



She's got attitude

“I study sex and drugs,” jokes B.J. Rye. “All that’s missing is rock and roll.” Slightly less tongue-in-cheek, she adds, “It’s important to get people developing healthy ways of living when they’re young, whether they’re kids at school or gay men coping with AIDS. If there’s a theme tying my work together, that would be it.”

Rye came to St. Jerome’s in 1999 to teach and do research in the Psychology department after several years at the University of Western Ontario and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).

Her interest in sex research began as an undergraduate at St. Thomas University in New Brunswick in the late ’80s. As she was asking questions about AIDS at a student services display, a friend surprised her by worrying that if they were seen at that booth, “somebody might think we had AIDS.” When her thesis supervisor suggested she investigate something really cutting-edge—such as attitudes to people with AIDS—she was ready.

Attitudes and behaviour are the focus of much of her research, including a new study on attitudes toward people who are intersexual (that is, they have some anatomical characteristics of

both sexes). In other research, she’s exploring attitudes to people with AIDS and to gender-based crime, and what motivates safer sex behaviour in gay men. At CAMH, where she’s still an affiliated researcher, she is involved with the School Culture Project, a study of the social and physical environments of Ontario high schools and how they affect students’ drug and alcohol use, mental health, violent behaviour, and victimization.

Teaching courses in human sexuality brings a unique set of challenges, she says. One is that “most people think they are ‘sexperts.’” As a result, many students expect a “bird course,” then are surprised when they are asked to analyze, synthesize, and draw conclusions at a fairly high level. Her courses are known as challenging, but fair. “One of the best evaluations I ever got was from one of my students at Western, who said, ‘BJ expects a lot, but that’s how university should be.’”

But with the challenges come the rewards. “I learn something every time I teach. Learning comes from reading new material, keeping up with the field; and a lot of it comes from the students, with their different backgrounds, who help me keep a current perspective.”

Attitudes and behaviour are the focus of much of B.J. Rye’s research.

Photo: Ron Hewson

Three celebrate a quarter century...

Three of St. Jerome’s best-known professors recently celebrated 25 years at the university.

- Stan Fogel, English, specializes in contemporary literature and criticism. Recently he’s also been teaching at Cuba’s Instituto Superior de Arte.
- Vera Golini, Italian and French Studies, has a special interest in Italian-Canadian women writers. Since 1997 she’s also been the director of Women’s Studies at Waterloo.
- Ken McLaughlin, History, began work on the main campus in 1970 and at St. Jerome’s in 1975. An expert on local history, he’s published several books on the history of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, and now Hespeler.

...and one moves on

A month before her daughter, Anna Leigh, was born, Charlene Diehl-Jones and her husband decided to return to Winnipeg where Bill had been offered a plum job with the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba.

They relocated this summer, and are settling into the familiar neighbourhood they inhabited as graduate students. Charlene writes: “One of our



Photo: Ron Hewson

friends suggested that, in the tradition of the Australian Aborigines, we’d completed our ‘walk-about’—a learning journey—and were now coming home again. It’s certainly the feeling that I have: I am filled with joy to be breathing the prairie spaces again, and it’s been wonderful to have time to spend with our families and old friends.

Still, I think of St. Jerome’s often—I treasure the warmth and good humour of students and colleagues, and the challenge and growth the place offered me. I feel extraordinarily privileged to be weaving St. Jerome’s into my life narrative.”

What is she doing now? “Teaching is an elemental part of me (I’ve just taken over a web-based course in prairie literature), but at the moment I’m soaking up the very different rhythms of motherhood, coaxing smiles out of my five-month-old daughter, tracking with awe the wit and wisdom of my three-year-old son Liam. And I’m determined to make some room in the next few years for my writer-self who’s beginning to complain of chronic neglect. I’m delighted to continue working with Trout Lily Press. We’ll launch two books in Waterloo at the end of January; I’m looking forward to being back!”