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You Go, Girl: Junior Lauren Olson Finds Feminism Book Club on Campus

Monday, December 6, 2010
 By [Natalie Devlin \(/natalie-devlin\)](#)

When the word feminism comes up, a lot of people immediately think of women in the 1960s who burnt their bras and didn't shave their legs. According to junior Lauren Olson, feminism is a lot broader and simpler than those eccentric activists.



Feminism is "the movement to end sexist exploitation and oppression," Olson says. "That would probably be the best definition of feminism that I can think of because a lot of things fall under that." This definition stems from feminist author Bell Hooks' concept.

Olson recently started a [feminist book club](http://women.missouri.edu/?p=771) on campus. The group meets every other Monday in the Center for Social Justice in Memorial Union. Olson is also the co-chair of the Feminist Student Union, which meets on the Mondays that the book club doesn't.

Olson first identified herself as a feminist her freshman year when she started working at the Women's Center. Before spending time there, "I didn't understand that I could be a feminist without having to be an author or an elected official or something like that," she says. Olson began getting involved in the Feminist Student Union and volunteering at Love Your Body events. Love Your Body is a yearly event sponsored by the Women's Center to encourage self-acceptance. "If you really think about it, feminism is an ideal that a lot of people can take and apply to themselves and have it be a part of their daily lives," she says.

However, the book club is not limited to only feminists, or only women for that matter. The books come from a variety of authors, not just authors commonly thought of as feminists. Because feminism can be such a broad topic, there are no real requirements for the books. They can be written by a radical feminist or by a woman writer who has feminist undertones.

Olson started the book club as an outlet for students to read for fun. With all of the textbook assignments and quickly approaching due dates, it can be difficult for students to find an excuse to sit down with a book that they actually enjoy. Olson used to read for fun as a way to escape from stress but noticed that it was tough to continue doing that in college. "I entered in the feminist part of it just because I think it's really critical to take note of feminist authors that we have or just women authors that don't get a lot of attention in the bestseller list," she says.

Olson believes that there are a lot of issues women today should be aware of. She says, "I think that we need to put a focus on women's health, and we need to put a focus on sexual education for everyone." She says that growing up without adequate knowledge of sexuality could cause people to be more insecure about their bodies. She also believes that feminists should play a larger role in health care because of the special knowledge they bring to the table. "I feel like a lot of times when it comes to health care and feminists, people automatically turn that into the abortion debate, and that's not all we do," she says.

Right now the feminist book club only has a handful of members, but if enough people join, Olson can apply for org status and use that funding to provide the books. The main difficulty with starting up the book club has been attendance. "It's up in the air whether or not this will be successful because not everybody has time to read," Olson says.

However, she is hopeful that the book club will be a success. She talks about how it is important to cherish books now because in the age of digital technology, tangible books might soon be outdated along with handwritten letters.

"Maybe 15 years from now, we won't be having tangible books in our hands that we can turn the pages of and put our faces in and smell the paper," she says. "I feel like it's really important to cherish this now as a pastime because it might be obsolete in the next couple of decades, which is really, really upsetting to me."

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