

Department of Women's Studies
March 2005 Colloquium

And

☆☆☆ Women's Studies Faculty Star Award ☆☆☆

Cheryl Rodriguez, Africana Studies

☆☆ Women's Studies Staff Star Awards ☆☆

Peter George, Gloryvee Cordero, Claudia Jaramillo, Joe Floyd
Reception Follows

Thursday, March 31

Grace Allen Room (library, 4th floor, Special Collections)

3:30-4:45

**“THE ETHICS OF NAMING:
UNCOVERING THE BIRTH-MOTHER IN
ADOPTION LIFE-WRITING”**

Emily Hipchin, Visiting Associate Professor, English, University of Tampa

This talk will probe the ethical complexities of adoption life writing, in particular, the ethics of “naming” or “showing” birthmothers who were promised anonymity as a condition of their participation in the relinquishment of their children. The presentation begins with the most recent discussions of ethics in life writing, Tom Couser's *Vulnerable Subjects*, and two essays from John Eakin's *The Ethics of Life Writing*, discusses the historical conditions of secrecy and anonymity in closed-record adoptions before the 1970s in this country, then explores the particular and peculiar ways in which adoption life writing by adoptees (Florence Fisher, Betty Jean Lifton, and Debra Levi Holtz as examples) handles situations that have been made more complicated by institutional secrecy. It will focus in particular on strategies that, paradoxically, both obscure and expose birthmothers, and the ethics of using such strategies to tell an adoption life story.

Dr Hipchen received her Ph.D. in English Literature from The University of Georgia, and currently teaches in the Department of English and Writing at the University of Tampa. Her research interests include autobiography, particularly adoption life writing and the role of the body in the production of adoption identity. She is an editor of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* and a member of the Executive Committee of the Alliance for the Study of Adoption, Identity and Kinship, which is planning its inaugural conference for November 2005 at the University of Tampa. Her adoption memoir is forthcoming this year from The Literate Chigger Press. She teaches courses in autobiography, adoption writing, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature.