



Simone de Beauvoir
Institute



eSimone

CONNECTING TO
THE "FEMINIST" IN YOU...

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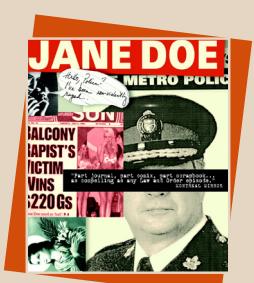
INSIDE



News 2-5



Congratulations 6



Past Events 7-8



Upcoming Events 9

A Word From the Principal

The red squares are staying in my office windows. They belong there. The Institute is about equity and social justice and the students' strike is fundamentally about those larger issues. The Institute is a place for teaching and learning and the red squares remind me that students have taught us great lessons this year. Just as we were lamenting the disappearance of older versions of feminist activism, just as we were complaining about younger women's apathy and apolitical stance: boom! Red squares, hundreds of thousands of them, bold and beautiful, shouting and singing, asking for a different university, condemning neoliberalism,

organizing and strategizing, occupying our campuses and our streets, still being strong and united two months later despite the smell of tear gas and the taste of cayenne pepper. The semester is just about over now, but my red squares are staying. They show how proud I am of our students, our Women Studies' Student Association, our supportive professors. Thanks for a different kind of semester and please keep fighting the good fight—for free education and for a leadership role for feminists in a new (non-privatized) university model!

- Dr. Geneviève Rail
SdBI Principal

A Victory Amongst Struggles at Concordia

Last Friday, while finishing up this edition of the eSimone newsletter, I took a break to read some Facebook newsfeeds. Amongst red squares and important links to media articles, petitions and endlessly creative protest events, a brief post about an article in the *Montreal Gazette* caught my attention; "Transgender Rights Won at Concordia University."

Despite the many continuing injustices thriving within the academic environment, this article was a refreshing reminder that individuals, and the peer support of individuals, can influence policy and lead to concrete positive institutional change. In today's

political climate, this is particularly important to celebrate.

A big congratulations to Concordia student Ben Boudreau and the 2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy for having fought and won for the right of students undergoing gender reassignment to be known by the name of their choice.

- Michelle Lacombe
Events Coordinator & Info Officer

Read the article here:

[http://www.montrealgazette.com/
news/Transgender+rights/6550186/
story.html](http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/Transgender+rights/6550186/story.html)

A Next Step for “Notre solidarité: un territoire à décoloniser”

Congratulations to Dr. Gada Mahrouse who recently received a SSHRC outreach/dissemination grant for \$12,585. The funds will be used to translate (to english) and disseminate a 90-page user-friendly educational manual entitled “Notre solidarité: un territoire à décoloniser” which was produced in 2011. This manual was designed to prepare youth before they travel on such programs as well as to help them reflect upon their experiences once they return. The manual can be used on its own or in workshop/training contexts. It provides key historical information, definitions of key concepts, as well as pedagogical materials that can be easily adapted by various groups, including case studies, questions for discussion, and ethical debates. The manual, which offers a more balanced and holistic approach to considering both the potential and the limitations of various international volunteer service programs, was co-authored by Projet accompagnement solidarité Colombie (PASC) and Dr. Mahrouse, and was funded by the Ministère de l’Éducation, des loisirs et du sport du Québec.

Dr. Rail Joins the RÉQEF

Dr. Geneviève Rail has accepted to sit on the executive committee of the newly formed Réseau québécois d'études féministes (RÉQEF). This network has been established thanks to an FQRSC grant (\$258,691) received by Dr. Francine Descarries (UQAM), Dr. Rail and others. The funds come with additional institutional funds from Concordia (\$15,000), which will be used for feminist research projects and their dissemination (for instance, Geneviève, along with Drs. Gada Mahrouse and Chantal Maillé, will take part in the 6ième Congrès international de recherches féministes francophones in Lausanne, Switzerland, this August 2012).

Funds Secured to Research Queers and Cancer Care as well as Girls' Health

The Principal, Dr. Geneviève Rail, has recently received good news regarding important projects on which she has been collaborating. With Dr. Mary Bryson (UBC) as Principal Investigator and working along other queer and feminist researchers across Canada, she has obtained a CIHR Priority Announcement Grant (\$100,000) to start an action research on queers and cancer care. The project is entitled “Cancer’s margins and the choreography of knowledge: Genders, sexualities and the queer biopolitics of access to health knowledge mobilization.”

In collaboration with Dr. Bilkis Vissandjée (PI located at U. de Montréal) and other women's health

Help Wanted

Looking for a fluently bilingual MA or PhD student who has some background knowledge on international solidarity programs to work as a project coordinator. Responsibilities include overseeing the dissemination process and liaising between the translator, printer, the partner organization (PASC), and Dr. Mahrouse.

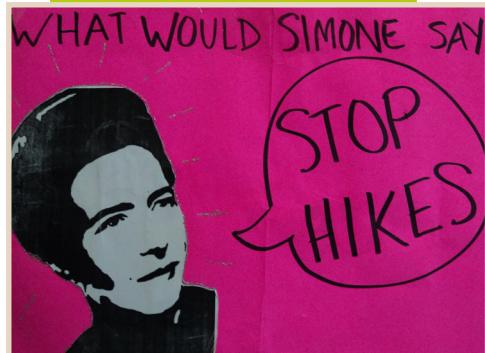
10 hours per week x 24 weeks (six months) = 240 hours

For more information, contact:
gada.mahrouse@concordia.ca

specialists, she has also obtained a CIHR meeting grant (\$24,000) to establish a pan-Canadian collaborative to look at “Gender sensitive adolescent girls’ health: Challenges and actions.”

Working in collaboration with Drs. Kelly Burns and Kate Russell from the University of Sydney and Dr. Caroline Fusco from the University of Toronto, she has received an International Program Development Grant from Australia and is awaiting answer from CIHR for the Canadian portion of this grant. The funds are to complete a comparative study of school-based HPV/cervical cancer vaccination programs and HPV-related knowledge in Australia and Canada.

NEWS



A protest sign found on the door of the SdBI classroom (MU 101)



Favorite Demonstration Signs!

On March 22, the SdBI community met in Montreal's streets to march in opposition to the proposed increase in tuition fees. The crowd, estimated at over 200,000 by student organizers, was celebratory, peaceful and creative. Here are some of our favorite hand-made protest signs seen at the march:

"We're here, we're queer, we're against tuition hikes!"

"Don't f*ck with notre éducation"

"Sorry for the inconvenience, we are trying to change the world!"

Joint Positions Express Solidarity

Since 2007, the SdBI has publically taken position regarding numerous issues affecting or concerning our feminist communities. In the past, the SdBI has released statements to denounce "reasonable accommodations" and Bill 94 and, more recently, to pronounce its support of Superior Court judge Susan Himel's decision with regards to Canada's prostitution laws. By weighing in on such issues, the SdBI makes visible its commitment to supporting bodily and personal autonomy for all women, and ensures that the feminist expertise and perspectives that are cultivated within the Institute contribute towards public debates.

In addition to addressing larger social issues, the Institute has also taken position regarding matters specific to Concordia University. This past semester however, these two spheres overlapped more evidently than ever when opposition began to form around Premier Charest's proposed tuition hikes. In response, the SdBI mobilized its community and published, for the first time, joint position statements. Written collaboratively between SdBI teaching faculty and WSSA, these texts articulate shared positions regarding the proposed hikes, the student strike and the administrative response to the student protests. The resulting documents not only tackle current issues impacting the lives of students and faculty alike, but also demonstrate the SdBI's ability to promote solidarity through feminist processes.

All of the SdBI's individual and joint statements can be found on our website.

<http://wsdb.concordia.ca/about-us/official-position-on-issues/>

SdBI Position Statements Published in 2012

-  SdBI Applauds Court of Appeal for Ontario Decision Related to Prostitution
-  Statement on Tuition Fees in Québec and their Impact on Women
-  Joint Statement from the WSSA and the SdBI Teaching Faculty Regarding the Student "Strike"
-  Joint Statement from the WSSA and the SdBI (Winter 2012) Teaching Faculty Regarding Concordia University's Higher Administration's Recent Approach to the Student's "Strike"

SdBI Students Take their Education to the Streets

On February 29th, women's studies and sexuality studies students voted unanimously in favour of going on strike in opposition to the Charest government's budgeted tuition fee increases. The Simone de Beauvoir Institute therefore became the first department in the history of English universities in Quebec to declare a student strike, leading the way for other departments at Concordia to join the province-wide student movement. Throughout the course of the strike, we have seen our fellow women's studies students put their politics into practice. We have marched in public demonstrations, debated in general assemblies, and stood together on dozens of picket lines. We have been witness to one another's courage, creativity, and commitment to social justice.

The strike at Concordia has undoubtedly presented numerous challenges, and at this time the

climate on campus seems rife with political division. However, women's studies students have shown incredible solidarity with one another, and have consistently engaged in meaningful discussion with other students and with faculty members. Indeed, we owe enormous gratitude to SdBI faculty and staff for the dedicated support and open dialogue that they have offered to us from the beginning. The women's studies strike has truly been a collaborative effort and in many ways has had a unifying effect on the Simone de Beauvoir Institute.

As the strike has progressed at Concordia and throughout the province, activist interventions combating the tuition hikes have brought other issues to the surface. The struggle for accessible education

is becoming increasingly enmeshed with struggles against police violence and state repression, environmental destruction, and colonialism. Equipped with critical understandings of these intersections and galvanized by the strike movement at Concordia, SdBI students are also taking their feminist politics beyond the university and deepening their engagement with other activist concerns and communities.

Much more work will be required before post-secondary education in Canada is really accessible, even after the strike is resolved. However, students at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute should celebrate the gains that we have made this semester and be proud of what we have accomplished. As the striking vanguard of English universities, we have made an important contribution not only to the strike movement at Concordia, but to the student movement in Quebec.

- WSSA

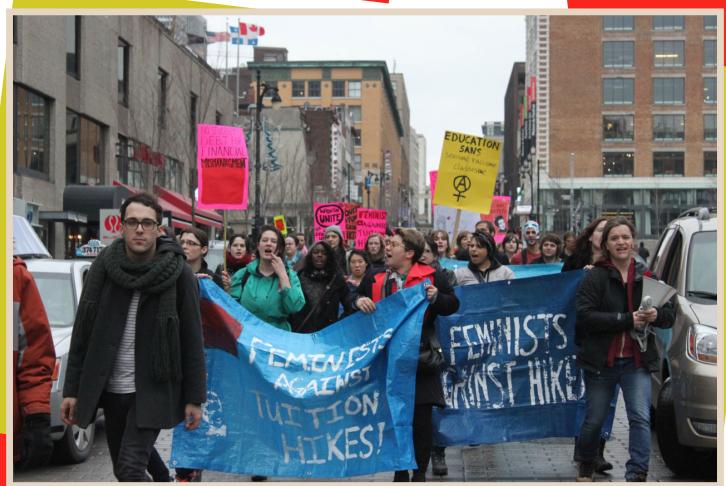


WSSA executive members Hector Villeda-Martinez, Gabrielle Bouchard and Andrea DeBruijn
(Photo by WSSA member Anum Peerzada)

Subversions Launch

This year's edition of the annual student publication *Subversions* will feature a spotlight on the student protest. Keep your eyes peeled!

NEWS



With the exception of the center image, which was taken by Michelle Lacombe, all images of the WSSA students participating in peaceful and festive protests and picket lines were taken by WSSA member Anum Peerzada

More images can be found on her blog: <http://wssaonstrike2012.tumblr.com/>

NEWS

Congratulations!

Belinda Bowes Celebrates 25 Years at the SdBI

This past March, SdBI program secretary Belinda Bowes quietly celebrated 25 years of working at the SdBI. Belinda is well known at the Institute having become a familiar and friendly resource for both students and faculty. Since 2001, she has been advising students, scheduling classes and taking care of all the general administration tasks associated with the running of a feminist Institute. Congratulations Linda on your dedication and hard work!



WSSA Receives the ASFA Student Advocacy Award

Congratulations to the Women Studies Student Association for having received the *Student Advocacy Award* from ASFA (Arts and Science Federation of Associations)! This award is given annually to an ASFA member student association that has consistently advocated for student rights within the Concordia Community. WSSA, who has worked hard throughout the year to promote a number of social justice causes both on and off campus, was recognized for having sought to protect and defend Concordia students in an engaging manner.



Governor General Honours Maïr Verthuy

This past January, the Governor General David Johnston named Maïr Verthuy, the first principal of Concordia's Simone de Beauvoir Institute, to the Order of Canada. A renowned feminist, scholar and social activist, Maïr Verthuy also received the Governor-General's Award in 2008 for her outstanding work on behalf of feminist causes in Canada.

Verthuy devoted her professional life to championing feminist causes, whether through her research, her teaching, or her activism. Now she has been named a Member of the Order of Canada for her tireless efforts on behalf of women and for her advancement of francophone literature.

When Maïr Verthuy joined the French Department at Sir George Williams University in 1965, she was surprised to discover how few works by women were included in the syllabus. "They didn't teach about women at all! AT ALL!" she says. "I was stunned by that. So I spent a lot of time introducing women into courses like the history of French literature, making sure women had their place."

Verthuy developed and gave the first course ever on Quebec women writers. She wrote the first bibliography of Quebec feminist writers and introduced her students to legions of unheralded, unstudied immigrant women writers. In 1978, she became the first principal of Concordia's new Simone de Beauvoir Institute, established to provide a foundation for the interdisciplinary teaching of, and research in, women's studies.

A recent interview with Maïr Verthuy:

<http://journalmetro.com/actualites/national/4498/mair-verthuy-elle-ne-savait-pas-que-cetait-impossible-alors-elle-la-fait/>

PAST EVENTS

International Women's Day

SdBI Partnership Looks at Media Misrepresentation

On International Women's Day (IWD), the SdBI partnered with a remarkable group of organizations to present a screening of the film *MissRepresentation* (2011). Initially proposed by Breast Cancer Action Montreal (BCAM), the collaboration was an occasion to simultaneously celebrate IWD, FemmeToxic (a youth-orientated campaign for safe cosmetics) and a remarkable group of women working towards the empowerment of female youth through the promotion of media literacy.

The movie screening was followed by a panel discussion during which Erika Jahn (FemmeToxic), Liz Miller (Department of Communications Studies) and Tatiana Fraser (Girls Action Foundation) offered insightful reflections on the film's content and posed questions to the public. By prompting the audience to share their experiences in challenging harmful representations of women and youth, the intersections between gender,

race, mental and physical health, and media literacy were made visible. This collective discursive process also provided an important context for knowledge and resource sharing, constructive criticism, words of encouragement and demands for change.

By having informed change and inspired direct action, the SdBI and peer organizations celebrated IWD in a way that, we expect, will last beyond the time frame of March 8th. Refuse to be Toxified!



CBC Radio One's Sonali Karnick moderates an IWD panel discussion with Liz Miller, Tatiana Fraser and Erika Jahn

SUNY Celebrates IWD With Dr. Mahrouse

On March 8th, Dr. Gada Mahrouse was the featured speaker at an International Women's Day event titled "The Feminist Politics of Emotions: Implications for Transnational Activism." The event was presented by the Gender and Women's Studies Forum of SUNY, Plattsburgh.

Focusing on the role of emotions in transnational feminist social justice practices, Dr. Mahrouse's talk addressed the following questions:

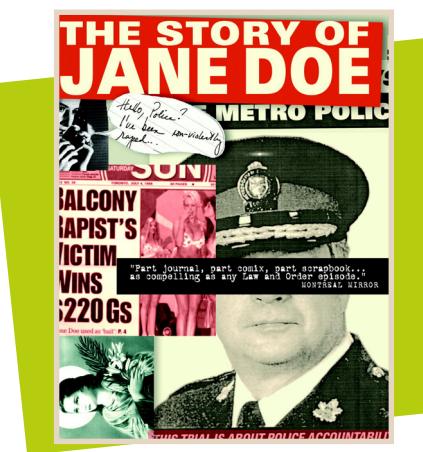
1. How are emotions produced/mobilized and to what end?
2. What are the political implications of certain emotions being expressed in specific geopolitical contexts and not others?
3. How are "communities of feeling" created and how are they structured around race, gender class, and sexuality?

PAST EVENTS

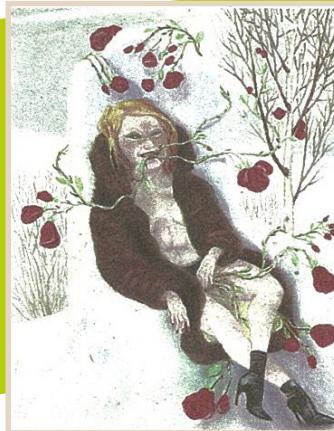
Jane Doe Talks Rape Politics

On March 14, the SdBI welcomed teacher, community organizer and feminist activist Jane Doe to give a talk entitled "The Politics of Rape." Jane Doe is the woman who, after an 11-year court battle, successfully sued the Toronto Police Force for negligence and gender discrimination in the investigation of her rape. Using her personal experience as a starting point, Jane intelligently discussed the use and efficacy of police warnings, the sexual assault evidence kit, the trial process, and other responses that contribute to gender and race inequality, rape mythology and an abysmally low conviction rate nationally. Her talk was followed by a very passionate question and answer period, and a book signing.

For those who missed the event or wish to relive it in the comfort of their favorite reading nook, Jane Doe's book *The Story of Jane Doe* (Random House, 2004), can be purchased at the Concordia Community Solidarity Co-op Bookstore (2150 Bishop Street) or consulted in Simone's Library (on the 4th floor of the SdBI, 2170 Bishop Street).



The cover of Jane Doe's book, *The Story of Jane Doe* (L) and an illustrated portrait of Jane Doe by artist Sharry Boyle (R)



Dr. Mahrouse Gives a Keynote Presentation at the University of Illinois

"Women and Children First?" is a 2011-2012 Focal Point collaborative faculty-graduate working group at the University of Illinois, focused on critical inquiries into nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations and the global governance of care, specifically focused on women and youth as categories of "crisis" and "empowerment." By organizing reading groups, speaker series and collaborative research groups, the working group creates an interdisciplinary dialogue that examines the "nongovernmental impulse" and its creation of categories of care and intervention. On April 20th, "Women and Children First?" held an end-of-the-year colloquium during which Dr. Gada Mahrouse gave a keynote at an event entitled "The Nongovernmental Impulse Symposium."

Spotlight



Adrienne Rich
(May 16, 1929 – March 27, 2012)

Adrienne Rich, one of the country's most honored and influential poets, whose finely tuned verse explored her identity as a feminist, a lesbian and an agent for political change, died March 27 at her home in Santa Cruz, California. She was 82.

In more than 60 years as a published poet, Ms. Rich examined the evolving lives of women in modern society and embodied many of those changes herself. She was a precocious child of a privileged Baltimore family, then a young wife and mother, and later dedicated herself to the ideals of feminism.

In the 1970s, she became one of the first mainstream poets to write from an avowedly lesbian point of view. Her subtle poems and uncompromising essays brought Ms. Rich a loyal following that extended far beyond the measured world of poetry.

UPCOMING EVENTS

An opportunity for Women of Colour Academics to Respond to Terror

On May 18-19, in Toronto, Dr. Gada Mahrouse will be participating in and helping to organize (along with Suvendrini Perrera, Sherene Razack, and Nashwa Salem) a two-day workshop entitled: "Violence in a Far Country: Women of Colour Respond to Terror." Dr. Mahrouse explains: "The aim of this workshop is to create an opportunity for women of colour academics to reflect upon our own particular dilemmas in producing knowledge on the topic of terror. Its central questions will be about the possibilities of ethicopolitical relations and responses to a violence that is perceived as distant from us, in space or time."

Transnational Feminisms at a Crossroads

On Tuesday May 29, 2012 from 1:30-2:45 pm, Dr. Gada Mahrouse, Trish Salah (University of Saskatchewan and former SdBI instructor) and Deb Lunny (PhD candidate Humanities and former part-time SdBI faculty) will be giving a panel entitled "Transnational Feminisms at a Crossroads" at this year's Canadian Women's Studies Association/L'association canadienne des études sur les femmes (CWSA/ACEF) Conference at the CFHSS Congress, University of Waterloo.

This panel will offer a critical look at the uses and limits of the frame of Transnational Feminisms (TF). The papers presented explore the tensions in academic and activist understandings of TF through specific case studies of activism. Questions around power, (self-)representation, praxis, and differing contexts and epistemologies will be addressed.

Cyberbullying Testimonials Brought Before Canadian Senate

This month, SdBI Research Associate Dr. Elizabeth J. Meyer will testify before the Canadian Senate Human Rights Committee on the issue of cyberbullying. The session, which will be webcast live, will begin with a 10-minute testimony by Dr. Meyer. This will be followed by the testimony of two other professors and a Q&A with the Senators. Scheduled to take 90 minutes, the entire segment can be viewed here:

http://www.parl.gc.ca/SenCommitteeBusiness/Notice.aspx?parl=41&ses=1&comm_id=77&Language=E&meeting_id=12962

Next Year: The SdBI turns 35!



In spring 2013, the SdBI will celebrate its 35th anniversary with a two-day conference and a fundraising gala dinner. Held from April 17th to 19th, the conference will bring together international academics, SdBI faculty, Research Associates, Fellows and students to reflect on the theory and praxis stemming from the Institute's intersecting areas of expertise; critical race studies, and gender and sexualities. The conference will also include more creative manifestation of feminist research such as workshops, artistic presentations and creative writings. Keep your eyes open for the upcoming call for abstracts!

Keeping in touch

eSimone is a regular publication of the SdBI. Its purpose is to promote the organization and its activities in the community as well as to provide information about issues related to scholarship, collective movements, and opportunities rooted in, and stemming from , a pro-feminist perspective. If you wish to submit information, please email the Events Coordinator and Information Officer at:

events.coordinator.sdbi@gmail.com