

For Immediate Release

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PUBLIC LECTURE AT UW EXPLORES 5:1 GENDER GAP IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Shari Graydon discusses “The Top 7 Reasons Smart Women Should Speak Up”

Women constitute 52% of the population and 61% of university graduates, yet their perspectives are represented in less than 20% of newspaper columns and guest commentary, with similar numbers for broadcast news. This gap is the subject of an upcoming public lecture at the University of Waterloo.

Shari Graydon from Informed Opinions, a project that aims to bridge the gender in gap public discourse by helping experts make their knowledge more accessible to the media, will be delivering a talk titled “The Top 7 Reasons Smart Women Should Speak Up” on September 20 at 3:30pm in the Sun Life Auditorium (LHS 1621, in the Lyle S. Hallman Institute for Health Promotion). The free lecture is hosted by the Faculty Association’s Status of Women & Equity Committee (SWEC).

Committee chair Diana Parry says of the committee’s motivations for inviting Graydon, “she casts a necessary spotlight on the need for female academics to elevate their profile in visual, broadcast, and print media.” Parry hopes that Graydon’s visit will “heighten the prominence of our female colleagues on campus, one of the central aims of SWEC. For the benefit of society at large, these women’s voices need to be shared more broadly. Shari’s talk will give them tools to engage in this important public discourse.”

Recent studies from Informed Opinions and McMaster University demonstrate an overall 5:1 ratio of male to female opinion in Canadian news outlets, despite an abundance of female expertise in Canada. The ratio is even more skewed in the ‘STEM’ fields – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math – making the problem especially relevant at the University of Waterloo and in Waterloo Region, where these fields are particularly prominent.

“Given the complexity of the world and the myriad financial, environmental and social challenges we face, we need to be drawing on the expertise and analysis of as diverse a group of thinkers and researchers as possible” says Graydon. “Women’s perspectives -- informed by different life experiences and ways of viewing the world -- offer complementary insights that can benefit us all.” The Informed Opinions website similarly stresses that “organizations and countries making most effective use of women’s contribution are more competitive and experience a higher quality of life.”

Shari Graydon is an award-winning author, journalist and communications consultant with 20 years of experience on both sides of the media microphone. A former newspaper columnist, TV producer and commentator for CBC radio and TV, she also served as press secretary to a provincial premier, and as president of Media Watch.

SWEC is a standing committee of the Faculty Association of the University of Waterloo, and is concerned with matters related to equity and the status of women including hiring, working conditions, and compensation.

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To register for the event or for more information, please visit fauw.uwaterloo.ca or contact Laura McDonald at laura.mcdonald@uwaterloo.ca or 519-888-4567, extension 35158.