Tulane Builds Strength in Race and Gender Politics through Newcomb College Institute and New Faculty

To build strength in race and gender politics, Tulane University welcomes two new professors. This fall, Melissa Harris-Perry joins Tulane University as a professor of political science and the founding director of the Anna Julia Cooper Project on Gender, Race, and Politics in the South. Her most recent book, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women in America*, is now available from Yale University Press. Beginning with the fall semester, Harris-Perry will teach an undergraduate course on women in politics, media and the contemporary United States and also envisages a new course on the role of first ladies. In her previous academic position, Harris-Perry taught politics and African American studies at Princeton University and has carved out a name for herself in the public sphere as a regular commentator on MSNBC programs such as *The Rachel Maddow Show* and *The Last Word with Lawrence O’Donnell*. New Orleans has long been the focus of Harris-Perry’s research, and she looks forward to further using the location of the South as a position from which to analyze contemporary issues in American politics. The project takes an intersectional approach and hopes to initiate a visiting scholar program, a postdoctoral program, student media projects, an endowed lecture series, and to develop a journal.

Ambitious in scope, the project is sponsored by Tulane’s Newcomb College Institute under the direction of Executive Director Sally J. Kenney, another recent addition to Tulane. Kenney took on her role at Newcomb College Institute in January 2010. She was previously a professor of public affairs and law and the director of the Center on Women and Public Policy at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota where she ran a successful postdoctoral program on race, gender, and public policy and operated a special graduate concentration in women and public policy. Kenney is completing a book on Gender and Judging (Routledge Press 2012) and looks forward to extending her international work on judges and her work on state court judges to Louisiana and the South (http://genderandjudging.com/2009/11/25/sally-j-kenney/). At Tulane, Kenney has pioneered a service learning course on domestic violence in which students do court monitoring of orders for protection cases and looks forward to developing more service learning courses on women, gender, and feminism.

Harris-Perry’s project is a key component of Kenney’s vision to involve undergraduate women in cutting-edge research that is politically engaged and leverages the strengths of the Newcomb archives and special collections of the Vorhoff Library. “Melissa’s skill at bringing her social scientific expertise to bear on her work as a public intellectual distinguishes her from other successful pundits. Her ability to cross disciplines and subfields, combined with her deep and sophisticated engagement with real-world politics, when added to the existing faculty strengths, positions Tulane to be a leader in women and politics.”