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### WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

Stepping in as acting director while Ann Brigham is on research leave, I am happy to reflect on our program's busy and productive year. While it's not possible to summarize all the day-to-day activities and notable accomplishments of our students and faculty, a few highlights seem in order. In October, in collaboration with area women's and gender studies programs, we hosted an internship, job, and volunteer fair, which featured over thirty local organizations addressing issues related to women, gender, sexuality, race, class, and other matters of social justice. During the months of November and December, with support from the Mansfield Institute for Social Justice, we organized workshops with Salome Chasnoff and Dorothy Roberts. Chasnoff, director of Beyondmedia, discussed her media activism in collaboration with underserved and under-represented women and youth. Roberts, professor at Northwestern University Law School, explained

how intersections of gender, race, and class inflect legal questions of reproduction, bioethics, and child welfare.

In the spring, threading a theme of ecofeminism and activism, students and faculty arranged several events in honor of Women's History Month. Focusing our attention on the topic of women's activism and grassroots movements in Chicago, "Women, Activism, and the Urban Environment" featured LaDonna Redmond from the Institute for Community Resource Development and Cheryl Johnson from People for Community Recovery. Later in the month, a screening and a panel discussion of "An Inconvenient Truth" offered a lively critical review of the film and a discussion of its engagement with and neglect of important social justice questions. In the spirit of educating and engaging the broader RU community, students developed a wildly successful Women's Trivia Challenge, which, stationed in the main lobby, attracted passersby eager to test their knowledge of women's history and win delectable candies and gift certificates.

Of the many important developments contributing to the strength and growth of our program, perhaps the most significant is the success of our recent search to fill the program's first fully dedicated, full-time, tenure-track assistant professor position. After a months-long search, the core faculty members were thrilled when Marjorie Jolles accepted the position. Jolles, currently an assistant professor at California State University, Fullerton, received her Ph.D. in Philosophy and a Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies from Temple University in 2003. Her research and teaching areas include feminist theory, feminist philosophy, sexuality studies, and feminist pedagogy. In the fall, she will bring her expertise and enthusiasm to the

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classroom with WGS 210: Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies and WGS 404-10: Feminism and Western Philosophy.

As we approach the end of this academic year, we look forward to welcoming a new group of M.A. students in the fall semester. Plans are also underway for an array of activities aimed at fostering the intellectual and social dimensions of our program.

Congratulations to our graduates, thanks to all for an exciting year and best wishes for a relaxing summer.

Ellen O'Brien  
Acting Director of Women's and Gender Studies

### **STUDENT PROFILE – JACKIE WOOD, MA 2008, WGS**

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

To expand my knowledge of women's and gender studies theoretical frameworks

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

Theoretical courses and the people I've been privileged to have met

What are your areas of interest?

Theories of the body

What projects are you currently working on?

Thesis project: Topics in Women's and Gender Studies: The Body in Art and Performance and my Internship Final (CODEPINK)

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

I plan on focusing the next 5-10 years on activism and learning more WGS theory, with the hopes of going on to obtain my PhD

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## IN THE CLASSROOM – BOOK REVIEWS BY STUDENTS

### ENG 441: Gender and the Artist in American Fiction

Fauset, Jessie R. *There Is Confusion*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989.

*There Is Confusion* is written in the 1920s by Jessie Redmon Faust in response to an appallingly racist book published just a few years before called *Birthright*. Faust was an African-American writer of the Harlem Renaissance, but I hadn't heard of her or this novel until this class. I like being a part of the unearthing of important novels that have escaped recognition and finding something valuable within them. *There is Confusion* is slipping into obscurity so quickly in fact that it's out of print. This aside, I was able to find much to be appreciated. The novel follows a few main characters from their childhood through adulthood; an aspiring dancer and singer, a hopeful surgeon temporarily sidetracked by the lure of an easier life as a musician, and periphery characters based on W.E.B DuBois and Madame C.J Walker, among others. We witness the injustices they're forced to bear as black Americans thick in the legacy of Slavery while being entertained by an engaging story. The novel is something of the 'up-from-the-bootstraps' story that I usually have some political issues with because of how such stories often communicate that 'anyone can do anything if they set their mind to it.' Nevertheless, the trials the characters endure are real and heartbreaking, and the way Faust sets them in history, as part of a longer and older story, is well done and thought provoking.

Martinique Haller, English Graduate student

**HIST 450: Gender, Sexuality in 19th-Cent. US and Europe**  
Bederman, Gail. *Manliness & Civilization A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880-1917*. Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

*Manliness and Civilization* is a fantastic book that from the get go magnificently explores the nuanced intersections of race, gender and class. Initially exploring the construction of masculinity as a concept (as it can be traced to the late 1800s) and then going on further to emphasize the forces of racial domination on the evolving restructuring of manhood throughout the time period in question, 1880-1917. In turn the author brilliantly explores how race and masculinity worked to shape "civilization" while simultaneously "civilization" enforced and redefined the boundaries of race and gender. This book is about 230 pages of historical analysis that won't put you to sleep. I highly recommend it!

Heidi Truax, WGS Graduate student

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## HIST 450: Gender, Sexuality in 19th-Cent. US and Europe

Srebnick, Amy G. *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century* New York. NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.

This book illustrates how one 'mysterious' death of a young girl manifests itself into a decade long morality tale against young women's sexual autonomy and abortion. FASCINATING.

Heidi Truax, WGS Graduate student

## POS 412: Politics of Gay and Lesbian Communities

Vaid, Urvashi. *Virtual Equality*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.

Vaid traces the history of the gay and lesbian rights movement in her book, *Virtual Equality*, and examines the effectiveness of the movement thus far. As an activist in both direct-action groups, and as leader of NGLTF, she brings an insider's perspective to the world of gay and lesbian activism and organization. Throughout the book, she highlights successes, failures, setbacks, obstacles, and many other aspects of the larger Lesbian and Gay rights movement. She continually reiterates her frustration with what she has termed "virtual equality," a "state of conditional equality based more on the appearance of acceptance by straight American than on genuine civic parity." Virtual equality is what lesbian and gay communities have won in the larger U.S. context, and we also perpetuate it within our own communities. She traces the development of national organizations and discusses their work, situating that work historically and culturally. As she notes the various tides of change in lesbian and gay communities in the U.S., as well as the rise and tides of the religious right, she argues that the lesbian and gay movement must re-examine itself, its leadership (and expectations of that leadership), as well as an overall assessment of its goals and the ways in which activists work together (or don't) in order to models champion our commitments to both joy and honesty. In a time when most of us could name gay celebrities, but not gay political leaders, Vaid's work is important. Through showing the history of activism, and giving her perspective on what our successes and failures have been, she develops a nuanced and helpful opinion of where we need to go, what is left to be done, and how we might begin to go about doing it. While she often presents two divergent poles of activism (mainstream v. liberation), she does develop a view that would account for the strategies of both groups (although there are many organizational she fails to present). She does propose a new political paradigm of assimilating the "dominant culture to us," and of assimilating heterosexuals to the "normalcy of gay and lesbian people." Vaid's text is accessible, engaging and informative. I would recommend it to anyone.

Brittany Boswell, WGS Graduate student

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### **PSYC 445: Psychology of Women**

Crawford, Mary. Transformations: Women, Gender, and Psychology. Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill, 2006.

The writing in this book makes it interesting and easy to read. It covers a lot of information very well. I would say it's a great book for undergraduate coursework. However, it doesn't go into much detail about any one topic and is intended mostly as a relatively basic overview of women's issues, touching briefly on relevant psychological concepts.

Heather Wilberg, WGS Graduate student

### **SOC 426: Race, Gender, and the Mass Media**

Akass, Kim and Janet McCabe. Reading The L Word: Outing Contemporary Television. New York: I.A. Tauris, 2006.

Although this was not a required text for the course, I used sections from it for a content analysis paper on the first season of *The L Word*. While I love this show and acknowledge its significance in representation for the LGBTQ community, I also recognize that there are going to be issues with any program that is trying to do so much and make so many issues visible. If anyone who likes the show were to read this book, then I believe that they would also learn how to be a more critical thinker and viewer for any other show. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes the forward, and I was truly engaged in her critique about the immediate reactions of many who saw the pilot episode and the overwhelmingly hegemonic lesbian group, without fat, hairy legs and pits. But it is just a start. This collection of critical essays also honestly critiqued visibility, representation, biracial and Latina identities, heteronormativity, sex, compulsory monogamy, and female! masculinities. I hope that more people write about and respond to the importance of this show, especially in the wake of its end.

Andi Michaels, WGS Graduate student

### **WGS 404: Sex, Gender and International Human Rights**

Gutman, Roy, David Reiff, and Anthony Dworkin, ed. Crimes of War 2.0: What the Public Should Know. 2nd Edition. London: W.W. Norton and Company Ltd, 2007.

This book is essential for anyone looking for a brief introduction to human rights because it is designed like a reference guide, with topics listed alphabetically. It provides a general overview and examples of varied length on topics from international relations and human rights discourses. While it broaches some dense issues, this guide is suitable for individuals with little experience with these terms or as a refresher for those with more knowledge. It was invaluable during class and I will definitely use it in the future!

Tara Gregg, WGS Graduate student

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## **WGS 404: Gender and Language**

Cameron, Deborah, ed. *The Feminist Critique of Language*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2003.

Cameron gathers together some of the most influential essays, articles and book chapters of the past century in the field of linguistics that examine language through a gendered lens. The pieces in *The Feminist Critique of Language* chronicle the evolution of scholarly attitudes to gender and language, from the stereotypical, essentialist findings of Jespersen to the now dated but still revolutionary for the period observations of Robin Lakoff to Kira Hall's interpretations of the effects of modern technology on gender and language. Cameron's selections manage to capture the complexity and scope of the subject matter while remaining highly readable

Dana Clark, MA 2008, WGS

## **FACULTY PROFILE – MARJORIE JOLLES, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES**

### **What course are you teaching in the fall?**

This fall, I'm teaching WGS 210, Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, and WGS 404, Feminism and Western Philosophy. WGS 210 is our introductory undergraduate course, and WGS 404 is our "Topics in Feminist Theories" graduate course.

### **How did you become interested in teaching this course?**

I have a rather organic relationship to the material in this course. My primary training is in philosophy, and it was through philosophy that I was introduced to feminist philosophy and social theory -- first in college and then in graduate school, where it came to dominate my studies. My research traces the cultural life of ideas-- specifically how existing conceptual frameworks give rise to, prevent, or otherwise shape the emergence of new conceptual frameworks.

The content of the WGS 404 course takes up this very question, by exploring how feminist knowledges emerge in the context of dominant philosophical thought. We will read the work of heavily influential philosophers along with their feminist fans and critics, to see how feminists have responded to their work by implicitly or explicitly relying on it, correcting it, or, perhaps most excitingly, discovering new uses for it when applied to contemporary feminist questions.

### **Typically, what types of students take this course?**

I hope WGS 404 will be a useful course for anyone interested in feminism and philosophy in general, and in particular, the specific uses that feminists have made of the work by canonical Western philosophers.

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## What have been their responses?

Whenever I've taught this material, students express interest in getting better acquainted with primary philosophical material, since it is referenced so frequently in feminist theory. So, for example, students find it very useful to closely read and think about what Karl Marx had to say, because that deeper understanding then provides a stronger and more nuanced foundation for their knowledge of Marxist feminism. I've found students have found this course so rewarding, as it works to build their "base" of feminist knowledge and inquiry styles.

This deeper knowledge becomes another tool for students' own thinking. Since graduate students are in the process of formulating their own research questions, this course helps students situate their own thinking, to see how their own thinking has been shaped by the debates and assumptions of the past. I always encourage students to look at their own thinking that way, as part of a history of thinking. Then they are better equipped to keep pushing their own thinking to new levels.

## What do you hope WGS students (and non-WGS students, if cross-listed) will gain from this course?

I hope students will gain a rich understanding of the philosophical schools of thought that have provided foundations for feminist thinking about a range of issues, like agency and power, the body and sexuality, history and social change, and others. These schools of thought--and the innovations and re-interpretations of them made by feminists--are frequently referenced in so much feminist theoretical work. So I want students to gain a firm grasp on them in order to enhance their future engagements with feminist theory, and to use these theoretical tools to come to new understandings about how to conceptualize gender and knowledge.

## **SPRING REVIEW**

### **Women's History Month**

The WGS program this year hosted several events in honor of Women's History Month to raise awareness of all that women have done and are currently doing to make our world more just.

The first event was a film screening of a documentary film, entitled *Beyond Beijing: The International Women's Movement*, by Salome Chasnoff of Beyondmedia, that highlighted the 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing.

**Women, Activism, and the Urban Environment**, as part of the WGS program's focus on the environment this year, was a panel discussion with women activists in Chicago working for environmental justice and to build a more sustainable environment. We were honored to have Ladonna Redmond, founder and CEO of the

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Institute for Community Resource Development, and Cheryl Johnson, from People for Community Recovery, discuss how they became environmental justice advocates and their experiences as women in the field. Over 20 people attended this event!

Developed in the WGS 404 Ecofeminism class in fall of 2007, *An Inconvenient Truth: Deconstructing the Hype and Building a Case for Action* was comprised of a film screening of *An Inconvenient Truth* followed by a panel discussion, facilitated by WGS MA student Brittany Boswell, on what is and is not addressed in the film and who is most affected by environmental degradation. A panel of RU faculty, including Carrie Brecke (English & Women's and Gender Studies), Vicky McKinley (Biology), and Kim Ruffin (English) shared their knowledge and perspectives on the film. We would like to send a special thanks to ArgoTea generously donated and served tea to our 20+ guests!

During the last week of March, several WGS students volunteered at the **Women's Trivia Challenge** held in the Michigan lobby to engage in educational and entertaining outreach as a method of consciousness raising. Roosevelt University students, as they entered the main lobby, were asked to correctly answer a trivia question regarding the achievements of women in areas such as politics, education, sports, the environment, the arts, and civil rights as well as commonly overlooked barriers that currently exist in the status quo. Those who correctly answered a question were entered in the final drawing for a prize.

By sparking interest about women's and gender issues and dispelling misconceptions of equality, the Women's Trivia Challenge increased awareness of women's history to members of the community who may not have been able to attend a formal event or who may not have been aware of the myriad facets of gender inequality. We had 46 people in the drawing for prizes that were donated from local Chicago businesses including Women and Children First Bookstore, Giordano's Pizza, Sirens Improv, and About Face Theatre. This event was so well received by the RU and Chicago communities that it was recognized by a student in a class project as an "event of interest." Thank you again to everyone who participated and helped make the Women's Trivia Challenge a success.

### **Queer and Feminist Literature Reading**

The WGS program teamed with RU's Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance and RU Proud to present a the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Queer and Feminist Literature Reading on April 28th. Several students, faculty, and alumni from RU read original works and works by their favorite poets. Readers included Regina Buccola, Carrie Brecke, Griffin Ross, Carlos Rios, Danny Dicrispino, Missy Meegan, and Joeseeph Schüpbach. With over 25 people in attendance, this event was a successful, collaborative ending to the spring 2008 semester!

### **WGS MA Graduate Presentation and Reception**

To celebrate the success of graduating WGS MA students, we hosted a forum on May 14<sup>th</sup> where students gave presentations and answered questions on their thesis or project. Graduating WGS MA students are Yolanda Branham, Dana Clark, Nesha Eaton, Beth Gillis, Shannon Hackett, Laura Kehoe, Becky Klugiewicz, and Jackie Wood.

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## FALL EVENTS

WGS Graduate Student Social, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 – 5 PM, AUD 244  
Come meet, mingle, and enjoy refreshments with other WGS graduate students and faculty!

The following events are pending – more details will be provided as they develop:

Professional Development Seminar on Applying to Interdisciplinary PhD Programs  
This workshop will feature a panel discussion of professor and administrators experienced in interdisciplinary PhD programs, such as American Studies, Cultural Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies. Topics to be addressed include the differences between interdisciplinary programs, how to choose an appropriate program for you, and best practices for applying to these programs. This event is free and open to all students.

"Works in Progress" Student Forum

Come discuss your progress with other WGS students, share advice and research tips, and most of all, support one another! This event is for WGS Graduate students only.

Women's and Gender Studies Colloquium with Guest Speaker  
Listen and learn first-hand from a guest lecturer.

*Margaret Garner* at the Auditorium Theatre

Students and faculty of the WGS program will attend an open rehearsal on October 31<sup>st</sup> and participate in related events the following week. The two act opera by Toni Morrison (libretto) and Richard Danielpour (music) tells the story of a slave from the Civil War period who fled captivity and killed one of her children to protect them from enslavement.

## HAVE A GREAT SUMMER, FROM THE WGS PROGRAM!

### Women's and Gender Studies Program

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Professor Ellen O'Brien, Acting Director  
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<http://roosevelt.edu/cas/wgs/default.htm>