



CLAIRE SUTTLES

Age: 31

Major: Women's studies

Planned Graduation: May 2010

“My life is like an emergency room. You have to triage,” says Claire Suttles, as she arrives for an interview with two small sons in tow. While taking three courses a semester at Wellesley, she also has full-time responsibility for her household while her husband puts in long hours at a hedge fund in Boston. She schedules her classes to finish before noon, when she races off to pick up her youngest at kindergarten. “It’s obviously not easy,” she says. “You have to deal with children and bills and rent while you’re also trying to deal with midterms.” Still, Suttles can’t stop grinning. “I am so happy. I never thought I could be this fulfilled through school,” she says. At 18, Suttles had to drop out of North Carolina State University because of a rare autoimmune disease. She then started a fashion label, which was just taking off when her health again sidelined her. In her early 20s, Suttles recovered and married, making “a very conscious decision to start a family right away, because I knew the fragility of life.” After three layoffs, her husband, a factory worker, sought further education, and the family moved north so he could attend Brown. With his degree complete, Suttles started at Wellesley. She is drawn to women’s studies and has a particular interest in modern-day abolitionist work for women in places like southern Sudan. She hopes to go into nonprofit work in that area, but for the time being, Suttles is just thrilled to be in school. “I just never in a million years would have thought that from misfortune could come such a blessing.”