



### **Message from the Chair, Banu Subramaniam**

We live in extraordinary times. I'm convinced that sometime in the future, we who lived through these surreal years will be asked to account for our time. What did we do about the growing injustice, the rampant corruption, and widespread hate, and the willful spread of misinformation? It is a heavy burden. Of course, I find myself having these conversations with people wherever I travel, and with colleagues, friends, and family. After having served one year as Chair, I have come to see up close what an extraordinary WGSS community we have built! I feel lucky to have found a home in WGSS at UMass, because it has proved a particularly thoughtful, well informed, and reflexive space filled with insightful, astute, and trenchant analyses of our times. Each day conversations with my colleagues – faculty, staff and students – give me new perspectives into the world. They have collectively helped me understand the news and its vituperative rants. As some point out, there is a consistent tendency in the popular media to characterize our times as unprecedented, i.e., we have never seen anything like this in the history of the planet! I also hear deeply dystopic thinking from many who believe we are barreling towards a planetary apocalypse. Others are filled with a deep sense of paralysis in feeling both vulnerable and powerless. These are understandable reactions. Indeed, historians remind us that many generations characterize their times as unique and unprecedented. Yet, thinking through the history of feminist theory and feminist social movements reminds us that history is never linear. History is never uniformly progressive or regressive. History ebbs and flows over time. Feminist scholarship teaches us to always locate our analyses contextually.

Trying to make sense of the world is what WGSS has always done, and done well. All of us in the department have faced these questions in our classes, and we have taken them seriously, addressed them head on, fueled engaged discussions, and reflected on the anger, frustration, and bewilderment that students report. In responding to the prevailing global anxieties around us about the news, Karen Lederer and I taught a course “WGSS Reads the News” in Fall 2018. The students in the class were in many ways self-selected since they were, like us, all obsessed with the news! We developed this class because we thought it important to bring feminist analyses to students through a perusal of the news. But I also learned so much from them! I was moved by the students’ passion, by their outrage, optimism and activism, and above all by their humanity. They refused the easy polarizing debates we see in the news – where we pit foreigners against natives, refugees against immigrants, the religious against the secular. They countered the cynicism of modern politics with engaged and positive action – in social justice movements, on national and local politics, on election campaigns, on issues close to home such as college affordability, reproductive justice, queer politics, and the rise of hate on our campus.

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While we had not anticipated the Kavanaugh hearings, we had previously invited the Interim Co-Director of the UMass Counseling Center to the class. It was sobering to hear that counseling services had been inundated with calls for their services, even though we were only a few weeks into the semester. We also dipped into the deep UMass well of resources to invite the pre-law advisor to give us a primer on the constitution. How illuminating that was! Again, and again in the class, I was reminded how national and world events translate into issues close to home. This is always what WGSS has done so well, to link for our students the intimate connections between the local and global, and the critical importance to historicize our world. The power of analyzing the news together was something we all craved. So, we continued our discussions during the Spring as a 1 credit class. While this is one class, I have heard from my colleagues that they have had similar conversations in their classes, as all of us grapple with understanding our political moment.

As Chair, I have often reflected on the growth of WGSS on this campus. We began over four decades ago with one desk and chair in the basement of Goodell; we are now a department with ten faculty, a Graduate Certificate program, and a vibrant undergraduate program with majors and minors. Our students continue to express some of the highest “student satisfaction” rates among all majors on campus. And we are in the midst of getting our proposal for a PhD program through its final administrative approval process. WGSS is thriving, engaging a new generation of students

who are eager to take control of their world and their futures. Being Chair has also brought me in closer touch with our remarkable faculty. As you will see in our faculty news, our faculty continue to produce award winning books and articles, and influence scholarship nationally and internationally, as well as on campus. I am delighted to report that Kirsten Leng was awarded tenure and promotion this year, a well-deserved recognition of her brilliant work. Our faculty teach exciting and cutting-edge research that animates our students. As you will see in the alum news page, so many of our graduates have gone into the world to transform it in small ways and large. We are so proud of you, and hope you will keep in touch so your accomplishments can inspire current students to imagine and chart new futures for WGSS. In these times, more than ever, I am reminded each day of the power of WGSS as a community, and how its commitment for justice should guide us to find a path towards empathy, understanding, peace and justice in the world.




## Thanks to donors and alums!

We are grateful to be supported by so many people who graduated from the department, as well as other UMass alums and friends. We are always working to create a stronger alum network, calling in our fantastic graduates to connect to current students. If you would like to be more involved in the department, and part of some new initiatives, do let us know.

Every month we are honored by the generous donations people give to the department. We use these donations for enhancing WGSS programming, student support, special events, alum outreach, and WGSS T-shirts for our new graduates, and the like. We love it when donors and/or grads of our program return to visit us. Come see our beautiful new space in South College and see how much the campus has changed! We would love to connect with you, so please let us know when you can visit.

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Mariana Delmonte-Gladstone  
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& Lucian Wagner  
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Have you visited our website recently? We've added a few new banner pictures (the fist coming home!), a page devoted to journals in which our faculty have published their work (with links), and a page of published books, presented in order by publication date. A video from keynote speaker, Dean Spade, at our conference in spring 2018 was just added. We also have many fill-in forms for students, and helpful links for undergrads.

## News Briefs

### Trans Studies Working Group

Transgender Studies is a rapidly growing interdisciplinary field. The Trans Studies Working Group provides an opportunity for grad students to get feedback on their projects (which include masters theses, prospectus proposals, etc.) and also connect with other trans graduate students. You don't need to be trans to participate. In 2018-2019, 7 students presented from 6 different departments! Typically, meetings are every three to four weeks, usually on a Friday afternoon, on campus. To join the list-serv - or if you'd like to present your work - contact the department [wgss-dept@umass.edu](mailto:wgss-dept@umass.edu) and keep an eye on our events. We look forward to seeing you.

### Graduate Certificate Changes! NEW 5-course Certificate in Feminist Studies

We have introduced exciting innovations to our Graduate Certificate. The new 5-course certificate has replaced the 4-course plus research project. Now, in addition to our required core courses (*Feminist Theory* and *Issues in Feminist Research*), students will take three electives in order to complete the certificate. All electives for the certificate must fulfill at least one of the following categories: Transnational Feminisms, Critical Race Studies, and/or Sexuality Studies. This is to ensure that the certificate program builds directly into the curriculum an analysis of the anti-racist politics of racial justice movements and that it explores the critical importance of women of color to feminism. This requirement also ensures that transnational feminisms, critical race studies, and sexuality studies will be a fundamental part of the WGSS field of inquiry. For more information, contact Graduate Director Miliann Kang ([mkang@umass](mailto:mkang@umass)) or Associate Graduate Director Laura Ciolkowski ([lciozkowski@umass](mailto:lciozkowski@umass)).

**Application Deadline: March 1, 2020**

## Events 2019-2020

It was great to have such a nice turnout at our welcome back reception in mid September. This fall we have been pleased to co-sponsor "*Legends of Stonewall: Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Marsha P. Johnson*" as well as "*Visions of Labor: Film and Worker Voices*". Both of these programs took place in early November, sponsored by our campus colleagues.

### Spring 2020 Welcome Reception

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

12-1:30 p.m. ● W401 South College

Start the spring semester with a convivial gathering over light lunch in the WGSS office. All are welcome.

### Symposium to Honor Alex Deschamps! ● Friday, March 27, 2020

Please save the date for an exciting symposium on "**Critical Pedagogies of Race and Gender.**" The event is in honor of the retirement of Professor Alexandrina Deschamps and will recognize her tremendous contributions to the University. The symposium is from 10:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (including a reception beginning at 4:30 p.m.) and will take place in the Commonwealth College Events Hall. Speakers include Michelle Rowley, Jennifer Nash and alums Allia Matta, Shelley Perdomo and Rani Varghese. The event is free and open to the public. We hope you will join us. More details to follow. Let us know you're coming by adding your name to this [Google Form](#).

Visit our website and subscribe to the listserv for other events. Ideas in the works include an event for alums and a movie night!

## Faculty and Staff News

We asked the faculty and staff for updates on their activities. Wow people are busy! If you are reading this on paper and want to follow the links, look for the electronic version of the newsletter on our website. <https://www.umass.edu/wgss/newsletters-wgss> Go to our home page [www.umass.edu/wgss](http://www.umass.edu/wgss) and click on “about”.

### **Kiran Asher**

Writing a byline for a newsletter is a little like scrawling a line of greeting to friends and family in a card: one must dodge the banal or bizarre to strike the perfect note of connection. Here's this year's attempt: Among the many highlights of another full year were teaching *Conversations with the Ghost of Marx* to a great group of undergraduates and graduates, finally publishing a piece that I had been working on for a decade (“After Post-Development: On Capitalism, Difference, and Representation”), bringing feminist and anti-colonial insights to my editorial work for *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*, and getting my first tattoo with my nieces to honor my beloved mother who passed away in 2018.

### **Cameron Awkward-Rich**

I have a review essay, “Thinking Black [Trans] Gender,” forthcoming in *American Quarterly* (September 2019). Last year, I presented work at the National Women's Studies Association and Modern Languages Association; at the latter, I organized a panel on trans literature and literary criticism that was very well-received. Also, I gave an invited talk for the English Department at the University of Virginia. In addition, I put the finishing touches on my second collection of poetry, *Dispatch*, which will be released in December 2019. Last spring, I had the opportunity to read work from the collection at various venues, including the Sarah Lawrence Poetry Festival and the Association of Writers and Writing Programs annual conference, at which I was a featured reader. Additionally, I was a Visiting Poet at this year's Juniper Institute.

### **Laura Briggs**

In addition to spending last year in residence at the Five College Women's Studies Research Center, I did a number of talks around the country and more locally. I insanely agreed to write a new book, *Taking Children: An American History of Terror*, in five months, and it was due in early September, so I did not start the year rested from my sabbatical! I also got a faculty research grant to do research for a new book focusing on debt, imperialism, and slavery which takes a critical look at the history of debt in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean more broadly. I co-edited a special issue of *Meridians* on Radical Transnational Feminisms, and look forward this year to moderating a plenary at NWSA (National Women's Studies Association) on Reproductive Justice. I am glad to get back to teaching.

### **Laura Ciolkowski**

My chapter “Narrating Captivity, Imagining Justice: Gender, Monstrosity, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in the Prison Classroom” is forthcoming in Sheila Smith McKoy and Patrick Elliot Alexander's *Teaching Literature in Prison*. I received a 2019-20 Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Faculty Fellowship in support of the development of a team-taught Service Learning course (with Toussaint Losier/Afro-Am), tentatively titled: “Re-Imagining the Carceral State.” I also received a Mutual Mentoring Micro-Grant for my project “Pedagogy, Program Building, and Prison Education.” In addition, I am Lead Humanities Scholar on the feature-length documentary film project *When Voices Carry*. The project was just awarded a Massachusetts Humanities Grant. Last spring, I was a fellow at the Inside-Out Prison Exchange, an educational program with a focus on innovative pedagogy, collaboration and dialogue among incarcerated (inside) and non-incarcerated (outside) students in the prison classroom.

### **Linda Hillenbrand**

I still can't believe I passed 26 years on campus! The national conversation about higher ed and unions has trickled to UMass Amherst in different ways. Staff on campus are watching jobs disappear to centralization in the President's

Office in the areas of HR and Finance. The new Paid Family Medical Leave Act will see some equality in terms of leave for Massachusetts. And we're seeing some good changes in IT (information technology) and that helps us all do our jobs better! On a happy note, I became a grandmother on January 5th of this year! Henry is walking and talking and charming everyone.

### **Miliann Kang**

I spent the early part of the summer at Chinese University of Hong Kong working on a Worldwide University Network Grant on gender, work, family and mobility, and helped organize and then presented at a related conference. C.N. Le and I also had a residency at Beijing Normal University where we each presented a series of talks on our research and met many amazing grad students and colleagues.

I published a co-authored article with Hye Jun Park at Seoul National University and Juyeon Park at UMass in July in *Gender, Work and Organizations*, "Teachers as good mothers, mothers as good teachers: Functional and ideological work-family alignment in the South Korean teaching profession," which is based on my Fulbright research project. The American Sociological Association released a list of the most downloaded articles in 2018 and an article which I co-authored with one of our former certificate students, Kat Jones on tattooing is 25<sup>th</sup> on the list!

I co-authored a review of the film *Crazy Rich Asians* with C.N. Le, Director of the Asian and Asian American Certificate Program at UMass, in *Sociological Forum*. I am continuing my position as Director of Diversity Advancement for HFA and am part of an ADVANCE grant to support women faculty of color.

I am also serving on the advisory board for the Public Engagement Project and Graduate Program Director for the certificate program.

### **Karen Lederer**

Last year I co-taught a course on critically watching the news which meant I could justify my not necessarily healthy habit of reading too many newspapers and watching too much news. It was great fun to discuss both the topics and the coverage with a group of thoughtful students and Banu. I wrapped up close to 5 years as one of the union reps on the labor/management PSUMTA (Professional Staff Union, Massachusetts Teachers Association) sick bank board. This board can grant union members extended paid time off for their own or family illnesses and parental leave. This year I am teaching a First Year Seminar on Careers and Liberal Arts. I'm also a member of the Leverett Community chorus which typically does a concert and a benefit in the spring and the fall. As the director often comments, in these times it is good to do something productive and positive with other people. Along those lines, even though I'm not a strong singer, last spring I gathered my courage and volunteered to sing a few labor songs in a small group (4 people, not 70+ like the chorus) at the "Building Bridges" event on campus.

### **Kirsten Leng**

I'm currently working on two special issues with my colleague, the fabulous Katie Sutton (Australian National University), that are coming out later this year. Both address "new directions in the history of sexology," and will appear in *Gender and History* and the *History of Human Sciences*. I have an article in the *Gender and History* Special Issue entitled "Historicizing 'Compulsory Able-bodiedness': The History of Sexology meets Queer Disability Studies." In addition, Fumi Okiji, Marianna Ritchey (Music), Sara Jackson (LLC) and I received a Mutual Mentoring Team Grant for 2019-2020 to explore "interdisciplinary performance studies". I will be an Interdisciplinary Studies Institute Fellow in 2019-2020 and presented work at the American Studies Association in Honolulu, and the German Studies Association in Portland, Oregon, in Fall 2019.

### **Fumi Okiji**

I co-authored an article to be published in *South Atlantic Quarterly* (January 2020), a collaborative effort with my comrades of Le Mardi Gras Listening Collective. We have been invited to be part of a performance philosophy

symposium at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, in London in the spring. My essay, "Onanism, handjobs, smut: Performances of self-valorization," will appear in the *Routledge Companion to Performance Philosophy*. I have also been invited to contribute an essay on Adorno and music for the *Oxford University Press Adorno Handbook*. I am a member of a Mutual Mentoring Team for 2019-2020 that will explore "interdisciplinary performance studies." The other members of the team are Kirsten Leng, Marianna Ritchey (Music), Sara Jackson (LLC).

In addition, I will be presenting a keynote address for the CUNY Graduate Center's conference on the late jazz musician, Cecil Taylor. I will also be presenting at the German Studies Association and NWSA conferences. I have been invited to give talks at the University of Virginia, Cornell and the New School during this academic year. I am developing a new musical work with Olie Brice, a long-time collaborator.

### **Svati Shah**

In 2019 I guest edited a special issue of *SAMAJ: South Asian Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*. It was a wonderful opportunity to curate work by younger scholars of South Asia who are working in queer, trans and feminist studies. (<https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/4925>)

The theme of the issue was "Sedition, Sexuality, Gender and Gender Identity." We were trying to open up questions of governance in relation to sexuality and gender politics, and what it means, for example, to see greater freedoms on the basis of sexuality, for example, but fewer freedoms for those working to end extractive capitalism. I also had the opportunity to be part of an experts group meeting outside of Bergen, Norway to evaluate the Comparative Research on the Poverty Programme, a global research consortium on poverty that is based at the University of Bergen and has been done in partnership with the International Science Council.

### **Banu Subramaniam**

I survived my first year as Chair of WGSS! Also thrilled to have my new book out, *Holy Science: The Biopolitics of Hindu Nationalism*. It explores the rise of Hindu nationalism, and especially how Hindu mythology is increasingly read as evidence of an ancient science. It is exciting to have it out in the world. I started a new project on Decolonizing Botany, where I'm exploring the colonial roots of the science of Botany and how histories of race and gender are deeply entangled with scientific studies of plants. I have long been wary of the language of invasive plants and the xenophobic rhetoric that often accompanies them. This work came forcefully to mind with practical effect when I spent much of the summer tending my long neglected garden, and where the naturalized periwinkle or *Vinca minor* had taken over the garden over recent years. It reminded me both of the vibrancy of the natural world, but also the profound consequences of the damage we have done to our ecosystems. There is something deeply wonderful and cathartic (although exhausting) about spending hours close to the ground. Now I'm back in the crouched position staring at the computer monitor all year!

### **Angie Willey**

This summer I finished up a special issue of *Imaginations: A Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies* with colleague Kim Tallbear. The issue, "Critical Relationality: Indigenous, Queer, and Multispecies Belonging Beyond Settler Sex and Nature," can be found here: <http://imagination.gledon.yorku.ca/?p=12084>. The contributors are an impressive group of scholars and artists at different stages in their careers, rethinking relational ethics, eros, and belonging in truly exciting ways. (I can't wait to teach it!)

I also finished preliminary research for and submitted an NSF grant with colleague Sara Giordano. The grant, dryly titled "Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Biological in Conversation with Basic Biology Textbooks through a Critical STS Lens," proposes bringing the insights of critical theory, science and technology studies (STS), and reproductive, environmental, and disability justice movements to basic biology education in the form of an interdisciplinary textbook designed to be used in high school and college biology classes. In addition to celebrating the launch of "Critical Relationality" and the submission of my grant last summer, I prepped my new courses, "Sex, Love, and Relationships" and "Theorizing Queer Feminism," and played outside with friends, especially my pup companion, Billie.

We are thrilled to welcome visiting scholar **Marlise Matos** from Brazil for the fall semester. Marlise is teaching a cross graduate/undergraduate class “Human Rights and Violence Against Women in Brazil and the U.S.” Marlise is Associate Professor of Political Science at Federal University of Minas Gerais and Executive Director of NEPEM – Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisa sobre a Mulher (Center for Studies and Research on Women).

We are also excited that **Rachel Briggs** and **Adina Giannelli** will be teaching for us! Rachel recently finished her Ph.D. in Communications along with our own WGSS Certificate and is currently teaching for the writing program. Rachel is teaching “Villians in Film: Issues in Representation” this spring. Adina started at Holyoke Community College as an Assistant Professor in the Criminal Justice Department this fall. She taught an online course in the Fall for WGSS and will teach “Gender and Difference: Critical Analyses” this spring, along with an online section of our introductory course, “Gender, Sexuality and Culture.” We’re glad to have them back on board!

## Yes! A new crop of books by our faculty!

**Dispatch** • By Cameron Awkward-Rich • Persea Books December 2019

Winner of the 2018 Lexi Rudnitsky Editor's Choice Award, Cameron Awkward-Rich's second poetry collection reckons with—while endeavoring to love in the shadow of—American violence. Set against a media environment that saturates even our most intimate spaces, these poems grapple with the news of racial and gendered violence in the United States today and in its past, asking: *What kind of revisions will make this a world—a story—that is concerned with my people's flourishing? How ought I pay attention, how ought I register perpetual bad news without letting it fatally intrude?*



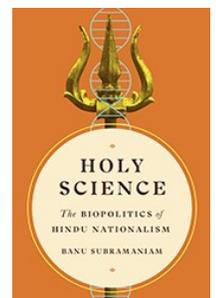
**Taking Children: A History of American Terror** • By Laura Briggs • University of California Press May 2020

*Taking Children* provocatively argues that the United States has taken children for political ends for four hundred years. Black children, Native children, Latinx children, and the children of the poor have all been seized from their families. As Laura Briggs' sweeping but concise narrative shows, the practice existed on the auction block, in the boarding schools designed to pacify the Native American population, in the growth of the foster care system to put down the Black freedom movement, in the US's anti-Communist coups in Central America, and in the moral panic about “crack babies.” In chilling detail we see how Central Americans were made into a population that could be stripped of their children and that every US administration beginning with Reagan has put children of immigrants and refugees in detention camps. Yet this history of terror has met resistance from every generation, and Laura Briggs challenges us to stand and resist in this powerful corrective to American history.



**Holy Science: The Biopolitics of Hindu Nationalism** • By Banu Subramaniam • University of Washington Press 2019

Behind the euphoric narrative of India as an emerging world power lies a complex and evolving relationship between science and religion. Evoking the rich mythology of comingled worlds where humans, animals, and gods transform each other and ancient history, Banu Subramaniam demonstrates how Hindu nationalism sutures an ideal past to technologies of the present to make bold claims about the Vedic Sciences and the scientific Vedas. Moving beyond a critique of India's emerging bionationalism, this book explores the generative possibility of myth and story, interweaving compelling new stories into a rich analysis that animates alternative imaginaries and “other” worlds of possibilities.



## **Engaging Feminist Futures: Reflecting on the 2019 Feminist Research Panel Series**

### **By Sandra Joy Russell, PhD candidate in Comparative Literature and Certificate Student**

For the *Spring 2019* Issues in Feminist Research Seminar, Professors Miliann Kang and Banu Subramaniam organized a series of public panels featuring UMass faculty across departments and disciplines—all of whom are engaged with feminist research. As one of the course objectives was to further orient graduate students within the big, ongoing questions in feminist research, the panels provided a sense of how and in what capacities feminist scholarship is happening on our campus. Moreover, they aimed to highlight the multifaceted ways in which feminist knowledge is being produced within and beyond WGSS, all while generating discussion around the course themes.

The seminar was comprised of graduate students from diverse disciplines and backgrounds, including Education, Economics, Communication, Political Science, Spanish and Portuguese, African American Studies, English, and Comparative Literature. The questions “what is feminist research?” and “what does it mean to do feminist research?” were at the heart of our weekly conversations, and often posed to each panel as an opening question. While, on the surface, these prompts may seem simple for those who do feminist work, for both the students and panel participants alike they proved to be far murkier and, at times, inconclusive.

As I entered this course with some substantial background in both WGSS as a discipline and how it fits within my own work in Comparative Literature and Slavic Studies, I was quickly reminded that the hard work lies ahead. As with any meaningful engagement with a body of knowledge, these panels simply scratched at the tip of the epistemological iceberg—often producing more questions than answers.

The range of responses from the panelists addressed the intersections of the methodologies of the speaker’s discipline and their feminist intervention. For instance, Professor of Archaeology, Whitney Battle-Baptiste, referred to what she called, “promiscuity in disciplinarity,” as a way of thinking within, between and beyond disciplines. It is, she argued, “the changes we go through within our own discipline as well as outside” that promote transformative research, as she encouraged graduate students to “try to write within and outside of the discipline” so that it can reach different audiences. WGSS Professor, Kiran Asher, commented on the high stakes of feminist research: “To complicate and interrogate the concept of feminist research means to *dislocate*. It emerges from multiple locations simultaneously—we must disrupt the notion that it comes from the West.”

These were two responses among many that captured the thorniness of what feminist research really is, what it can achieve, and who is able to do it. As I see it, in order to confront persistent racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia—which are themselves knowledge systems—feminist work must produce new knowledge that moves between temporalities, localities, and disciplines. Its futures are bound up in and reliant on our sustained commitment to the questions of “what” and “how,” as they steer the rudder of our work toward more radical and liberatory practices. Or, as Kiran Asher articulated in response to our guiding questions: “It can’t address everything, yet it must address everything”—a fitting paradox for feminist research.

## **Critical University Studies Symposium**

### **By Kevin Henderson, Phd candidate in Political Science and WGSS Certificate Student**

We are hoping to start the PhD program in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies at UMass Amherst soon! The proposal is working its way through the formal administrative process of approval, and it is exciting to build on our already thriving graduate certificate program and enter this exhilarating new phase in our department. As part of the deliberative process, we held a conference, “Critical University Studies and the Futures of Academic Feminisms” on May 3-4, 2019 and invited influential thinkers to ask what it means to start a PhD in WGSS at this time.

For the symposium, we wished to create a space to discuss graduate student training in the context of the larger changing intellectual, political, and economic environment we face in higher education. We wanted to stage conversations that would engage ongoing debates about gender, race, sexuality, class, and power in relation to the

critical and creative impulses of WGSS education. What desires, hopes, and aspirations are motivating our investment in building a new program? How do legacies of colonialism, racism, and sexism shape what we believe possible in the academy? Who do we imagine as our future students? We invited feminist scholars from across the United States to think with us. In particular, we invited scholars who did not currently work in PhD-granting programs to avoid the temptation to simply reproduce what is already out there. Over two days, we held four panels that framed these core concerns from a variety of angles: Afterlives of Colonialism; Visions of WGSS; Working While Feminist in the Privatized University; and Evasion, Theft, and the Neoliberal University. For details, see: <https://www.umass.edu/wgss/event/critical-university-studies-and-futures-academic-feminisms>

A central goal and vision for Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies that guided the organizers of this conference was to not simply replicate ourselves or our training in the future program. Our faculty had talked at length, among ourselves and with colleagues in existing programs, about perspectives on what works and what does not, in graduate training in and beyond WGSS. Our idea for the conference was to stage conversations that support imagining – and building - something different. Throughout the weekend, we envisioned a program that can meet the needs of many kinds of students, including those less likely to be childless and young. We asked: How can many different kinds of intellectuals cohabitate? How can we expand the narrow form of the PhD dissertation into one that is more capacious, where there is room for experimental, artistic, and activist iterations? How can we move beyond narrow educational metrics of “student success?”

We also envisioned a program that takes into account the politics of differential funding, student debt, and the feminization of many kinds of academic labor. Our panelists Lyko Day and Lisa Armstrong reminded us about the increase in crushing student debt. Despite data to the contrary, students underappreciate the value of the humanities and especially, a feminist education. Karen Cardozo reminded us that aspirational labor (doing labor with the hope that you may one day get paid to do what you love) is at an all-time premium, including within the university. Elora Chowdhury pointed out that many WGSS faculty typically hold multiple appointments (more work) and are routinely called upon to do more service work, especially, as Sushmita Chatterjee specified, as “diversity workers” in the university. Mari Castaneda asked us to think about what it means to do feminist administrative work, and many panelists, including Priya Kandaswamy, suggested there is much to learn about organizing from labor movements outside the academy. Steve Dillon challenged us to think about how we might all work *less*, and Natasha Warikoo reminded us that women graduate students often do not pursue academic careers because they see first-hand the heavy work load of their advisors.

Histories of colonialism and slavery, and how those histories have shaped the contemporary university was a theme across panels. Land-grant colleges and universities such as ours produce a notion of “the public” that relies on a previous history of land dispossession and erasure of indigenous land claims. As Janet Jakobsen argued, the university, its calendar, and its orientation around competitiveness is an enactment of Christian secularism. Yet, as Rebecca Herzig reminded us, the university existed three centuries before the word “future” was invented and thus gives us hope that we may think and act outside the disciplining and extractive frames of normative futurisms and neoliberal logics. We take seriously the colonial roots of our field and of the university and acknowledge challenges it presents to imagining other worlds and other ways of being together.

We envision a program that takes up race as central to the project of Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies. Not only is race one of the key historical conditions of possibility for the very intelligibility of women, gender, and sexuality as categories, but race and racism also affects who is present in the WGSS classroom. As Tara Bynum and Biko Caruthers both articulated, we must insist that this new program will be a place where black women belong.

Finally, Sandy Alexander asked, can responsibility be taken up with hope? How might the cultivation of hope be a feminist project? All of us at the conference were inspired by the idea that, as feminists, we can take responsibility for an institution with hope, excitement, and joy. Together, we will bring a kind of hopeful responsibility into the on-going work of building our PhD program.

## Alum News

We were thrilled to hear from alums of our **Graduate Certificate in Feminist Studies** about their new projects. **Allia Matta** and **Stephanie Evans** were each featured in the publication *Diverse: Issues In Higher Education*. Our students make their mark! Follow the links to learn more about the scholarship and personal background of these amazing WGSS certificate alums!

**Allia Abdullah-Matta**, Associate Professor of English at LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York, helped launch a Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Option in Liberal Arts. For the complete article by Tiffany Pennamon: <https://diverseeducation.com/article/134002/#.XBkYUzd-mbs.email>

**Erika Arthur** is a Policy Analyst in the Justice Policy Program at the Cutler Institute for Health & Social Policy at the University of Southern Maine. Erika co-authored the Maine Sexual Assault Kit Study, available here: <http://justiceresearch.usm.maine.edu/>. Erika is a double alum!

We also heard from **Stephanie Evans**, who will be the next director of the Institute for Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Georgia State University. Evans comes to Georgia State from Clark Atlanta University, where she was Chair of African American Studies, Africana Women's Studies and the History Department. For the complete article by Tiffany Pennamon: <https://diverseeducation.com/article/147059/>

We also heard from **Judith Branzburg**, Emeritus Professor of English at Pasadena City College in California:

*"I'm a Ph.D. 1983 alum of UMass/Amherst. I was officially in the English Department. . . , but my second home was what was then called the Women's Studies Program. . . I even presented a lecture on my dissertation, "Women Novelists of the Harlem Renaissance" at the Women's Studies colloquium series and I worked as a part-time staff member in the WOST office with Arlene Avakian and Dale Melcher for a year. I have maintained a deep interest in the program (I immediately read the newsletters). . . I'm telling you all this because, even though I am not an official major, certificate holder or graduate, I see myself as an alum and want to share news of my new book: *The Liberation of Ivy Bottini: A Memoir of love and Activism as told to Judith V. Branzburg*. Ivy, now 92 years old, is a well-known lesbian feminist activist, artist, and actor admired for her pioneering work and leadership in two of the most important movements of the last half century, the women's and gay and lesbian liberation movements.*

Editor's note: We suspect Judith isn't alone in feeling like an alum, even if not one officially!



**Undergraduate alums from our department continue to do amazing things! Congratulations to all on the promotions, books, jobs and overall fascinating and important life projects. Read on:**

**Julia Becker Collins** was promoted to Chief Operating Officer of Vision Advertising, a 100% women-run & -owned, full service digital, nationwide marketing agency. Julia leads all aspects of the company. Julia also volunteers with Framingham State University as an alumni member of the Emergency Fund Grant Committee for students in crisis. Julia wrote: "This past year I've also been working hard towards a personal goal of racing & finishing my first ultra obstacle race. In April I completed the Spartan NJ Ultra in 14 hours, 16 minutes, & 45 seconds, which was comprised of: 35 miles, 10,000+ feet of elevation, 60+ obstacles, I was one of only 89 women among a starting field of more than 800 total racers in my division to finish the race." In addition, Julia holds an emeritus position with the MetroWest Women's Network—a community that supports local women-owned businesses and offers networking opportunities. Julia was just awarded the Worcester Business Journal 40 under Forty 2019 Award.

**Amy Cronin DiCaprio** is the new Outreach Coordinator at Safe Passage, the agency in Hampshire County working to provide support to survivors of domestic violence and relationship abuse. She also writes a bimonthly column for the online magazine, "Feminist Homemaker," and is raising two fabulous feminist sons.

**Ali Diamond** is living with her family in Northampton, and is the director of the Hospice Shop of the Fisher Home, which recently relocated and expanded. The shop benefits Hospice of the Fisher Home, which has both residential and community hospice programs in the area, and works to make compassionate end-of-life care accessible for all.

**Christina Knowles** is currently the Finance Director for Ranked Choice Voting 2020, which is a Massachusetts statewide ballot campaign. As Finance Director, Christina is responsible for raising millions of dollars. Christina is a founding board member of UMass Amherst Women into Leadership (UWiL), a training program for undergraduate women students to train them for leadership positions in public service.

**M. Dru Levasseur** is now Deputy Program officer for the National LGBT Bar Association. Dru is an expert in transgender law, employment law, and public accommodations law. Dru's projects include increasing outreach to and education for law schools and students, law firms, corporations and more.

**Laura Merwin** is a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist in Boston Public Schools, working with school aged children ages 3-22 to ensure that all students with visual impairments have access to the general curriculum. In addition, Laura teaches Expanded Core Curriculum for students with visual impairments which includes skills such as: Compensatory Skills, Orientation and Mobility, Social Interaction, Independent Living, Recreation and Leisure, Sensory Efficiency, Assistive Technology, Career Education, and Self-Determination.

**Jan Passion** continues to enjoy life in California, living in Pleasant Hill Cohousing, with his breeder dog Navi (who breeds puppies for Guide Dogs for the Blind). He maintains his connection with the Nonviolent Peaceforce, helping to organize a series of regional (Asia, Mid-East, Sub-Saharan Africa, North America/Europe & Latin America) meetings on Good Practices in the field of Unarmed Civilian Protection & Accompaniment. He also serves as a coach helping folks manifest their dreams and move through various obstacles in their path and he continues to sail on the San Francisco Bay.

**Emily Schnee** has spent time working for the Democratic Party of Wisconsin, working to support seniors in New York to gain a better understanding of their healthcare rights, and supporting democratic candidates through integrated communications in Washington DC. Now, Emily acts as the Coordinator for the Communities & Volunteer Relations team within the Development Department at the Human Rights Campaign.

**Caroline Tomasetta** worked as a teacher and career coach in an AmeriCorps position in the Refugee Department at JVS Boston. Caroline taught "Bank Career Training" and "Hospitality Training" to immigrants to the United States. Caroline then supported the students in finding employment opportunities, applying to jobs, and preparing for interviews through one on one coaching. At last summer's end she wrote "I am moving to Spain where I will teach English as a language assistant for a full school year. I am excited to live with a host family and teach ages 5 to 18 at an all-girls school on the southwestern coast of Spain!"

**Annie Tummino** lives in Queens, New York, with her husband (UMass/STPEC alum Meir Hamilton) and son, Enzo. She is Head of Special Collections and Archives at Queens College, City University of New York.

**Emily L.B. Twarog** is an Associate Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign School of Labor and Employment Relations. Emily won an American Council of Learned Society (ACLS) Burkhardt Fellowship for 2019-20. Emily will be in residence at the Newberry Library writing a new book on the history of sexual harassment resistance among service sector workers.

**Deborah Workman** wrote: "living in Berkeley CA with my 15 year old daughter and our little pup. Got MPH at UC Berkeley in 1995 and I'm now working as Director of Planning for a community health center."



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## Highlights of 2018-19 events:

We welcomed folks to receptions and registration events, launched our “Issues in Feminist Research” series (see page 9 for more) and had a very successful conference in early May on *Critical University Studies and the Future of Academic Feminisms*. See pages 8-9 for more on this wonderful conference. We also celebrated our graduating students and new books by our faculty.



This newsletter is typically produced semi-annually. We modified the publication schedule for 2019. Written and edited by Karen Lederer and designed and produced by Linda Hillenbrand. Thanks to Laura Ciolkowski, Kevin Henderson, Linda Hillenbrand, Sandra Russell, Banu Subramaniam, Angie Willey, and all the WGSS faculty for their written contributions. Alum news is published in the fall newsletter. If you want to receive this newsletter electronically, email us (see page 2). Send us your alum news updates by August.