



Winter 2-27-2008

Illinois Wesleyan Design I Class Tackles Social Issues

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Recommended Citation

Sherman, Teresa, "Illinois Wesleyan Design I Class Tackles Social Issues" (2008). *News and Events*. 5517.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/5517>

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February 27, 2008

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University students are used to tackling controversial issues in the classroom, and in Professor of Art Sherry McElroy's Graphic Design I course they're doing it through the power of advertising.

Archived at the Student Graphic Arts Collection Web site, the advertisements feature research subjects that illustrate current social, political and economic conditions.

"The objective of the project is to explore visual solutions that best serve to educate, inform or call the audience to action," said McElroy.

Many students in the class, which welcomes non-majors looking to fulfill a general education credit, chose the theme of gender inequality. "Earning Power," an ad by senior accounting major Jennifer Daniels that demonstrates the pay inequality between men and women in Illinois, stood out to McElroy as particularly effective.

Underneath a one thousand dollar bill with a his-and-her-style piece cut out in the shape of the state, Daniels writes: "In Illinois, women earn 75 cents to every dollar earned by an Illinois male. ... It may seem like just a few cents, but the wage gap between men and women adds up to enormous sums over the course of a working lifetime. Women working fulltime earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. For a female college graduate, that's on average \$1.2 million lost. ... For the same work."

For Daniels, who has not taken an art class since high school, the assignment not only reconnected her with her love of art but also made her aware of the real-life struggles she will encounter as a graduating senior entering the accounting field in Illinois. "I don't think a lot of people are really aware of the consequences of this pay inequality," said Daniels. "It's 2009. Our states and our country need to see men and women equally."

According to McElroy, the Student Graphic Design Collection represents exemplary work done by students in graphic design courses at Illinois Wesleyan. The collection may be browsed by assignment: logo, postcard, ad or social issues.

For additional information, contact McElroy at (309) 556-3048 or smcelroy@iwu.edu.