

WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM

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From the Director

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May is a great month. It's a time that offers a unique vantage point, allowing us to reflect on the year's successes and look forward to future happenings. This year, we welcomed Marjorie Jolles, our first full-time, tenure-track faculty member in Women's and Gender Studies. She has already made a tremendous impact on campus, teaching undergraduate courses filled to the maximum and developing graduate seminars that have inspired students to pursue new areas of inquiry. All of our core faculty members continue to produce new courses and scholarship, and we're happy to highlight some of those accomplishments in this issue. Our graduate students have also been especially active this year. Nine students presented their academic work at professional conferences. All of the students who presented at out-of-state conferences received travel funding through a joint award given by the Women's and Gender Studies program and the Dean of Arts & Sciences office. Three of our graduating students won prestigious university awards. Heidi Truax received the Matthew Freeman Social Justice Award; Liam Lair received an Outstanding Thesis Award given by the Graduate College, and Tara Gregg won the Samuel Ostrowsky Award for Excellence in the Humanities for her MA thesis. More details on these achievements appear within.

In looking back on our successes, I'd like to acknowledge several students who worked behind the scenes to enhance the WGS program's presence in the larger community. My thanks to

Liam Lair for organizing the film screening of "still black: a portrait of black transmen" and the discussion with the director and producer that followed. Thanks, too, to Tara Gregg for organizing the Decibelle Women's Music and Culture Festival Workshop, "Confronting Gender Based Violence," last fall, and to Tara and Heidi Truax for developing the panel discussion, "Integrating Feminism in the Non-Profit World," which took place in March. And, another thank you to Tara Gregg for developing, writing and editing this online newsletter for the past three semesters. The entire Roosevelt WGS community has benefited from Tara's initiative, enthusiasm, and ability to get things done with poise and polish, and I am very grateful for her work.

It's also an exciting time to look ahead. Next year, we will launch a new feature of the program: an internship in the teaching of women's and gender studies. This internship will match an experienced student with a WGS faculty member in the teaching of an undergraduate WGS course and provide a tuition waiver for the course. We are delighted to expand our financial support of graduate students with this award and to make the first award to KT Leuschen. Another new development underway for next year is The Harkens Scholarship, an alumni-sponsored fund designed to provide assistance to a WGS student who actively engages in translating academic experiences into activism. Three of this year's graduating students—Tara Gregg, Liam Lair, and Heidi Truax—created this scholarship, and I am humbled by their ongoing commitment to our WGS program. For the complete list of student awards, please see the last page of this issue.

My interest in looking back and forward has greater meaning for me this May. After nine years in the position, I will be stepping down as Director of the WGS program in August. Serving in this position has been a true pleasure for me, especially because it has allowed me to work so closely with WGS students over the years. I have learned a great deal from these students, current and former, and I want to thank all of you for sharing your ideas about the program. Your contributions have been, and will continue to be, invaluable to the program's identity, sense of community, and future successes. I also want to thank the WGS core faculty for dedicating their time, energy, and expertise to the program in ways that far exceeded my expectations. Finally, I want to extend a special thanks to Tara Gregg and Heidi Truax, who have served as the WGS graduate assistants for the last two years. Committed to improving and expanding the everyday experiences of WGS students, these two students have transformed this program in more ways than I can count. I am grateful for their boundless imagination and determination—and for making our work so enjoyable. I am delighted to close with the announcement that Associate Professor Ellen O'Brien will succeed me as director beginning August 15th, and I look forward to her leadership over the next several years. Please join me in welcoming Ellen into this position, and please continue to work with the WGS program as we continue to develop in exciting ways.

- Ann Brigham, Director of Women's and Gender Studies Program

STUDENT PROFILE

LIAM LAIR, MA 2009, WGS

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

When pursuing a Master's Degree at Chicago Theological Seminary, I was introduced to influential feminist theorists in some of my classes. I became intrigued with feminist, queer, and trans theory and my passion for WGS was ignited. Roosevelt was the best fit when I decided to change schools—the program and the faculty were unbeatable.



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

While my classes have been challenging and provocative, the relationships I built with colleagues and professors are irreplaceable. The learning environment created by the professors fostered an environment where we, as students, were able to try out new ideas and create and discover knowledge. I also really enjoyed being able to pursue projects that addressed issues I was passionate about, and that our professors allowed us a great amount of autonomy and independence in that regard.

What are your areas of interest?

I am interested in questions of identity, especially at the intersection of race, sexuality, and gender. I am also really fascinated by the construction of feminist ethics in this time in history—and how people reconcile their ethical convictions with their understanding of the world and reality.

What projects are you currently working on?

I am currently working on a project that examines the role of whiteness in the construction of transgender subject narratives in the U.S. I examine the ways that transgender narratives valorize immutable, white, heterosexual masculinity and through that valorization, uphold and perpetuate hegemonic race, gender, and sexual norms.

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

I hope to someday teach at a university, so my current graduate studies are preparing me for my pursuit of a PhD. I am undecided as to which type of program I want to pursue (American Studies, WGS, or Cultural Studies) but feel confident that my MA in WGS will have prepared me for whichever program I choose.

What are your immediate plans after graduation?

I will be working for the summer and hopefully adjuncting in the city during the fall semester. I will also be applying to programs and deciding where I'd like to go to school.

FACULTY RESEARCH REPORT

GINA BUCCOLA, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

My research concentrates on two basic areas: early modern drama and poetry, which I examine through the lenses of performance studies and feminist theory, and contemporary British and American feminist drama. I have a research leave coming up in fall 2009, during which time I will work on several different projects.

I will continue with research on seventeenth-century gypsy plays, which tend to cluster chronologically around the events leading up to the British Civil War and, curiously, to be authored by Royalists. Queen Henrietta Maria has come to play a prominent role in my research on these plays, since many of them were written in the romance genre that she favored. Finally, all of the gypsy plays that I discuss feature female characters who deploy gypsy disguise specifically to resist patriarchal control of their marital choices, a focal point of my discussion of them.

Additionally, I will proceed with work on my novel in progress (working title, "Foul Papers"), which is a feminist exploration of grief and loss as experienced by one half of a pair of twins. While the relationship between the twin sisters Clio and Cassandra is the heart of the novel, it also has elements of the wildly popular "Shakespeare mystery" sub-genre, since the deceased twin, Clio, was a scholar whose death was staged to appear as a suicide by a rival in whom she confided a rare archival find. The dead Clio has been a luminous presence, wildly successful at all that she attempts, and seemingly fearless. Cassandra suffers from panic attacks, and shocks friends and family members alike with her metamorphosis into a shrewd investigator of the suspicious circumstances surrounding her sister's death. Clio and Cassandra each bear the traces of the classical figures from whom they take their names. Cassandra sees what others do not in the evidentiary trail leading from her sister's cryptic journal entries, research notes, and e-mail messages to her sudden, seemingly accidental death. The novel adopts a third person narrator, linked to Cassandra's point of view; therefore, the reader encounters a polyvalent text consisting of Clio's private writing, her e-mails to others and their responses, as well as official documentary evidence regarding her death. An influential text with respect to the construction of my novel has been Margaret Atwood's *Possession*.

Gina Buccola is Associate Professor of English & Women's and Gender Studies.
She will be on research leave during the fall 2009 semester.

Recent Faculty Publications and Awards

WGS core faculty Regina Buccola and Ellen O'Brien were recognized for their outstanding work in the humanities as recipients of the Samuel Ostrowsky Award from the Department of Literature and Languages.

Ellen L. O'Brien, *Crime In Verse: The Poetics of Murder in the Victorian Era* (Ohio University Press, 2008).

Regina Buccola, *Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith: Fairy Lore in Early Modern British Drama and Culture* (Susquehanna University Press, 2006). Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins, editors *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama* (Ashgate Publishing, 2007), Regina Buccola, *Conjuring* (2008 New Women's Voices Chapbook Series, Finishing Line Press).

IN THE CLASSROOM

COURSE TEXTS REVIEWED BY STUDENTS

Balkin, Jack M. "Roe v. Wade: Engine of Controversy." *What Roe v. Wade Should Have Said: The Nation's Top Legal Experts Rewrite America's Most Controversial Decision*. New York: NYU Press, 2005. 3-27.

In the essay, "Roe v. Wade: Engine of Controversy," Jack M. Balkin discusses the supreme court decision ruling abortion as legal because a women's right to privacy is constitutionally founded. The author also explains the ruling itself, including the introduction of the trimester structure, the fetus' viability, and the influence of previous rulings based on the right of privacy. This essay opens up a new debate in the over discussed issue of abortion. Opening new forms of dialogue surrounding a debate helps invent new ways of discussing particular issues. This essay also complicates the importance of the court decision of *Roe v. Wade* saying that the court decision was premature and has set back a woman's right to have an abortion.

- Sarah Dee Hollibaugh, WGS MA student

Flueckiger, Joyce, B. *In Amma's Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South India*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006.

Flueckiger's relationship with Amma, her subsequent encounters with the practice of vernacular Islam, and her easy going and close portrayal of Amma's voice made it a good read. Flueckiger's ethnography points the reader to how gender plays a significant role in performing various identities in the southern city of India, Hyderabad, "Amma's unusual position of authority" as a healer, and the religious 'boundary-lessness' of the healing room (the introduction's mention of "crossroads"- a center for roads to branch off, rather than choosing paths – helps elaborate on the boundary-lessness of the healing room). (If you're looking for an ethnography along the same lines, but one that reframes the ethnographer and subject boundaries as more fluid, I highly suggest: McCarthy Brown, Karen. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn (expanded edition)* Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001.)

- Ausra Buzenas, WGS MA student

Stallybrass, Peter and Allon White. "Introduction." *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986. 1-26.

This reading tackles the intersections and dependencies of "high" and "low" cultural forms and uses Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque body to locate possible areas of cultural transgression. We have referenced this text many times in our class discussions of gender and popular culture, raising questions as to which bodies are criticized or labeled as grotesque, where our cultural fascination with them lies, and what norms are being challenged through this sort of embodiment.

- Maria Jenkins, WGS MA student

WGS STUDENTS PRESENT PAPERS AT PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES

Conference Presentations

Keven Cates and Jamie Moran (WGS MA students), "From Margin to Center and Back Again: Deviance and Discipline in the Space of The Center on Halsted." Chicago Feminisms: Past, Present and Future Conference. Oakton Community College, March 2009.

Tara Gregg (WGS MA student), "The Feminist Politics of *The West Wing*." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference. New Orleans, April 2009.

Martinique Haller (WGS graduate certificate student), "Queer Femme Representation: Disrupting 'Woman.'" Thinking Gender 2009 Conference. UCLA, Los Angeles, February 2009. "Queer Femme Representation: Disrupting 'Woman.'" National Women's Studies Association Conference. Atlanta, November 2009.

Maria Jenkins, KT Leuschen, and Heather Wilberg (WGS MA students), "Roundtable: DIY Music Culture and Feminist Change." Chicago Feminisms: Past, Present and Future Conference. Oakton Community College, March 2009.

Liam Lair (WGS MA student), "Clear and Present Whiteness: Transgender Narratives in the United States." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference. New Orleans, April 2009. "Beyond Whiteness and Ideal Masculinity: Expanding Transgendered Identities." National Women's Studies Association Conference. Atlanta, November 2009.

Heidi Truax (WGS MA student), "Discussin' It Proud: A Question of Authority, Identity and Language in Pedagogy." Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference. New Orleans, April 2009. "Queering Pedagogy: Creating Community Space for Marginalized Youth through Education." Queertopia! 2.0: An Academic Festival. Chicago, May 2009.

Heather Wilberg (WGS MA student), "Queering the Game: Video Games, Queer Nerds, and Activism." Queertopia! 2.0: An Academic Festival. Chicago, May 2009.

Conference Report

"CHICAGO FEMINISMS: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE" Oakton Community College, March 2009

The experience of attending my first professional conference was amazing. The Chicago Feminisms conference at Oakton Community College was a great experience, and especially for a novice like myself. This conference in particular was very friendly and receptive to graduate students' work, so many of the presenters were in my age and experience groups, making the experience a lot less nerve-wracking. There were also a number of my classmates who attended, and we were wonderfully supportive of each other. Presenting a collaborative project as I did, I learned how to work with a partner on a project that incorporates our varying perspectives and research interests. Working and presenting with a partner also allowed for a reduction in stress level—I only had to field half of my audience's questions! The discussion that ensued with the audience after the presentation of our paper was quite intriguing and made me think about the subject matter of our paper in new ways. It was also great to engage in conversation with fellow scholars on the subject matter, be in an environment in which everyone had an investment in the topics discussed, and for my work to be given credibility. Overall, the experience of presenting at this conference greatly added to my academic confidence.

- Jamie Moran, WGS MA student

FACULTY PROFILE

CARRIE BRECKE, INSTRUCTOR

What WGS course are you teaching in the fall semester?

I will be teaching “Gender, Race, and Environmental Justice” this fall. This course used to be titled “Ecofeminism,” but many students have never heard of Ecofeminism. Ann and I thought that this title would give students a better idea of what the course is about, and if students have an idea of what they are getting into, they are much more likely to enroll. The new title, though, is really just a truncated definition of ecofeminism.



How did you become interested in teaching this course?

I grew up on the Oregon coast—lots of loggers and fisherman. Very beautiful. I grew up around people who loved nature, but saw nature as very clearly in the service of humans. My father, who took us camping and berry picking, who taught us to garden and fish, would look at a tree and say, “Well that’s about X number of board feet. You’ve got a good \$2000.00 standing there.” Even as a child this seemed weird to me. So, in many ways, I have always been interested in environmental issues. I have been a feminist since I bought my first issue of *Ms. Magazine* in 1972 at age 15, but I never really considered myself an ecofeminist until about ten years ago. I had been having a series of lively discussions about globalization with my Green Party activist nephew, Leif, and I came to realize that as a feminist I simply had to include the environment in my analysis. I realized that the environment was one of the strands (like race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) that shapes individuals and communities. That the environment is a part of the simultaneous and multiple forces at work on us daily. This addition to my analysis has made me feel complete in my feminism. So, when Ann and I were talking about a possible Topics in Feminist Theory course, I suggested Ecofeminism.

Typically, what types of students take this course?

Generally, students take this course who are interested in environmental issues, but really do not have an understanding of how environmental issues and feminist issues (race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, ableness, etc.) intersect. We have all seen the activist suburban mom on television whose child has been affected by some environmental blight, and her demands are important, but her “call to action” needs to be placed within a larger discussion. Why do her demands get heard, while children on the south side of Chicago attend schools that neighbor toxic waste dumps? How does the coal burning factory in Illinois affect the air quality in Alaska? In India? I would also encourage students to take this course who have never had an interest in environmental issues. They are often the students who come away from the course most energized in terms of local activism. Through this course, students come to see that they can make a difference.

What do you hope students will gain from this course?

Students should gain an understanding of the connection between patriarchy and ecological degradation—how environmental degradation, militarism, and neoliberal ideas about economic “development” are patriarchal worldviews antithetical to feminist frameworks of community and justice. Studying both theoretical approaches and grassroots movements, students will learn how feminist responses to environmental issues have positively impacted individual’s lives and communities. Students will look globally, coming to understand how environments cannot be isolated from one another, nor from other social issues, but ultimately, students’ focus will be local. They’ll learn the Chicago area’s environmental history, issues, and activism, and begin to situate themselves as advocates for environmental justice. Most importantly, students will develop their own feminist environmental philosophy, finding a theoretical position through which they can orient their everyday lives and their environmental activism.

GRADUATING MA STUDENTS

Denise Allen-Blackmon, MA Women's and Gender Studies, December 2008

MASTER'S PROJECT TITLE: HIV/AIDS Resources For Women In The West Garfield Park and Austin Communities: Searching For Help, Searching For Hope

My project examines the resources available for women who have contracted HIV/ AIDS in an African American working-class community. For working-class African American women, there is a limited amount of resources available to them to help successfully manage this disease. The community I examine is the West Garfield/West Austin community on Chicago's Westside.

Tara Gregg, MA Women's and Gender Studies, May 2009

THESIS TITLE: Contentious Debates in *The West Wing*: The Quest for Feminist Citizenship

My thesis explores how *The West Wing*, using strategies from and critical engagement with feminism, negotiates an American hegemonic feminist narrative and creates an environment for the consideration of feminist politics in relation to discourses of citizenship. First, I provide an historical account of America's evolving understanding of feminism on television. Next, I analyze how the television show exists as a "site of struggle" wherein feminist debates are considered integral explorations for the shaping of policy and politics. Finally, I provide an analysis of how *The West Wing* helps to construct and reflect America's understanding of feminism in 21st-century America.

Liam Oliver Lair, MA Women's and Gender Studies, May 2009

THESIS TITLE: Beyond Whiteness and Ideal Masculinity: Expanding Transgendered Identity

My thesis explores the role of whiteness in the construction of transgender (trans) subject narratives in the U.S. I examine the ways that trans narratives valorize immutable, white, heterosexual masculinity and through that valorization, uphold and perpetuate hegemonic race, gender, and sexual norms. I want to disrupt the assumptions of the white male subject, of essentialized white masculinity within dominant trans narratives, and focus on the effect of whiteness and white privilege within these narratives. In articulating how whiteness operates in trans narratives, I also search for the spaces that allow for recognizing the interplay of racial identity and (trans)gendered subjectivity.

Andi Michaels, MA Women's and Gender Studies, December 2008

MASTER'S PROJECT TITLE: Looking for You in the Whirlwind: Political Women in Exile and Prison

For my final project, I developed a literature course entitled "Looking for You in the Whirlwind: Political Women in Exile and Prison" with a radical critical pedagogy that makes the students responsible for their own knowledge production.

Heidi A. Truax, MA Women's and Gender Studies, May 2009

MASTER'S PROJECT TITLE: Queering Pedagogy: a Handbook for the Non-Profit Sector

My master's project sets up a new framework, queering pedagogy, which operates as more than the inclusion of queer voices into education; it is a reformation of both the primary pedagogical relationship (teacher/student) and curriculum. Working directly within the unique environment of the non-profit sector, queering pedagogy creates inclusivity, agency, subjectivity and community for the persons who are most often forgotten in education and queer culture, namely non-white queer youth.

WGS Alums--we want to hear from you!

Let us know what you're doing and how you're using your degree.

If you are interested in making a donation to the Harkens Scholarship, founded and supported by
Roosevelt University WGS Alumni, please contact the director of the program.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Matthew Freeman Social Justice Award

Graduating WGS student Heidi Truax received this award in recognition of significant achievements in social justice work carried out by a Roosevelt University student. The award recognizes Heidi's work in the educational service department at Teen Living Program's Belford House. Teen Living Program (TLP) offers youth ages 12 to 24 residential care, educational and vocational services as well as tools and support for sustainable living in their future.

Roosevelt University's Outstanding Thesis Award

Graduating WGS student Liam Lair received this award in recognition of academic excellence in a Master's thesis. He presented his work on destabilizing dominant narratives of transgender identity and received his award at the RU Research Day held May 7th.

Samuel Ostrowsky Award

Graduating WGS student Tara Gregg received this award in recognition of her outstanding work in the humanities. Her work was a feminist analysis of Aaron Sorkin's *The West Wing*, specifically how it negotiates an American hegemonic feminist narrative and creates an environment for the consideration of feminist politics in relation to discourses of citizenship. She was presented with this award at the Department of Literature and Languages Awards Ceremony, May 15th.

Graduate Assistantship Award

The WGS program awarded two half-time graduate assistantships for the 2009-2010 year to continuing student Sarah Dee Hollibaugh and incoming student Michelle-Marie Gilkeson.

Grace Mary Stern Scholarship

This scholarship is awarded to one or more WGS students who exemplify the goals of journalist and political activist Grace Mary Stern. The 2009-10 award recipients are returning students Maria Jenkins and KT Leuschen.

Teaching Internship Award

This new award, to be offered annually, provides a teaching internship with a WGS professor and a tuition waiver for the course. KT Leuschen received this award for the 2009-10 year.

NEWS AND UPDATES

Congratulations to Associate Professor Ellen O'Brien, who will assume the role of WGS Program Director.

Thanks to Keven Cates and KT Leuschen, respectively, for reviewing their course texts in the Fall 2008 Newsletter.

Women's and Gender Studies Program at Roosevelt University

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

Roosevelt University
College of Arts and Sciences
Mailstop: 724
430 S. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60605