

**AAIS Women's Studies Caucus Annual Meeting**  
**April 23rd, 2016**  
**1:00-2:00 PM**  
**Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA**

**Minutes**

**Present at the meeting:**

Emanuela Zanotti Carney (President), Cosetta Seno (Secretary), Carol Lazzaro Weis, Ombretta Frau, Margherita Caput Hayer, Claudia Pompei Karagoz, Maristella Cantini, Monica Streifer, Juliette Guzzetta, Erika Nadir.

**Opening remarks**

WSC President Emanuela Zanotti Carney welcomed everybody present and proceeded to discuss the following.

**WSC Membership:**

The WSC has about 50 registered members. Zanotti Carney urged members to continue promoting the WSC with colleagues.

**Budget update:**

Emanuela discussed our financial situation. We have been consolidating the WSC budget over the last few years, while, at the same time, giving greater visibility to the WSC through sustainable and collaborative initiatives, such as co-sponsorship of the plenary sessions, at both the 2014 Zurich and 2015 Boulder, conferences. This year, the WSC sponsored a book presentation by scholar and fiction writer Laura Benedetti. No honorarium was paid for Benedetti, while the WSC covered Benedetti's travel and lodging expenses. Currently the WSC has about \$1000 in its bank account. Hopefully this number will increase next year, depending on membership renewals.

**AAIS 2017:**

Zanotti Carney announced that next year AAIS the conference, a joint collaboration with the Canadian Society for Italian Studies (CSIS), will take place at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, on April 20-22, 2017.

Cosetta Seno asked WSC members what kind of guests they would like the Women's Caucus to invite next year. Given our limited resources and budget constraints, it might prove difficult to have sufficient funds that would allow us to invite a high profile speaker from overseas for our next conference.

Possible solutions were discussed. One solution would be inviting as plenary speaker a Women's Studies scholar from overseas who will be visiting professor in the USA in 2017. Cosetta Seno made the suggestion that, in order to reduce costs and offer our members a different perspective on the profession, we invite women colleagues in the academic community who had distinguished themselves in various fields, even outside the professorial life. Laura Benedetti, the 2016 WSC guest speaker, for example, is not only a full fledged scholar, but also a writer of fiction novels. Cosetta requested the members' opinion on the possibility to invite women colleagues who transitioned into the administrative career, such as, for example, Cristina Della Coletta who was recently appointed Dean of Arts and Sciences at the University of California at San Diego. One of the members objected that we should not focus on just one category (administrative, for example) but we should try to have, every year, several guests representing the various fields: academic, artistic and administrative, in order to avoid resentment and a feeling of injustice among the members. However, the question of how to be able to invite 2 or 3 guests every time, given our limited funds, was left unanswered.

Alternatively, the WSC could again seek a co-sponsorship for the plenary in collaboration with the organizers of 2017 conference in Columbus. Given the WSC's limited resources, a collaboration with the conference organizers would allow the Caucus to share in the efforts/financial burden while giving visibility to its mission and initiatives.

**Report: WSC Initiatives**

Once again this year, the WSC sponsored or co-sponsored numerous events (including WSC Roundtables, WSC Panels organized by members, the WSC Annual Meeting)

**WSC guest speaker:**

This year the WSC organized a Brown Bag Lunch and Book Presentation event. Carol Lazzaro-Weis, AAIS

President and WSC member, introduced Laura Benedetti's new work of fiction, "Un paese di carta", published by Pacini in 2015. An open discussion and conversation with the author followed.

WSC had also sought to co-sponsor the plenary session speaker Serenella Iovino in collaboration with the organizers of the 2016 AAIS conference; however, that offer of collaboration was declined.

### **WSC Annual Round table(s)**

Again for 2016, the WSC organized an annual Round Table: "Teaching Dacia Maraini: a methodology" with panelists Maristella Cantini ("Dacia Maraini in cross-cultural teaching syllabi"), Ombretta Frau ("Dacia Maraini: for the gender studies classroom only?"), and Antonella Del Fattore-Olson, ("Maraini's Voices Through the Lens of Visual Art"). After congratulating roundtable panelists and attendees for a very stimulating and interesting presentation/discussion on Dacia Maraini, Emanuela expressed dismay at the cancellation of a second WSC round table, titled "Does the Women's Studies Caucus need a new name?". At the last business meeting in Boulder, Colorado, in March 2015, the issue was raised to give the WSC a new name. Arguing that the field of Women's Studies has undergone substantial transformations in research and teaching since the inception of the WSC, some members advocated the need for a name change, reflective of the ways in which the field has expanded and diversified. Following that discussion, Emanuela and Cosetta organized the 2016 round table "Does the Women's Studies Caucus need a new name?" to provide an open forum where to engage in a frank discussion about the Women's Studies Caucus current name and whether or not it continues to best reflect the scope and range of its mission. However, the round table had to be cancelled since no proposals were submitted.

### **WSC Panels**

WSC-sponsored panels included a panel on Anna Maria Ortese, organized by Cosetta Seno, and a panel on "Teaching Italian Women Writers", organized by Jennifer Haraguchi. Both panels were later canceled.

### **Awards etc:**

Emanuela suggested that we use some of our funds to sponsor a graduate student who is presenting a paper in one of the panels sponsored by the WSC.

### **The future of the WSC**

The members present at the meeting suggested to merge the WSC with the Queer Studies Caucus. All expressed concern that very few WSC members were present at the meeting and that many conference sessions about/on/by women had not requested to be sponsored by the Women's Studies Caucus. Carol Lazzaro Weis wondered if it still made sense to have a Women's Studies Caucus at a time when women writers were represented in many sessions and women scholars were no longer a minority in the field. A discussion on how we could solve this problem ensued but no agreement on any specific strategy was reached. Members in attendance asked that Emanuela and Cosetta go ahead with investigating the possibility of merging the Women's Caucus and Queer Studies Caucus. As members suggested, a merger would allow the Caucus to have more funds and resources available and also promote more participation to our activities, including the brown bag lunch and the various sessions organized by the WSC. Emanuela and Cosetta will get in touch with the President and Secretary of the Queer Studies Caucus about a possible merger, and a ballot system (Survey Monkey) would be set up to get the WSC membership's opinion/vote and feedback on whether or not to go ahead with the merger. Monica Streifer volunteered to help with setting up the ballot system.

At around 2 pm, our meeting was adjourned.