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Gender and Yale: Where Were the Women?

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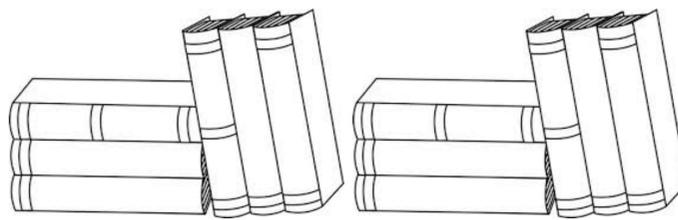
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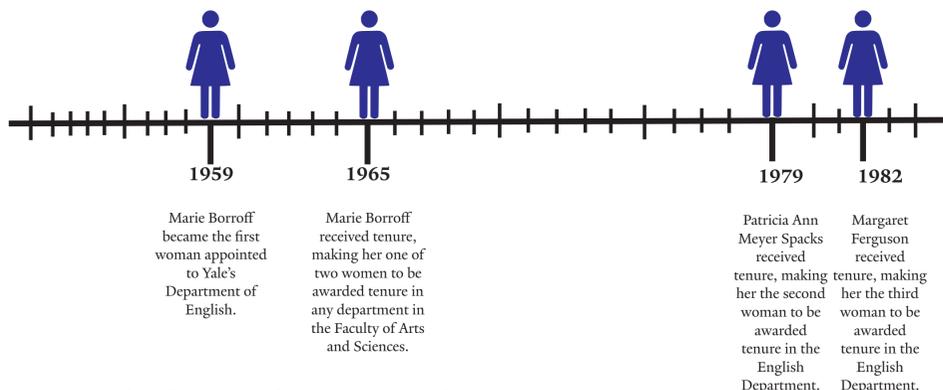
Gender and Yale: Where Were the Women?

A Poster Series on Early Women Faculty and Graduate Students

English Faculty



Though English had been taught at Yale throughout the 19th century, the structure of a modern department did not emerge until about 1884 when a number of appointments were made at various faculty ranks. Yale boasted a number of leading scholars according to Paul Fry's departmental history, though no woman would receive an appointment, let alone tenure, until 1959. That all changed when Marie Borroff entered the scene in the middle of the 20th century. Appointed in 1959 as the first woman in the department, Borroff rose in rank. In 1965, she was promoted to professor of English, making her one of the first two women granted tenure in any department of Yale's Faculty of Arts and Sciences.



Then Vs. Now: Tenured Women in English		
View Iteration	Women Tenured	% Women Tenured
View of 2002	9/23	39%
View of 2007	8/23	35%
View of 2012	11/27	40%
View of 2017	12/30	43%

From the statistics above, we can see that change is slow and - at times non-existent - over the last 15 years for the representation of tenured women in the English Department, with just about 1 only rising to the rank of professor over each five year interval. Here we cite data from our 5 year report on gender and the Yale faculty, named the "The View."

English Graduate Students

The Graduate School began awarding degrees in 1861. In 1875, English began awarding doctorates to men. Twenty years later in 1894, the first cohort with women received PhDs from English. Thus, fairly early on its history, graduate education included women, in comparison to women's inclusion in the tenured ranks. Despite their inclusion, the curricula remained fairly focused on a traditionally western canon comprised of a homogeneous of authors and ideas that did not include women or other scholars from minority groups.

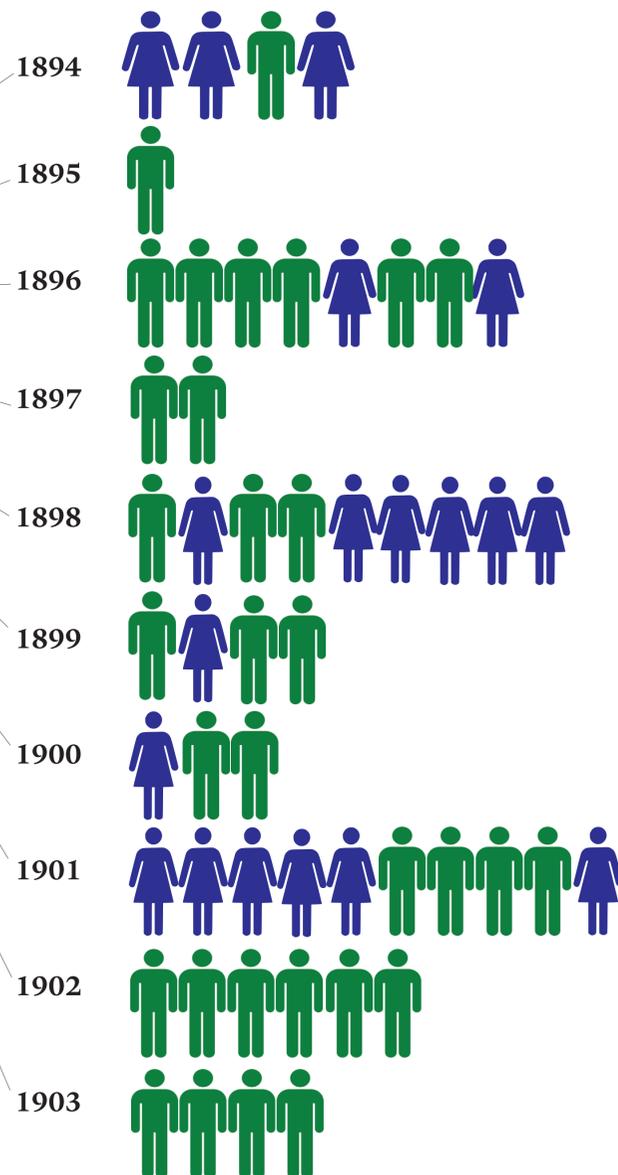


The Yale English Department began awarding doctorates in 1875. 7 men received PhDs before the first women received a doctorate.

The English Department began awarding doctorates to women in 1894. Elizabeth Deering Hanscom, Mary Augusta Scott, and Laura Johnson Wylie were the first three to earn the PhD degree. Given the early entrance of women into the department, one might expect a steady representation of women to develop over the next twenty-five years: while there were indeed a fair number of them earning doctorates over that time period, we can nevertheless see that men continued to outnumber women in graduate student cohorts.



In 1894, the first three women earned doctorates in English at Yale, and the graduate school began awarding degrees to women: Elizabeth Deering Hanscom, Mary Augusta Scott, and Laura Johnson Wylie. Their cohort had one man.



Men still made up the majority of the cohorts for the next ten years, and it was not unusual to have an all male class.

"Alumnae Graduate School" tabulated the women graduates, their biographical information, and their outcomes, recording the statistics found below:

40 Women Awarded Doctorates between 1894 and 1920...

"10 Are Married
3 Have Died
2 College Presidents
3 Deans
10 Professors
7 Assistant or Associate Professors
31 Published Dissertations"

We have preserved the categories from the *Alumnae Graduate School* booklet here to highlight the sexist attitudes surrounding women doctorates despite their inclusion in graduate education at Yale. Even though they achieved success in their careers after graduating, the graduates' professional accomplishments were relegated to their marital status, demonstrating the societal priorities and pressures placed on women at the time.

Early Tenured Faculty



Patricia Ann Meyer Spacks; Received Tenure in 1979 | Marie Borroff; Received Tenure in 1965 | Margaret Ferguson; Received Tenure in 1982

Prominent Women Alumnae



Elizabeth Alexander, BA 1984; President of Mellon Foundation | Anne Applebaum, BA 1986; Pulitzer Prize Winner | Ellen Barry, BA 1986; Pulitzer Prize Winner

Early Graduate Students



Elizabeth Deering Hanscom, PhD 1894 | Laura Johnson Wylie, PhD 1894 | Mary Augusta Scott, PhD 1894



Marjorie Hope Nicholson, PhD 1920; Wilbur Cross Medalist | Orelia Cromwell PhD 1926; First African American PhD Recipient | Carol Christ, PhD 1970; Wilbur Cross Medalist

Source List and Further Reading:

1. "Alumnae Graduate School," Yale University 1894-1920. Available in MSSA.
2. "A Very Brief History of the English Department, Excluding the Present," by Paul Fry. Available here: <https://english.yale.edu/about/history-department>
3. "The View: The Status of Faculty at Yale, 2002-2017." Available on <https://wff.yale.edu/resources/view-2002-2007-and-2012-status-faculty-yale>.

Interested in learning more about where women were in other departments at Yale? Check out the poster series on our website:

