

Summer program explores gender in literature

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High school participants in the 2017 Newcomb Summer Session on Women's Literature work on their original zine. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

Virginia Woolf, Alice Walker and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie were among the iconic writers read and discussed by 20 high school students at Newcomb College Institute's (NCI) first pre-college program titled, Newcomb Summer Session: Women's Literature.

This intensive program, directed by Molly Pulda, administrative assistant professor of women's literature, brought in students from as far as New Jersey, Kentucky and Texas, as well as the greater New Orleans area.

“Not only did I learn about feminism and intersectionality but I learned about the history of women through literature and how women are portrayed through media (including Beyoncé’s album, *Lemonade*),” said Clara Gibbs, a rising junior from Austin, Texas. “Most importantly, I met people like me who want to make a change, grow together to create conversations and ideas that will last for years and maybe make a big change one day.”

The five-day session was packed with programming and projects that fostered critical thinking and promoted leadership. The group enjoyed daily “Leadership Lunch” lectures by visiting writers and scholars, including NCI’s director Sally J. Kenney, as well as field trips to the Amistad Research Center and Newcomb Art Museum. Pulda shared strategies for writing the college application essay, using Woolf’s essay *A Room of One’s Own* as a model, and staff-led interactive workshops that ranged from an introduction to key leadership skills to a guided writing session.

The students also wrote, designed, and produced *Ours*, an original zine or feminist magazine, to commemorate the inspiring week. They viewed examples of feminist zines from the Newcomb Archives and learned how to create their own content.

The goal for the Newcomb Summer Session is to become a residential program that offers a full college campus experience. As the program grows it will stay true to its original goal—to form a strong community through the exploration of gender in literature.

Registration for next summer will open in spring 2018.