

FALL 2008

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WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

This semester, our women's and gender studies program has grown in unprecedented ways. We welcomed our largest class of incoming master's students in the history of the program. This talented group of new students arrived at the same time as Marjorie Jolles, our very first, full-time assistant professor of women's and gender studies. These new arrivals have already enabled us to expand and strengthen our graduate curriculum in exciting ways. Most immediately, we are offering three new WGS core graduate seminars this coming spring semester. All three of these seminars, Gender, Sexuality and Popular Culture; Global Feminist Ethics, and Grassroots Activism and Feminist Theory, have been developed specifically in response to students' research interests and needs. Although we will continue to cross-list a number of excellent courses from other departments, the WGS core faculty is particularly excited about the opportunity to offer more graduate seminars tailored to our graduate students. Furthermore, these courses represent growth in areas of study that are central to the strengths and mission of our program:

the analysis of social institutions, networks of power, and cultural productions, as well as the exploration of avenues of resistance, justice and transformation. Outside of the classroom, it has been a busy semester as well. I'll review a few highlights here. In October, the WGS program partnered with The Chicago Foundation of Women to co-sponsor the "Margaret Garner in Context" panel. This event, which coincided with the premiere of the Margaret Garner opera at Roosevelt's Auditorium Theater, featured four panelists who discussed the historical case of Margaret Garner and its relation to a wide range of human rights issues. The success of this event was followed in November with a screening of the film "Still Black: a portrait of black transmen." This documentary explores the lives of six black transgender men living in the United States and offers a complex and multi-faceted image of race, sexuality and trans identity. The film screening included a Q&A session with the filmmakers, Kortney Ryan Ziegler (director) and Awilda Rodriguez Lora (producer). Finally, the program began a new initiative that focuses on introducing WGS graduate students to important WGS organizations and resources in the Chicago area. In November, we visited the Gerber/Hart library for a private tour of the library and its archives. Founded in 1981, the Gerber/Hart is an LGBT Information Resource and Archives. It is the Midwest's largest LGBT circulating library (with over 14,000 volumes) as well as an important archive of LGBT-related records and artifacts of individuals and organizations both in Chicago and nationwide. It provides a unique research resource for WGS students, and we hope some of our students will choose to work with this rich collection.

STUDENT PROFILE

DENISE ALLEN-BLACKMON, MA 2008, WGS



1. Why did you decide to get a degree in WGS at RU?

I completed my undergraduate degree in Sociology at Roosevelt. I wanted to get a MA in WGS because I felt it would provide a deeper concentration in the areas that interest me in Sociology which were issues related to the life course of women, particularly African American women and other women of color. I was aware that the WGS program was an interdisciplinary program which was also of great interest to me. The fact that Roosevelt is a university that is focused on issues of social justice was also appealing to me.

2. What have you most enjoyed about RU's WGS program?

I honestly say that I've enjoyed my entire experience in RU's WGS program. One thing I can say that has impressed me a great deal about the program is the faculty. They're always available. There has not been one professor or faculty member that has been unapproachable. They've always seemed concerned that the goals of the courses are being met. The best part of being in the WGS program at Roosevelt is that the faculty insists that you intellectually "show up" and take part in the class discussions so you're not just sitting there listening to a lecture.

3. What are your areas of interest?

Issues that affect women of color such as poverty issues, social movements geared toward women of color. The role that women of color have played in the history of the United States, political issues and the historical transformation of women of color in this country. Issues relating to women in regards to violence and exploitation and how women are interpreted in the mass media.

4. What projects are you currently working on?

I'm currently working on my graduate research project which analyzes the resources available to women with HIV/AIDS on Chicago's Westside (my community).

5. What are your career goals and how will a degree in WGS be beneficial?

My long term goal is to develop or work for an agency that provides services and resources to high risk women in low income communities. My second goal is to teach courses relating to social issues. I also want to work or volunteer my services to organizations that work toward empowering women. I have taken WGS classes that have examined various issues and concerns that affect women in the United States and our global world. The WGS program at RU has enlightened and intellectually challenged me to look at the world and issues that affect women in a totally different way. The journey has been a wonderful. I've truly enjoyed my experience being in RU's WGS program.

IN THE CLASSROOM

BOOK REVIEWS BY STUDENTS

WGS 404: Topics in Feminist Theories: Comparative Feminisms

Narayan, Uma. *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Uma Narayan's *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*, offers an insightful account of the contexts in which third world feminism (and feminists from the "third world") contest and come into conflict with local nationalisms and "first world" feminisms. In particular, Narayan's book did an excellent job of critically examining rhetorics of "authenticity" as used to discredit feminists working in "third world" contexts. The book truly shines as Narayan shifts the focus to western feminists and the colonialist rhetorics often employed in, for example, discussions of dowry murders. Narayan's style of writing is easy to read and her topic matter (including a chapter titled "Eating Cultures: Incorporation, Identity, and Indian Food") provides ample opportunity for critical self-reflection. A must-read.

WGS 442: Imagining Terror

Rushdie, Salman. *Shalimar the Clown*. New York: Random House, 2005.

Salman Rushdie's novel *Shalimar the Clown*, a New York Times Bestseller, explores the interconnectedness of public and private terror. Set in the United States, India, France, and Kashmir, the novel changes character perspectives as it changes settings. In this way, Rushdie draws on the intimacy of both personal and political human relationships in a continuously globalized shrinking world. Rushdie rummages through the recesses of the human heart, of human desire, honor, and difference. This novel is not only thrilling, but astoundingly heart-wrenching as the reader follows generations of characters through their seemingly separate yet intimately woven lives. India, the illegitimate daughter of Max Ophuls, finds her father's throat slit, convulsing at her front door. Police assume Max's death is the work of a terrorist assassin paying retribution for Max's ambassadorial work in India, but the reader knows that Shalimar the Clown, a violent political activist, hunted Max down to avenge the seduction of his beautiful wife, Booyani. The reader learns of Max's experience evading Nazi Germany and his marriage to British intelligence agent Margaret. They follow Shalimar through his once simple life as an entertainer, the destruction and loss of his family, his cold blooded political fighting, and his murderous revenge on the adulterers who betrayed him. The reader learns of Booyani's desire to escape her marriage and village, dreaming something more for her life and the ultimate punishment she receives for trying to rise above. Finally, the reader follows India through her life as a daughter of this troubled past, her attempt to come to terms with it, make sense of it and build her own life.

FACULTY PROFILE

ANN BRIGHAM, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

1. What WGS course are you teaching in the spring semester?

I am teaching WGS 404: Gender, Sexuality and Popular Culture.

2. How did you become interested in teaching this course?

This course topic is directly related to my own research, which focuses on the analysis of gender and sexuality in 20th-century American popular cultural texts. I am very excited to bring this research interest into the classroom in order to explore the ways that popular cultural forms shape, indulge, and challenge a wide range of pleasures, desires, and identities related to gender and sexuality, and to understand the cultural work performed by such representations.



Just as important, I am developing this course in response to a recent trend in students' research interests. In the past few years, several master's students in WGS have focused their final projects or theses on popular cultural topics. This seminar offers the opportunity for all of us interested in working on popular culture to share and develop our ideas in a rigorous and collegial forum.

3. Typically, what types of students take this course?

Since this is a new course, I don't know who will take it. But, I hope it will be of interest to graduate students with an interest in exploring, in depth, the importance of popular culture as a subject of study, specifically in terms of how popular cultural texts present such complex and conflicting representations of gender and sexuality.

4. What do you hope students will gain from this course?

I hope students will come away from the course with knowledge of a wide range of theoretical approaches to the analysis of popular culture as well as experience analyzing popular cultural texts in and against their historical moments of production. I also want them to further develop their understandings of the politics of pleasure. What I mean by this is that I want students to think through the social and cultural importance of the various pleasures represented in and created by popular cultural forms. In addition, I want them to analyze the ways that these forms of pleasure can also function as political practice.

FALL REVIEW

Decibelle Women's Music and Culture Festival Workshop:

Confronting Gender Based Violence

The 6th annual Decibelle Music and Culture Festival presented by Estrojam partnered with Roosevelt to host one of its workshops during the festival. Focusing on violence against women and the queer community, representatives from two nonprofit organizations, FAIR-Fund and Chicago's Young Women's Empowerment Project discussed how their organizations work to create social change for victims of violence and some ways that individuals could support non-violent problem solving strategies in their communities. Facilitated by Roosevelt University faculty member Kate Webster, the panel discussion was an integral piece to the purpose of the Decibelle Music and Culture Festival, raising awareness of gender based violence, specifically trafficking and sex work.

Margaret Garner in Context

In October, the WGS program, in conjunction with the Chicago Foundation for Women, presented a panel discussion entitled *Margaret Garner in Context* where Roosevelt faculty members Bethany Barratt and Sandra Frink and community experts discussed Margaret Garner's case in regards to contemporary human rights issues. Ranging from violence to education and human rights, the panelists shed light on the story of Margaret Garner and emphasized its relevance in today's discourses.

Professional Development Seminar on Applying to Interdisciplinary PhD Programs

This workshop featured a panel discussion with WGS faculty members Ann Brigham, Ellen O'Brien, and Marjorie Jolles who discussed the process of selecting and applying to interdisciplinary PhD programs, such as American Studies, Cultural Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies. Topics addressed included the differences between interdisciplinary programs, how to choose an appropriate program for you, and best practices for applying to these programs. The panel was attended by students in WGS-related fields.

The Price of Pleasure: Pornography, Sexuality and Relationships

On October 10, RU Feminists United, in partnership with the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, hosted a screening of the film "The Price of Pleasure." The documentary film explores the complex politics of mainstream American pornography, featuring interviews with pornography producers, consumers, scholars, defenders, and critics. The screening was followed by a discussion session with the film's director, Chyng Sun, facilitated by Marjorie Jolles, Assistant Professor of Women's & Gender Studies. The discussion was spirited, as students raised important questions regarding representation, sexual violence, fantasy, reality, and the gendered division of labor in the sex industry.

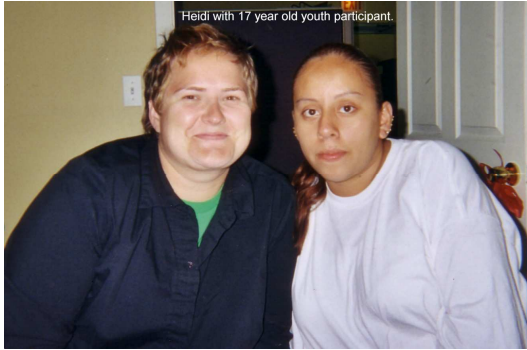
still black: a portrait of black transmen

On November 11th, WGS hosted a film screening of still black: a portrait of black transmen. This film portrayed the stories of six black transmen, and does the work of showing trans narratives that differ from the majority of white trans narratives that are available in text and on film. The film offers viewers a complex and multi-faceted image of race, sexuality and trans identity. Kortney Ryan Ziegler (Director) and Awilda Rodriguez Lora (Producer) created an important and crucial film that is much needed in the queer community.

INTERNSHIP REPORT

HEIDI TRUAX, WGS MA STUDENT

Chicago's Teen Living Program



Getting the opportunity to work in the community with the Teen Living Program (TLP) has been a tremendous experience! TLP is a residential center for 'youth' ages 17-21 who are homeless and in need of permanent shelter. As an agency their goal is to empower and equip youth with the tools they will need to be self sufficient in the future. I work directly with their supportive services program in Education. I get to tutor youth who are going to take their GEDs, ACTs and SATs as well as work with those who are studying to complete high school. Besides this

I've been given the opportunity to implement some of my own programming ideas which include field trips and group discussion groups around queer issues. Everything that I've learned in the WGS program here at Roosevelt has allowed me to feel so prepared to work in the realm of social services. Not only do I have an in depth understanding of the intersections of Gender, Race, Class and Sexuality to help support the participants but I also have gained a variety of tools in every field of study on the breadth of issues both the youth and the agency itself are faced with everyday. WGS has allowed the opportunity to integrate activism and education and the experience has been paramount!

SPRING EVENTS

Life in a Nonprofit Organization—Panel Discussion

Join representatives from various nonprofit organizations to discuss pursuing a career in the nonprofit world, what organizations look for in job candidates, and the range of positions available in a nonprofit organization.

WGS MA Graduate Presentation and Reception

To celebrate the success of graduating WGS MA students, we will host a forum in May where students will present and answer questions on their thesis or project.

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For more information about the program and to view course listings, please visit us at
<http://www.roosevelt.edu/cas/wgs/default.html>.