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different societies often vary in opinion when judging acceptable societal norms. For example, Keith Parsons, professor of philosophy, argues journalists should never feel an obligation to avoid offending or enraging any group, no matter how traditionally sacred.

"Journalists have a responsibility to tell the truth as they see it to the best of their ability," Parsons said. "Sometimes satire is the most effective means of telling the truth, and it should be a weapon in the editorialist's armory. Freedom of speech absolutely implies freedom to offend. Why should religions automatically be exempted from satire or ridicule? Religion has uplifted, nurtured and inspired, but it has also generated intolerance, fanaticism and atrocity."

Parsons continued his argument by describing the central problem in finding the proper balance between religious courtesy and freedom of speech.

"We should remind ourselves that our traditions of freedom of expression are just as sacred and vital to us as religious tradi-

tions are to other societies," Parsons said. "I think the question we should really be asking ourselves is this; has the rioter's outrage succeeded in intimidating us? Would even a scholarly critique of Muslim belief or practice now be avoided out of fear that it might be taken as an insult? I think, if we value our freedoms, we should defy the outrage."

Paul McGrath, visiting UH-Clear Lake lecturer and front-page editor of

the Houston Chronicle, believes most journalists will refuse to be intimidated by threats of violence.

"Some will be more fearful; most won't," McGrath said. "Even journalists in Middle Eastern countries have questioned the violent protests over the cartoons, to the

point of being arrested and charged. The journalists who will be silenced by the bounty would probably not have been inclined to have their voices heard in the first place."

Ashley Packard, professor of communication who teaches a course in media ethics, said the current major problem facing journalists is deciding how best to respond as the story gains international notoriety.

"Most newspapers would not have published the cartoons initially because the justification to do so was weak, but once the cartoons become an international story, the ethical decision becomes more complex,"

Packard said. "Now journalists around the world have to weigh the public's right to the information (in this case, visual information) against further offense to Muslim sensibilities."

Packard continued by describing the lines of moral responsibility for both journalists and the public who might be offended by their works.

"Even in countries in which freedom of the press is broadly protected, the press still has an ethical responsi-

bility to consider the potential consequences of its actions," Packard said. "That does not mean the newspapers

who printed the cartoons are responsible for the deaths and riots that followed. The people who reacted to the cartoons violently are responsible. But a basic tenet in ethics is that we should treat one another with mutual respect."

Keith Parsons  
Professor of philosophy

Al-Mubaid said most Muslims do respect the beliefs of other cultures and that the violence caused by the international protests went against the teachings of Islam's holiest book, the Quran.

"In Islam the violence is prohibited as a response to such an incident," said Al-Mubaid. "Instead, Islam's teachings encourage us, as Muslims, to always use peaceful means to convey our messages, especially to non-Muslims. This is clearly and explicitly mentioned in the holy Quran which states, 'and (Oh Muhammad) call to the way (path) of your Lord (Allah) by means of wisdom and good preach.'"

Roger Chadwick, a visiting lecturer who teaches "A History of the Arab World," seemed to sum up the debate by stating that the ongoing controversy was an issue that called for "a global adjustment."

"If this had happened in 1900, no one would have heard of it in the Middle East," Chadwick said.

"However, we now live in a worldwide community with few effective boundaries. The question is how far will we go to extend to these new close neighbors the civility and good manners we expect in our own traditional communities, and vice-versa?"

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Hisham Al-Mubaid  
Assistant professor  
of computer science

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American, so all they see is our president or Senate hearings."

The lecture was open to the public and was attended by students and faculty. Dahmash-Jarrah fielded questions that ranged from free elections, education in Arab speaking countries, and the need for more emphasis in the arts for those countries.

"Since artists do not generally make much money, some Muslims believe that the arts are not worth getting involved in," Dahmash-Jarrah stated. "The consequential backlash of that is the other cultures around the world tend to have a de-humanizing view of them."

"We found Mrs. Dahmash-Jarrah's comments interesting and thought provoking," said Barbara Miller, who had just returned from a trip to Israel and Egypt with her husband.

"Arab Voices Speak to American Hearts" is available in most bookstores, as well as the campus bookstore. Dahmash-Jarrah also has a Web site at [www.arabvoicespeak.com](http://www.arabvoicespeak.com).



MATTHEW SHAW: UHCLIDIAN

ONE HEART: Samar Dahmash-Jarrah speaking to a student after the Feb. 22 lecture featuring her book "Arab Voices Speak to American Hearts."

# Women's studies program examined 30 years later



FREEDOM FIGHTER: Betty Friedan pioneered the women's liberation movement with her 1963 best seller "The Feminine Mystique." In 1966 she founded the National Organization of Women.

By MERCEDES McCRRORY  
THE UHCLIDIAN

We would like to think that women have always had the same opportunities opened to us today. Thirty years ago our grandmothers and mothers lived in a male-dominated society and were taught that their primary role was in the home.

Gretchen Mieszkowski, professor of literature, has seen the roles of women evolve in the 30 years since she and Nanette Joan Bruckner introduced the women's studies program in 1975.

UH-Clear Lake was the beginning of

women's studies in Houston; at that time no other university offered programs in women's studies. Mieszkowski taught the first women's studies course, Women in Literature.

"I wanted to show through literature, the attitudes of men and the attitudes of women and fight to re-define it," Mieszkowski said.

Along with the women's studies

programs, there were a series of Women's Weeks, which included films, workshops, discussions and speeches such as, "Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?"

At this time the feminist movement was at its height. Women had only a few careers to choose from: such as nurses, teachers and secretaries and they were not satisfied with the limited choices.

"This was the white picket fence era; the notion that women wanted to do something besides raise children and look after the home was pushed down and hidden," Mieszkowski said.

In 1978 Betty Friedan, author of the

1963 best seller "The Feminine Mystique" and founder of the National Organization of Women, appeared as a guest speaker for Women's Week II.

Friedan revolutionized the women's movement with her idea that having a husband and children is not everything and women should strive to have separate identities. Friedan died last month of congestive heart failure at the age of 85.

"Betty Friedan gave middle-class women the impetus to think about themselves differently, and once they got started, the women's movement was on its way," Mieszkowski said.

Today, Women's Studies Week differs from the Women's Week of thirty years ago. The focus has shifted from women's rights to gender studies.

"The first Women's Weeks were radically and aggressively feminist," Mieszkowski said. "We had cause, conviction and the determination to help other women discover the truths we were learning. Without this impetus, Women's Week became lame."

Angela Howard, professor of history and a historian of women's studies, says that while women have experienced more opportunities in the last three decades, many of the advancements women achieved are now in danger of being reversed.

"The current political tide seems poised to wash most of those opportunities away: equal opportunity – economic, legal,

social, political and every kind of access that allows each girl to decide for herself who she will be and what she will do with her life; equal pay for equal and comparable work, access to the professions and equal treatment as students and as peers in the professions; the fundamental reproductive rights; adequate protection of women in terms of violence against them (sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, to name a few)," Howard said.

"The Women who are coming of age in the 21st century are complacent and under the illusion that the revolution for women's rights, begun with the Seneca Falls Woman Rights Convention in 1848, has been won. However, the only right women have 'in writing' as part of the U.S. Constitution is the vote – and many women, young and mature, don't bother to use it!"

Howard points out that women still battle a "glass ceiling," a double standard in the workplace.

"A woman is encouraged to think of herself as an individual, making her way on her own merit, when the truth remains that we must acknowledge that women are all in this together: taking our cue from the Texas Longhorn cows, 'It's rumps together and horns out,' if we are to maintain the progress for women – solo and collectively – of the last quarter of the 20th century," Howard said.