We are phasing out the print edition of the Newsletter. If you would like to receive the digital edition to keep up with what's happening in the department, please reach out to Linda Hillenbrand at lindah@umass.edu to let us know how to reach you. If you would like to be featured in the next Winter Alumni Edition, email us at wgss-alum-news@umass.edu!
Dear WGSS compañer@s, s@this, and allies,

A month into becoming Chairs of WGSS, I have a renewed appreciation and deeper sense of gratitude for those who have done this job before me. I’m particularly grateful to Angie Willey for courage, endurance, wisdom, care, and leadership as interim chair last year. Her willingness to take on the role for a year enabled me to take a much-delayed research trip to India (where I got to meet up with WGSS Advisory Board member Sangeeta Kamat). And as I return to UMass, I have a renewed sense of appreciation for how WGSS faculty, staff, and students model the principles of democracy and abolition justice in all aspects of their quotidian lives and work.

As the COVID pandemic becomes endemic, we strive to advise and teach in ways that serve the needs of our students, and do research and writing that contributes to building better worlds. In other words, we strive to practice the feminist politics reflected in our curriculum and in WGSS’s mission. Ironically, the University and US academia in general does not seem to appreciate and learn from the interdisciplinary work of WGSS and departments such as ours, even as they profess to take diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice seriously. For example, our amazing and beloved Chief Undergraduate Advisor, Karen Lederer, retired in late 2020. Since that time we have been trying to convince UMass to replace her position, arguing that a professional undergraduate advisor is imperative to support the kind of interdisciplinary learning that we do and that other departments aim to do. We hope you will respond to the Alumni Call in this newsletter.

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But even as we struggle and strategize, we celebrate the many amazing achievements of our faculty, students, and alums (some of which are highlighted in this Newsletter), we continue to bring insightful speakers, host exciting events, and collaborate with allies across campus and beyond to amplify struggles for justice.

Our goals for this year include continuing our attempts to hire a black feminist theorist (or better yet do a cluster hire in Black feminisms!), get our PhD program started after long delays, and make space for some joyous noise together to celebrate and support you to do good work!

Thank you all, take good care and saludos!

Kiran
As many of you know, our former Chief Undergraduate Advisor, Karen Lederer, retired in the winter of 2020. Ever since, her essential job functions -- including facilitating orientation events, holding individual advising meetings, organizing graduation events, performing outreach and student recruitment, coordinating with career services, and clearing students for graduation -- have been redistributed to faculty and to our one remaining staff member, Linda Hillenbrand. At the same time, many of the duties that Karen undertook that went above and beyond -- internship coordination, her Career Course, the newsletter and alumni relations, and other tasks particularly key to an interdisciplinary major like WGSS-- have had to be drastically reorganized or have fallen by the wayside.

Simply put, without a professional Undergraduate Advisor we do not have the time, resources, or labor-power to run the department as well as we would like to, certainly not as well as we believe our students deserve. We know that WGSS has served as a ‘home’ to many students -- in particular women students, students of color, queer students, transgender students, and students with disabilities -- both because of the content of our course offerings and because we have been seen as a supportive space.

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We were able to be such a space in large part because we had a dedicated advisor who was available to students in ways that faculty, by virtue of our job descriptions, cannot be and who had nurtured necessary cross-disciplinary and even cross-college connections in the university and beyond. In order to continue being such a place, we have repeatedly argued that a professional Undergraduate Advisor is crucial for a radically interdisciplinary department such as WGSS. But the College of HFA has repeatedly refused our request saying that a department as small (read unimportant?) as ours does not need a professional Undergraduate Advisor.

We believe that UMass’ refusal to replace our Undergraduate Advisor not only harms our students, who do precisely the kind of work that UMass professes to aspire to. It also clearly violates the terms of our contracts by unduly increasing the workload of faculty and remaining staff. To address this inequity, the Department filed a grievance against the University in 2021. After months of stalling, a hearing was held in July 2022 at which faculty and students gave eloquent testimony to UMass administrators, stressing the importance of a dedicated professional undergraduate advisor and the inability of faculty to do that job while doing other aspects of our contracted work. Two months later, we learned that our grievance was denied. We have since filed a Level 2 grievance, which means the designee of the UMass President’s Office in Boston will come to campus to hear our appeal. This hearing is tentatively scheduled for October 28.

At this stage, we are collecting testimony from our alums about the vital role that a full-time Undergrad Advisor has played in our students’ trajectories through UMass. **If you have specific memories or stories about how Karen—in her advisory function—or other previous undergraduate advisors helped you to succeed in WGSS, at UMass, and beyond, please send them to chair-wgss@umass.edu.** Thanks, we very much appreciate it!
Apply for the WGSS Travel Scholarship to the Duke Feminist Theory Workshop (March 24-25, 2023)

The Duke Feminist Theory Workshop (FTW) brings together internationally recognized keynote speakers, faculty, and young scholars to engage in lively and focused debate.

Keynote speakers for 2023 are Roderick Ferguson (Yale University); LaMonda Horton-Stallings (Georgetown University); Sayak Valencia (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte). Co-Keynote speakers are Nat Raha (Poet and Independent Activist-Scholar) and Mijke van der Drift (Royal College of Art, London).

The Department of WGSS invites applications from UMass graduate students who have completed or who are currently enrolled in the WGSS Certificate in Feminist Studies and who are writing a dissertation on a topic in WGSS. Scholarship funds to attend the workshop are in the amount of $250 per student. Please note that these funds will subsidize, but likely will not cover the total cost of attendance at the workshop. ***Submission deadline: Friday, October 28th, 2022***

Questions? Please contact Laura Ciolkowski, Associate Graduate Program Director: lciolkowski@umass.edu

Undergraduate Advising

Kirsten Leng is back from sabbatical and looking forward to meeting and reconnecting with students in her role as Undergrad Advisor. "Perhaps," she says, "I can even introduce students and colleagues to my family's new, rambunctious puppy Muffin (in addition to her elder "sisters," Rosa and Rue!)

Undergrads: if you have questions regarding the major/minor, your progress towards degree completion, and/or course selection during November's enrollment period, you should reach out at wgss-advisor@umass.edu.
LOOKING TO SPRING 2023...

Apply to the Graduate Certificate in Feminist Studies!

The UMass Graduate Certificate in Feminist Studies is an independent interdisciplinary program designed to broaden and enrich disciplinary scholarship for students enrolled in a master’s or doctoral degree granting program. The purpose of the certificate is to enable students interested in feminist scholarship to pursue a coherent, integrated curriculum in the field and to credential them as knowledgeable in Feminist Studies, thus qualifying them for positions requiring such expertise. Students completing the certificate will have the opportunity to bring a feminist perspective to bear on the practices and ideas of their own discipline, thereby increasing the body of feminist theory and research. APPLICATIONS DUE: MARCH 1, 2023. More info available on our website.

Questions? Please contact Laura Ciolkowski, Associate Graduate Program Director: lciolkowski@umass.edu

Submit an essay to this year’s Joyce A. Berkman Award for Outstanding Graduate Feminist Scholarship!

The Joyce A. Berkman Award is presented annually by the Department of Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies. Essay submissions may be on any topic that falls under the broad rubric of feminist scholarship. Prize-winning essays will exhibit clarity, originality, and ambition. Please note: Applicants must be currently enrolled in or have completed the Graduate Certificate in Feminist Studies. More information, including how to submit, coming in spring 2023.
Svati Shah's guest edited special issue of the Anti-Trafficking Review is out this month! The entire issue, on "Migration, Sexuality, and Gender Identity," is free to read online. Sva is currently on sabbatical, spending the next few months at the University of Bergen in Norway, hosted by their Center for Women's and Gender Research.

Banu Subramaniam is on leave this academic year, having won UMass's Samuel F. Conti Faculty Fellowship.

Cameron Awkward Rich's new book, The Terrible We, will be out from Duke University Press in November.

Laura Ciolkowski was invited to join the 2022 Bard Prison Initiative Summer Residency. She was part of a cohort of emerging leaders in the field of college-in-prison representing public and private institutions, community colleges, small liberal arts schools, and large research institutions as faculty, program directors, newly hired practitioners, graduate students, alumni, and directly impacted people from eleven states and seven nations.

Angie Willey, alongside her collaborator Sara Giordano (Kennesaw State University), was awarded a nearly $600K National Science Foundation grant to launch a biology education research project. Over the course of three years, they will examine how basic biological sciences are taught at the college level, and the context in which that body of knowledge is created. The objective of this project is to bring together research from critical science and technology studies (STS) and related fields with extra-academic knowledges to directly impact basic biology education through the creation of critical, open-access, interdisciplinary biology education modules.

Miliann Kang is continuing to work on publicly-engaged scholarship, most recently co-authoring with C.N. Le on “Asian American mothers confront multiple crises of pandemic, anti-Asian hate and caregiving” in The Conversation. This research will be part of the last chapter in her book, Mother Other: Race and Reproductive Politics in Asian America, which she is completing soon for the University of California Press. In the meantime, her previous book, The Managed Hand: Race, Gender and the Body in Beauty Service Work has been translated into Chinese by colleagues at Beijing Normal University and hopefully will be out soon.
The new Trans/Queer Studies Colloquium hopes to be an informal space for centralizing the disparate web of trans/queer studies across the colleges. To be added to our mailing list please email cawkwardrich@umass.edu
Asian American Feminisms Speakers Series

Judy Wu, U.C. Irvine
Thur. Sept. 29, 2022 / 4pm - 5:15pm
“First Woman of Color in Congress: Patsy Takemoto Mink - The Intersectional Feminist Behind Title IX”
Virtual Event

Ananya Chatterjea
Thur. Oct. 27, 2022 / 4pm - 5:15pm
“A Conversation with Ananya Chatterjea on the Transformative Power of Dance and Social Justice”
Virtual Event
*Performance on Thur., Nov. 3, 7:30pm, Fine Arts Center

Grace Cho, CUNY Staten Island
Thur. Nov. 10, 2022 / 11:30am - 12:45 pm
Talk on Tastes Like War
Commonwealth Honors College Events Hall

Linh Nguyen, Univ. of Washington
Thur. Nov. 10, 2022 / 4pm - 5:15pm
“Shattered Relationalities, Fetishizing Trauma and the Task of Representation”
Virtual Event
