

Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies

University of Massachusetts Amherst

A Department in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts

Fall 2018
Newsletter

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Farewell Message from Chair, Laura Briggs

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As I pack up the “chair’s office” and move down the hall to my faculty office, I have been thinking about how grateful I am to have had the opportunity to chair this department. As I came in seven years ago, it was clear that there were changes afoot. Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies had just become a “department” rather than a program. Dean Julie Hayes indicated her interest in growing the department’s faculty. After my time at the University of Arizona, which had just seen its overall budget cut by a third by a state legislature that really didn’t much believe in public higher education, it seemed like a sweet spot to land, with its vibrant faculty and staff, smart, activist students, and long history. So my partner and I packed up our things and our one-year old baby and moved back east.

It turned out to be both a more and less auspicious time for the department than I expected. Trump happened, along with rising right-wing activity in lots of places outside and inside the United States. For an international research department like ours, the consequences of closing borders, rising racism, sexism, and anti-immigrant feeling has been serious. Students and faculty members have faced death threats, threats to their visas, have been delayed at international borders, and have even been prevented from doing their research or attending conferences for fear that they won’t be allowed back into the United States because of harassment from the right-wing administrations of the US, Turkey, and India. Trans students and faculty have been the objects of campaigns on the right against transgender people. This year, for example, there is a ballot question that would allow discrimination against trans people in public accommodations. As with all ballot questions, wording is key. Students and faculty of color, especially those who are Black and Muslim, have experienced on-campus harassment as well as witnessing what seems to be rising rates of police violence against unarmed people in the world at large. The department has appeared in the right wing press, so we must be doing something worth noticing! The bad stuff goes on and on, so I’ll just mention one more thing—a new Supreme Court member seems poised to overturn the legal right to abortion and gay marriage in the next several years.

But at the same time, the department’s faculty, staff, and students offered brilliant and formidable resistance to all of this. It has continued to grow as a site to stand against these things and study their origins and effects. We have new gen ed courses that allow large numbers of students to study climate change, the history of anti-gay and anti-trans mobilizations, and alt-right demonstrations. We’ve been part of initiatives to start two new Five College certificates, in Queer and Sexuality Studies and in Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice. We’ve successfully pushed back against several social media campaigns to intimidate our faculty and urge the administration to fire people. The university and state attorney general’s office have been much better than most about defending DACA students and non-US-born employees. Our faculty has grown from 5 to 9, which has enabled us to teach many more classes. The final version of the PhD proposal has been turned in, positioning us to train the next generation of intellectuals who will create new spaces and courses in the academy.

And me? The just-started-walking baby is now going into third grade, and has his own strong feelings about Trump, sexism, racism, and separating immigrant children from their parents. I’ve got big plans about being just a scholar and a teacher again, and will be on sabbatical this year at the Five College Women’s Studies Research Center at Mount Holyoke College. And I’m thrilled that the department is in such capable hands, and that Banu Subramaniam will bring her characteristic energy, passion, and organization to the work of the chair. I can’t wait to see what happens next.

Laura Briggs

Faculty Updates and Comings and Goings

Miliann Kang is returning from a year on a Fulbright in South Korea, and stepped back into her role with the dean's office as Director of Diversity Advancement. **Angela Willey** returned from sabbatical this fall and celebrated the publication of an edited collection, *Queer Feminist Science Studies*. **Kiran Asher** was promoted to full professor, and joined the editorial collective of *Antipodes*. **Cameron Awkward-Rich** has a book of poetry coming out in 2019. **Banu Subramaniam** is the new chair of the department! **Laura Briggs** is on sabbatical to work on a new book on globalization, gender, the Caribbean, and the debt economy. **Fumi Okiji** is celebrating the publication of her book, *Jazz as Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited*. **Kirsten Leng** welcomed both a new baby and a new book, *Sexual Politics and Feminist Science: Women Sexologists in Germany, 1900-1933*. **Svati Shah** has been writing and doing archival and ethnographic research for two new monographs on sexuality in India, including one that is under contract with a feminist press (Women Unlimited) in New Delhi, India. We are thrilled to welcome **Laura Ciolkowski** who brings a broad background in scholarship and activism. See pages 4-7 for in-depth interviews with our new faculty!

Alex Deschamps started full time as Associate Dean for Recruitment, Advising, and Diversity at the Commonwealth Honors College this Fall, critical and important feminist work at the University. We look forward to continuing to work with her in the department and in her expanded new capacity. She will be sorely missed!

Congratulations **Lezlie Frye**, a new Assistant Professor in Disability Studies/Gender Studies at the University of Utah. Lezlie is a terrific scholar, teacher and colleague, and we will miss her! Best of luck! We will also miss **Stina Soderling** who has moved on to be a Lecturer at the Gender Institute for Teaching and Advocacy at the Metropolitan State University of Denver. Farewell Stina! Welcome to visiting scholar **Dr. Jie Li**. Jie Li is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at China Women's University who researches gender, family and childbirth.

Miliann Kang and graduate students **Laura Heston**, **Donovan Lessard** and **Sonny Nordmarken** coauthored an open access textbook: **Intro to Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies**. The book has been downloaded over 22,039 times since July 2012 and is one of the most widely used open access textbooks at UMass. Open Educational Resources (OER) were developed to make educational materials more accessible to students by eliminating cost and making the material available to people throughout the world to revise, remix, and redistribute. The book has been downloaded and been in courses throughout the U.S. and other countries ranging from the University of Indonesia to the University of Toronto and more. The book is available at (<https://press.rebus.community/introwgss/> or https://scholarworks.umass.edu/wost_ed_materials/1/). The project was funded by the UMass Libraries Open Education Initiative.

Award Winners

We are thrilled that our excellent faculty and students were recognized with nominations and awards for their research, teaching, scholarship and community service. Here are just a few of the highlights! **Kirsten Leng** received the College of Humanities and Fine Arts Outstanding Teaching Award, 2017-2018. **Cary Speck** won the Joyce Avrech Berkman Prize. **Katelyn Litterer** was awarded the Ann Ferguson Gender and Women Studies Scholarship. **Sonny Nordmarken** received a Campus Climate Improvement Grant to organize a Transgender Studies Mutual Mentoring Graduate Seminar. Our students got several other awards including **Nargis Aslami** being named a 21st Century leader! The WGSS book award at Amherst Regional High School was awarded to **Yanis Maher**. Congratulations all! Current students, keep your eyes out for award programs for leadership and activism, applications typically are late winter/early spring.

NEWS FOR STUDENTS

Undergrads: We have terrific new classes! Often electives are only offered once a year or even less often, so grab those fascinating classes when you see them. A few reminders for majors: Theory and Writing are offered every fall. The Integrative Experience is offered every spring. Be sure to check in with Karen Lederer about major and minor requirements, internship plans and more. Students can now put their pronouns on Spire. The Stonewall Center website has links to instructions and info.

Graduate Students: Application deadline for the Graduate Certificate in Advanced Feminist Studies is *March 1, 2019*. Changes to the certificate are forthcoming! Stay tuned to the website for more info!

Welcome Cameron Awkward-Rich!

Cameron Awkward-Rich received his PhD in Modern Thought and Literature from Stanford University in 2017. He was a postdoctoral associate in transgender studies with the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at Duke University. Currently, he is working on a book manuscript that brings together trans, disability, and affect theory to examine the politics and poetics of 'bad' feelings in transgender cultural production. Pieces from this project and others have appeared or are forthcoming in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *Science Fiction Studies*, and *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Disability*. Also a poet, Cameron is the author of *Sympathetic Little Monster* (Ricochet Editions, 2016) and *Dispatch* (Persea Books, 2019), winner of the 2018 Lexi Rudnitsky Editor's Choice Award



What are you most looking forward to about coming to our department at UMass Amherst?

I am very much looking forward to being a part of such a vibrant network of feminist scholars. Between the interdisciplinarity of the department and the opportunity to interface with like-minded scholars and artists throughout the Valley, there seems to be so much potential for rich conversations and collaborations.

What do you want students to know about you?

As an undergraduate, I double-majored Biology and English, I went on to get a PhD from Stanford University's program in Modern Thought & Literature, and I am now thrilled to find myself on faculty in UMass's deeply interdisciplinary WGSS department. All of this is to say that, for me, education has always been about wide-ranging, rigorous exploration. I like to follow ideas around, wherever they lead, and students should expect that my courses will reflect this orientation. I hope to meet you soon!

Please describe a recent project or current research.

My current project brings together transgender, disability, and affect theory to examine the politics and poetics of 'bad' feelings in transgender cultural production. More specifically: through an engagement with theoretical and literary texts, as well as the historical entanglement of gender non-conformity and disability in the US, my project rethinks the relationship between trans identity and mental illness.

While this project is a work of theory, and largely takes theory as its object, it comes out of some of my frustrations with and anxieties about trans life and politics in the present moment. That is, even though the last decade has been marked by increasing affirmation of trans people in liberal media, the law, and so on, we have also seen an increase in the (recorded) numbers of murders of trans women of color and a growing conservative backlash. Given the simultaneity of trans inclusion and abjection, I believe that it is vital for trans studies to think productively with the negativity that often marks trans life, as a trans studies that refuses to think with bad feelings is insufficient to the task of learning to live with and despite them. After all, rather than only impeding or confining trans life, thought, and creativity, bad feelings and mad habits of thought have been central to their development.

Is there anything else about your background, training or expertise you would like to share with us?

In addition to revising my academic manuscript, I am in the process of completing my second collection of poetry, which will be published in the fall of 2019. As do many in the long feminist tradition of artists/theorists, I believe that theory and art-making are complementary practices that, at their best, help us to think new thoughts, enlarge our sense of what is possible, and understand the world more sharply. While my role as a writer/scholar certainly influences all of my work, it

especially shapes my teaching. I love to incorporate creative projects into all of my courses, either as small assignments during the semester or as the option to pursue a creative final project, which I encourage students to take!

Is there anything else you can tell us about other activities you are or have been involved in including activist projects, hobbies, favorite books etc.?

During graduate school, I was deeply involved in the slam/spoken word/poetry community in the Bay Area, and even helped to run a biweekly reading series in San Francisco. It's been a year or two since I've been so involved in a literary community, but I'm looking forward to attending, participating in, and eventually organizing such events in the Valley. Also, I've taken a few tumbling/acrobatics classes over at SHOW Circus Studio in Easthampton this summer, and am hoping to keep it up!

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Welcome Laura Ciolkowski, Associate Director of the Graduate Program!

Laura Ciolkowski's teaching and research interests include gender and sexuality studies, feminist pedagogies, social justice movements, literary and cultural theory, the literature and theory of mass incarceration, and sexual and gender-based violence. Her work has been published in a range of journals, including: Twentieth Century Literature; Studies in the Novel; Genders; Novel: A Forum on Fiction; Public Books; and Victorian Literature and Culture. Her "[Rape Culture Syllabus](#)," published in Public Books, was widely shared and circulated by scholars and activists across the country. In addition to her scholarly research, Laura is a writer and book critic whose articles and reviews have appeared in the New York Times, the New Yorker Magazine, the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, the Boston Globe, the LA Times, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the International Herald Tribune, and the San Francisco Chronicle.

Laura has taught a wide range of WGSS courses over the last 15+ years as a faculty member at Columbia University, where she was also Associate Director of the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality. Laura is especially interested in and passionate about prison education and, as a faculty member at the Center for Justice at Columbia, she taught humanities and WGSS courses at Taconic Correctional Facility, a medium security women's prison in Bedford, NY, in a program for incarcerated students pursuing a college degree.

Laura received her PhD and MA in Literature from Brown University and graduated from Columbia University, Phi Beta Kappa and magna cum laude, with a BA in English and Comparative Literature.

Read on for a letter from her!

Greetings, UMass Community!

It is with great pleasure and much excitement about the WGSS road ahead at UMass that I take this opportunity to introduce myself. As Senior Lecturer and the new Associate Director of Graduate Studies, I will seek to fill the



massive shoes of the beloved teacher and scholar Lezlie Frye, who has moved on from UMass to the University of Utah. I will also attempt to bring my passion for teaching, collaboration, and feminist activism to my new home at UMass from my old home at Columbia University, where I was a faculty member in WGSS and also Associate Director of the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality.

There's something, for me, both wonderfully challenging and enormously inspiring about the opportunity to think with others about WGSS. What is WGSS? What does it enable us to do not just in the classroom, but also out in the world as scholars, creative thinkers, and activists? What are some of the ways we can use WGSS as a lens to engage deeply with the world, and to think critically about some of the major themes, questions, and political debates at the heart of WGSS research, scholarship, and activism, including: the ongoing fight for reproductive, racial, economic and environmental justice, LGBTQIA and dis/ability rights, and the fight against mass incarceration, among other things?

On the first day of virtually every WGSS course I have taught over the last 15+ years, I offer students (and also offer to myself, as a reminder) the following warning: *This course will change everything for you.*

I say this in every class, every semester, because WGSS is, for me, a deeply transformative practice. It ensures that what seemed natural or transparent or, quite simply, *unremarkable* will appear now to be not just *un-natural*, but also intimately entangled with complex webs of power, systems of inequality and difference, dynamics of culture and society. Angela Davis once wrote, "Politics do not stand in polar opposition to our lives. Whether we desire it or not, they permeate our existence, insinuating themselves into the most private spaces of our lives." I am devoted to writing, teaching, and thinking WGSS and am looking forward to doing these things together with you, as a member of the WGSS community at UMass, because the moment we begin this fundamentally important life-work, there is simply no turning back.

With appreciation, anticipation, and hopefulness for an exciting year ahead,
Laura

PS: Please come in to see me and introduce yourself! My office hours this semester are Tuesdays from 1-3pm in W475 South College. I'll be especially happy if you bring along your top 3 picks for things to do in the area. I'm a devoted cyclist and hiker (ask me about my near-disastrous winter trip in Colorado with my daughter and my malfunctioning GPS). I also have a very large, very lovable Labrador Retriever (Max), who would really appreciate your top 3 picks for things that he would enjoy here. My son is a senior at Tulane this year, but he would also love a few recommendations for things to do when he visits from New Orleans!



Welcome Fumi Okiji!

Fumi Okiji previously held the post of Black Arts Postdoctoral Fellow at Northwestern University. Her work cuts across critical theory, black feminist thought, performance studies and aesthetics. Fumi received her PhD from Royal Holloway, University of London in 2015. Her book *Jazz as Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited* was recently published by Stanford University Press.

What are you most looking forward to about coming to our department at UMass Amherst?

WGSS at UMass Amherst is a fantastic group of intellectually and politically engaged individuals. I really appreciate the broad range of interests and



commitments housed in the department, as I believe this provides fertile ground for thought and holds so much potential for exciting collaborative study and action.

This fall I am teaching on black music, gender and sexuality, and leading a graduate seminar on contemporary black feminist thought. I look forward to facilitating conversations about the contradictions of black life, its inherent queerness—conversations that often revolve around the figure of the black female. I am really interested in bringing to the fore the ambiguities we find in, and that actually help structure, black expressive products. These practices of music, film, dance, visual art and the everyday feature so prominently in our cultural landscape, and cannot help but intervene in socio-political concerns. It will be great to explore with students the difficulties and opportunities blackness presents critical thought.

What do you want students to know about you?

I am a musician-turned-academic, so my approach to study is very much committed to retaining some of the spontaneity and openness that characterizes the music that most excites me. I approach artistic practice and expressive form, more broadly, as modes of knowledge, and I attempt to employ such work as tools to help understand the inadequacies of our social life, and to spotlight alternatives.

Please describe a recent project or current research.

The project I am currently working on is, tentatively, titled *Abandon/ment*. This project is driven by a desire to think through alternatives to humanist fixations on preservation, permanence and certainty; and, relatedly, to disrupt the virtue that is made of perfection and of self-monumentalization, these centerpieces of contemporary work ethic. Rather than valorize “black excellence,” which oftentimes merely mirrors the “self” obsession of the mainstream, I ask how we might go about arranging our thoughts and actions to allow for radical receptivity of aspects of ourselves and of others that tend to be drowned out by that neoliberal mantra of self-improvement. Toward this I am looking to stage conversations between critical theory (first generation Frankfurt School, and contemporary feminist and queer), black feminist thought and music improvisation practices.

Is there anything else about your background, training or expertise you would like to share with us?

My teaching and research aspirations are, in large part, motivated by a desire to see a world in which difference and contradiction are considered attributes that we might embrace, even when such encroachment on our intellectual space makes us uncomfortable. I am committed to working in a way that is not mere tolerance, but creates an environment in which our differences (and the very fact of those differences) might be viewed as a means to generative ways of learning together.

Is there anything else you can tell us about other activities you are or have been involved in including activist projects, hobbies, favorite books etc.?

There are two practice-enabled research undertakings that form an important part of the *Abandon/ment* project. The first is a solo effort that looks to music improvisation for inspiration. I am wondering whether anything useful, politically or ethically, can be garnered by an injection of uncertainty into my writing, or whether this is mere gaslighting dressed up as criticism. I am also part of a fledgling “listening” collective, a group of academic-artist-friends from a range of disciplines that meets to practice radically open listening.

As I've mentioned, I am a musician as well as an academic, and performing continues to inform the work I do in the academy. Last year as part of Black Arts International, a conference-festival organized by Northwestern University, I was commissioned to write and perform a suite drawing from the practice-based research I was undertaking at the time. I really look forward to checking out the music and arts scenes here in the valley, and hope to find time to take part.





Our donors from December through the summer of 2018! Because of your donations we can help students, do programming, give T-shirts and a lovely breakfast to students as they complete the major, minor and graduate certificate and more. Thank you!

CAF America

Timothy Hogan

Helen Holmes

Sharani Rebecca Robins

Kath Cote

T. Kim Cromwell

Erin Jackson

Elizabeth Rensenbrink

Diane Lynch Curley

Kristin Damigella

Donna Kerner

Michelle Sheridan-Molovanski

M. Katherine Dwyer

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Deborah Litvin

Inez Sieben

Andrew Elder

Mary Hawkesworth

Dale Melcher

Susan Walker

Donna Grant

Cynthia Holmes

Janice Rayner

Anne Wiley

ALUM NEWS

As always, our grads are doing terrific things! Some of our alums have offered to help out current students, so if you see something interesting, contact us for more info. Sometimes we post a link about a grad on our Facebook page, so be sure to follow us to get the updates! <https://www.facebook.com/umasswgss/>

Congrats to all on degrees, books, films, new jobs and continuing great work!

Kelsey Barowich took the position of Coalition Organizer with the Yes on 3 campaign. This campaign was a nationally watched campaign to defend anti-discrimination protections for transgender people. Massachusetts was first with a statewide ballot on whether or not to uphold these protections. The Yes on 3 coalition has over 1,000 members from a variety of industries. She also recently became a board member for [UMass Women into Leadership](#). She writes, "I could not be more excited to continue to support this organization encouraging young UMass undergraduate women break into politics."

Lauren Brannon uses her feminist science studies daily as a newly minted Family Nurse Practitioner practicing in rural North Carolina. "Nursing is a fabulous career and we need more feminists providing direct care!" Lauren lives with her four year old daughter and her dog, Fran.

Kerry Chenausky is a Nurse Practitioner practicing at Belchertown Internal Medicine. "I am so excited to have the opportunity to practice in the Pioneer Valley after working as a Nurse Practitioner in New York for the last several years...In particular, I am happy to offer patient-focused women's and sexual health services in a primary care setting."

Julia Becker Collins sent an article from Boston Voyager Magazine where she talks about her background, education at WGSS, her work as Vice President at Vision Advertising and being the co-founder and former president of the MetroWest Women's Network. The entire article (with great pictures!) is linked on our facebook page.

Susan Crane received an MSc degree with distinction from Cass Business School, City of London University. Susan's degree focused on charity management with an emphasis on philanthropy and grant management.

Sarah Dunton is the Alliance Manager for Expanding Computing Education Pathways (ECEP), a National Science Foundation project. The job entails working with leadership teams in 16 states and the territory of Puerto Rico to ensure that all K-12 students, especially those underrepresented in STEM and computer science, have access to high quality computer science courses. While this work is focused on formal K-12 education policy, Sarah remains committed to informal education and is a consultant with Girls Inc. on a data science curriculum for high school girls.

MORE ALUM NEWS

Christina Knowles spent last year living in DC, working as the lobbyist for an organization that works to stop sexual assault and rape in the military. In February, Christina returned to Massachusetts and is the Finance Director for the "Yes on 3" ballot campaign. In this role, Christina is charged with "raising \$6 million to ensure that critical protections for the transgender community are not repealed when Massachusetts voters head to the polls on November 6."

Ellie Kozlowski wrote/directed/edited a film *Harvest* which won first place in the TWIST: Seattle Queer Film Festival last fall. *Harvest* "In a world where experience is a commodity and empathy is generated through consumption, people's lived experiences are bought and sold."

Emily Labarbera-Twarog just received tenure at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is an associate professor in the School of Labor and Employment Relations. Emily's book, *Politics of the Pantry: Housewives, Food, and Consumer Protest in 20th Century American* was published by Oxford University Press in 2017.

Nicole Lisa lives in Bangkok where she works for the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific as a technical editor. For her job, she has traveled to Surabaya, Indonesia and Moscow, Russia. She has also published her first novel, a young adult fantasy titled *The Desert Wall*, under the pen name Raf Morgan. The sequel will be published in the fall, as will an adult fantasy/mystery novel under the name R. Morgan.

Katherine Maich, M.S. in Labor Studies and Graduate Certificate in Advanced Feminist Studies, completed her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley in 2017, where her work won the Cheryl Allen Miller award from Sociologists for Women in Society. She joined the Center for Global Workers' Rights at the Pennsylvania State University as a Postdoctoral Scholar, and this fall will begin a new position as Assistant Professor of Labor and Employment Relations at Penn State.

Carrie Nagle is currently working at Suffolk University as the Assistant Director of the Moakley Center for Public Management, while she finishes her Masters in Business Administration in Healthcare. Carrie hopes to enter the Healthcare Administration field to ensure equal and quality care to patients.

Aidan Novo is working as a shelter manager and caseworker at Craig's Doors—A Home Association Inc. Craig's Doors is Hampshire County's only behavior based shelter; offering low barrier services to many of the community's most vulnerable adults experiencing homelessness.

Jan Passion and his partner are custodians for a breeding yellow lab for Guide Dogs for the Blind. He continues his consulting practice and was recently in Lebanon organizing a "Good Practices in Unarmed Civilian Protection" workshop that included 10 different NGO representatives and academics from 16 countries to discuss how to build nonviolent civilian response to violence and war. He was a founder of Nonviolent Peaceforce, which just received a multi-million dollar grant to address gender based violence in South Sudan. In his spare time he is a sailing captain on the San Francisco Bay.

Mariajosé Paton has worked as a residential counselor with Wediko Children's Services, done research in Los Angeles in Dr. Nilanjana Dasgupta's lab observing gender differences in middle schooler's interest in STEM, and worked as a Clinical Research Coordinator at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. This fall Mariajosé starts a Ph.D. in Clinical-Community Psychology at the University of South Carolina with a certificate in Women and Gender Studies and a master's thesis topic of examining gender differences in the participation in physical activities in after-school programs and associated health outcomes.

Josie Pinto is an organizer with Planned Parenthood New Hampshire Action Fund based in Concord, New Hampshire. Josie recruits and trains volunteers, campus leaders, and patients to take action around the state in the fight for reproductive justice. "During the legislation session this year, we killed 5 bills that would {have} rolled back abortion rights in New Hampshire, and we signed a bill into law allowing for a 12 month birth control prescription to be picked up in a single pharmacy visit with no co-pay." Josie added "I truly do not think I'd be where I am today without all I learned through WGSS and the Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice certificate. . . I have immense gratitude for the whole department. . ."



Andrea Pulido will be conducting research in Manila, Philippines as a Fulbright grant scholar. She will study how Filipino culture impacts the way sexual education is taught and interpreted, especially focusing on aspects of religion, patriarchy, and familial values. Andrea hopes to foster dialogue with local communities in Quezon City (a university-heavy neighborhood in Manila) to understand more about their reproductive needs and experiences.

Geidy Romero is an Outdoor Guide at Intrepid Academy at Hale--a joint venture of Hale and Boston Public Schools (BPS). In the summer Geidy was a summer camp director for Hale Outdoor Learning Adventures a free summer day camp program for 2nd-5th graders from BPS schools and urban neighborhoods. Campers attend academic classes and archery and sports. Geidy trained the high school and college age counselors and provided guidance, instruction and parent communication. "It has been a blessing for me to end up here where I can share most of what I know how to do. I have been challenged to utilize my knowledge of social injustice to better the lives of teens and younger children. I feel like I am combating and addressing social inequality by providing meaningful experiences for under privileged Boston students. I truly feel lucky to have come from a WGSS background where I learned my value and worth."



Jill Rubin, is practicing psychotherapy and is a relationship coach. Jill works with coaching clients all over the country and is currently living in California.

Emily Schnee is working with the Human Rights Campaign as the Communities and Volunteer Relations Coordinator. The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer civil rights organization, and envisions a world where LGBTQ people are ensured of their basic equal rights, and can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

Cait Simpson graduated with a focus on Performance Activism. Currently, Cait is the full time marketing director for a community based music and arts venue in Holyoke, Gateway City Arts. She is also a professional musician, poet, and performance artist. She performs along the east coast with her band *The Greys* and recently reimagined her senior thesis performance of her original show, "DIRTY WORDS" which was performed this past January for charity.

Paige Smith-Hogan lives in Bushwick, Brooklyn. She works as a receptionist during the day and does standup and sketch comedy at night. She is actively looking for jobs in nonprofits or student services.

Kaeleigh Terrill has been working as a full-spectrum doula and breastfeeding counselor for the past four years in New York City. She is currently training as an herbalist and midwife's assistant. Kaeleigh produces a reproductive health storytelling podcast and is currently taking new stories about birth, abortion, menstruating, sexuality, body literacy and anything else related to the wide spectrum that is reproductive health.

Becky Tew co-founded the Northampton Institute of Intersubjective Psychotherapy this past year. The Institute offers professional trainings, supervision and an advanced clinical fellowship for psychotherapists with the focus on intersubjective psychodynamic theory through a feminist and queer theory lens. Becky goes on to write "...many other psychotherapists see the value of integrating critical social theories into their work. My experience in WGSS has always been the foundation of my clinical work and I'm so excited to get to share these ideas with other colleagues."



If you are an alum who is a high school teacher or who works with youth, let us know if we can send you materials and/or visit to talk about WGSS at UMass.....a great place to go to school!

◆◆ Remember, send your updates for next Fall's newsletter by August 1, 2019 ◆◆

**“...the trick
of good
leadership
was “finding
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Last spring, I was invited to be the next Chair of WGSS. In the true feminist spirit of shared and collaborative departmental governance, I knew it was my turn. And so, I accepted, as graciously as I could, filled with genuine honor and humility for everyone’s faith in me, trepidation at the daunting responsibility that came with the appointment, and exhilaration for the many new and inspiring challenges ahead. The stream of advice has been swift! A friend quoted *A Bug’s Life*, “First rule of leadership: everything is your fault!” Others chimed in with cautionary notes and sage advice about the need for mindful living, mediating anxiety, nurturing patience, sharpening my crises management skills (because I’m told crisis never comes in the singular!), and the daunting task of learning to say “No”! Needless to say, I have never felt so mortal!

Jokes aside, of all the advice given to me and in my perusal of advice columns, the one that most resonated was that of John Naisbitt who suggested that the trick of good leadership was “finding a parade and getting in front of it.” And indeed, I feel I have done just that. The talented leadership of WGSS that has recently preceded me, Laura Briggs and Arlene Avakian, have nurtured a formidable WGSS department alongside collaborations and alliances with a vibrant feminist community at UMass, the Five Colleges, and the Pioneer Valley. After all, the Valley is the largest feminist academic community in the world, some say. WGSS is a phenomenal department – with its highly accomplished, thoughtful, skilled and generous faculty and staff, its super talented, interdisciplinary, creative graduate students constantly challenging the boundaries of disciplines, and the inspiring undergraduate students who enliven our classes with their passion and faith in the possibilities of a better world. Notes and news from our alums remind us each day about the brilliant and important work that a UMass feminist education has nurtured across the globe. For me, the large and active feminist community at UMass and the five colleges ensures many lively engagements on most issues each day. My faculty, staff, and student colleagues never fail to challenge revered assumptions of mainstream culture or academia, constantly equipping us with new theories and analyses of and for our times. In these days, when the news stupefies rather than enlightens, when pundits bemoan the death of the humanities, WGSS at UMass Amherst always reminds us that other worlds are possible, and worth working towards.

**Welcome
message from
new Chair,
Banu
Subramaniam**

At a time when some of our leaders are hard at work in blurring the boundaries of truth and falsity, WGSS has always insisted on the importance of rigorous analyses, and impassioned scholarship grounded in social justice, even while it remains suspicious of claims of universal truths claimed by the powerful. For us, tracking the circuits of power and its claims to knowledge is a central project. Feminist analyses of knowledge have never been easily swayed by ideological camps, or facile claims. Instead, they have always called for nuanced, historically grounded and politically situated accounts of knowledge. It is ironic that in these times of the alleged demise of the humanities, we have seen a resurgence of electoral resistance from the margins, Black Lives Matter, the #MeToo movement, queer and indigenous movements, and an energized citizenry that has seen an unprecedented influx of new candidates who challenge “politics as usual.” Each of these movements have inspired and been inspired by the academic growth of the fields of feminist, ethnic, queer, disability, and sexuality studies. WGSS has never lived and worked in a vacuum, but always in conversation with other academics and activists in the wider world. While I admit that reality often looks surreal, it is as much for the inflammatory conversations on twitter as the passionate advocacy from the margins. Feminists are fed up and fired up. This history of the past and the present of WGSS is a legacy of seeking to transform our knowledge practices. This is my genealogy, and my mission. I look forward to contributing to this grand mission of WGSS - of taking seriously how deeply grounded our theories are in the lived realities of lives across the globe.

**“These are
challenging yet
exciting times,
full of peril and
promise. In my
view, the spirit
exceeds the
challenges.”**

We have much that awaits us this year – mid-term elections, more budget cuts (despite a soaring economy), a volatile world, but also the addition of three new talented core faculty, many new affiliate faculty across campus, and new graduate and undergraduate students full of potential. These are challenging yet exciting times, full of peril and promise. In my view, the spirit exceeds the challenges. As I take on this task, I feel a depth of gratitude to all who have shaped this wonderful department, and the hard work of so many who have nurtured it over the years to such flourishing possibilities. It is an honor to be the incoming chair. I count on all of you to help steer the department, and the field of WGSS, as we craft new worlds and new possibilities through our words, our actions, our lives and our activism. Even while we face an onslaught on so many aspects of our lives that we hold dear, we are also witnessing an unprecedented resistance in a new generation of leaders. I look forward to working with all of you as we seek more feminist and just futures. All our lives depend on it.

Banu Subramaniam

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Inside: Messages from incoming and outgoing chairs, Laura Briggs and Banu Subramaniam!

What's happening online?

We keep our Facebook page active! So, if you're on Facebook, please find us and "like" us! If Twitter is your thing, our Facebook page tweets for us! We keep doing great events, and posting news on our website. Check it out: www.umass.edu/wgss

Donate Your Old Cell Phones for CWC in the WGSS Office

The Center for Women and Community is collecting old and used smartphones, tablets, and cellphones to raise funding for services including 24-hour crisis intervention, counseling, advocacy, support, and resources to survivors of sexual and relationship violence, as well as their friends and family. Services are available to folks of all genders and are free and confidential. All smartphones, tablets, and cellphones, no matter how old or damaged, are accepted. Call CWC at (413) 545-0800 for more information. If you are in crisis or in need of services, contact the 24hr hotline.

This newsletter is produced semi-annually. It is written and edited by Karen Lederer, and designed and produced by Linda Hillenbrand. Thanks to Cameron Awkward-Rich, Laura Briggs, Laura Ciolkowski, Linda Hillenbrand, Fumi Okiji and Banu Subramaniam for their contributions. Alums: Send us your news by August 1, 2019 for the fall edition!