



News & Events

University News & Information

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California

Jan. 26, 2005

Contact: Andrea Nash
Cal Poly Women's Studies
(805) 756-1525

Gender and Science To Be Focus of Cal Poly Talk Feb. 10

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Carla Fehr, an assistant professor of philosophy and religious studies at Iowa State University, will talk about gender in science in a free public presentation from 11 a.m. to noon Thursday, Feb. 10.

The talk, titled "A Lab Coat Can Cover More Than Your Clothes: Objectivity and Women Scientists," will be in Philips Hall in the Christopher Cohan Center at Cal Poly.

"If good science is objective, then why have so many scientific investigations produced knowledge that is obviously colored by sexist social values?" Fehr asks. "I will talk about how some traditional notions of objectivity have produced ignorance instead of knowledge, and argue that we can counter this ignorance, and do better science, by treating objectivity as a feature of scientific communities composed of a diversity of members rather than a feature of individual scientists.

"Diversity has to mean more than increasing the number of women in science," Fehr says. "A lab coat can cover more than one's clothes; it can cover one's gender and aspects of self that fail to conform to the accepted values in a scientific community. Scientific communities can appear to be diverse, when in practice they are not, and appear to produce objective knowledge, when in practice they do not."

Fehr earned Bachelor of Science degrees in philosophy and biology at the University of Saskatchewan and a Ph.D. in philosophy of science at Duke University. Her research focuses on the areas of feminist theory, evolutionary theory, and the philosophy of biology.

The talk is sponsored by the Cal Poly Women's Studies Program and the College of Science and Mathematics. For more information, contact Women's Studies at 756-1525 or womst@polymail.calpoly.edu.

###