene products. Stellavato’s lecture was part of a celebration of Women’s History Month by the UO’s Center for the Study of Women in Society. The lecture was one of several that the center is presenting in Eugene classrooms.

Daniel Morphis, the Jefferson class’s teacher, said he immediately wanted Stellavato to give her presentation to his class after he saw a list of the lectures being presented.

“It seemed appropriate at the arts and technology academy to discuss a piece of technology that’s being used to distort the images they are seeing,” Morphis said. “They are very impressionable.”

Stellavato began the discussion by showing art pieces depicting concepts of beauty from many centuries and countries: works from Egypt, Europe, China, Persia, Mexico, Thailand, and Africa, among other locales.

She discussed the difference between the centuries-old beauty concept and the new idea of beauty, which according to her, isn’t even real. The root of current beauty-ideal problems, she said, is advertising.

“We are drowning in advertising and drowning in ideas that we’re not good enough,” she said.

Stellavato, who’s also a photographer, told students that, with current technology, people in magazines can manipulate images like never before. During her presentation, she showed a Ralph Lauren advertisement that last fall came under fire with critics claiming that the model’s head was wider than her hips. Stellavato said: “To me, she looks like a praying mantis.”

Stellavato also cited statistics from various sources about body image among girls and young women. Among those is an increasing trend in elementary-age girls dieting and feeling overweight.

Although the statistics she cited were for girls, Stellavato said she believes that the thin beauty ideal also influences males. Men and boys expect women to be very thin, she said.

After the presentation, Stellavato asked for comments.

“Pretty disturbing,” one boy said.

Twelve-year-old Allison Trox agreed. “It’s creepy,” she said during an interview after the presentation. “The people have no zits or freckles. The only person with a freckle is Marilyn Monroe — and that’s because hers is considered gorgeous.”

Trox, Anderson and 13-year-old Meka Gil, who sat together, spoke about the relationship between having a positive body image and happiness. The girls concluded that in order to be happy, people need to live healthy lifestyles.

But they admitted that it can be difficult not to become envious of “perfect” models in magazines.

“Sometimes I think, ‘Why can’t I look like that,’” Anderson said, adding that she knows the images aren’t real.

Eighth-grader Yulinda Loomis said she thinks society has an ideal of beauty that is fake and that it “is just wrong.”

“It’s not what you look like on the outside — that doesn’t count,” she said. “It’s what’s on the inside that matters — that’s what counts.”

—by Rebecca Woolington / *The Register-Guard*

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FIRST GRADERS LEARN ABOUT WOMEN FARMERS

The children were drawing pictures of Pippi Longstocking when Megan Burke arrived. “Remember, carrot-colored hair that sticks straight out on the sides, a nose like a potato, freckles,” said the teacher. “One brown stocking, one black stocking.”

As the children handed in their drawings, the teacher introduced Megan, a UO graduate student in philosophy and CSWS Road Scholar, sent as emissary to the Eugene School District 4J Charlemagne French Immersion School to talk about the role of women in agriculture.

“What’s special about the month of March?” Megan asked.

“St. Patrick’s Day,” said one boy.

“Spring,” said a girl. “Daylight Savings Time,” said another.

“Those are all very good answers,” said Megan. “Did you know that March is also Women’s History Month?”

The pale light of late winter shone through lace curtains. Twenty-eight first graders sat in rapt attention. “It’s important that we learn about women in history,” Megan continued. “Did you know that women were the first farmers in the world? Who can tell me what a farmer does?”

“They plant food,” said one child. “They grow vegetables,” said another. “They feed the world.” As the answers came streaming in, Megan began showing slides of early tools shaped by women, tools that were the forerunners of shovels, hoes and hand

plows. The !Kung women from South Africa shaped a primitive hand-digging tool, made from rock bound to wood, she told them. A woman from the Philippines invented a hand tractor now used all over the world, and a woman from California known as the Walnut Queen made one of the first big sprinkler tools in the United States.

The children asked more great questions. “How did they know how to make a tool? Who was the first woman to invent a flower?” And finally, one little boy stumped the philosophy student: “Who made the Earth?”

“That’s a very good question,” Megan responded. ■

—by Alice Evans, CSWS