

WGS News

Women's and Gender Studies Department at UMass Dartmouth Newsletter



What is WGS?

Women's and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary academic field that fosters active analysis of how gender (together with race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, ability) affects our lives. WGS draws upon anthropology, art history, crime and justice studies, economics, history, literature, philosophy, political science, sociology, and the visual arts. WGS students reflect on how gender structures societies past and present and how it affects people at the individual and group levels; they study the historical factors that have shaped the status of women from varying backgrounds and countries; and they explore paths to achieve equality for all people.

Women's and Gender Studies Department

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Women's History Month March 2022

Caroline Ochs

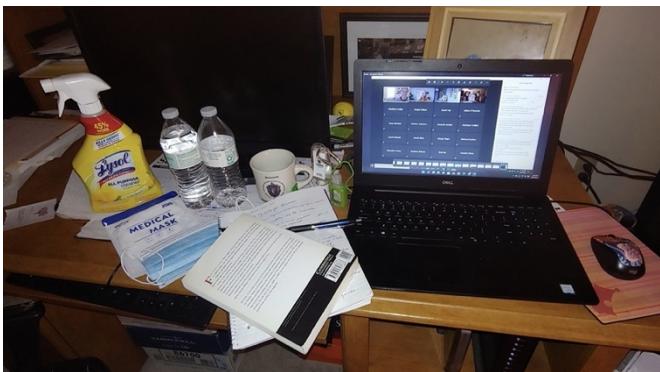
In the Spring of 2021 I had the pleasure of working with Dr. Kristen Abatsis McHenry on an independent study centered around women's health. During this semester I spent time researching and learning about the impacts that fracking can have on women and the environmental activism surrounding it. In the time I spent working on this independent study I learned that women are often the first impacted by environmental injustices and the last heard when expressing their concerns. My research highlighted the importance of listening to the activism centered around the health of women, that is often impacted by common practices in the industrial world. The negative health outcomes for women related to fracking is not a singular problem, but one that mirrors a multitude of other environmental, political and social aspects working against women in the United States everyday. As a Political Science & Health and Society major, the knowledge I gained from this independent study and my WGS classes, was extremely helpful in understanding the dynamics of gender, activism, and policy.

I recently graduated from UMass Dartmouth in the Winter of 2021 and have since begun working a full-time position in healthcare administration. In addition to my new job, I spend a couple hours a week doing research for my town's Board of Health connecting residents to the resources they need. Additionally I work as a research and social media assistant for a local non profit that serves victims of domestic violence. I have found great pleasure in working with various local groups to help assist the members of our communities. I hope to use the skills and knowledge I received from my time with the WGS departments, to continue to serve those who need it most.



Hannah Foley

"I'm a recent graduate of UMass Dartmouth. I just wanted to say thank you for making my time at UMass special. I really enjoyed my WGS classes and how much Professor Elizabeth Lehr respected/helped students, especially me. Even though my last semester was online and only the WGS capstone course, I enjoyed the readings and the discussions held in class. I recently started working at UMass Hospital in Leominster as a patient advocate and my manager minored in Women's Gender Studies during her time at her college. Having those classes under my belt actually helped me get the job here at the hospital. It's great to continue conversations we had in the classroom outside of school now with a co-worker."



My photograph has an intentionally cluttered composition to illustrate how messy and uncertain our lives were at this time. As seen in the photograph, I always had masks and miniature bottles of hand sanitizer laying around, as well as a bottle of Lysol to spray everything down after repeatedly touching it. On occasion, I had time to walk around the mall or the bookstore, which felt like the greatest escape ever; never again will I take going places for granted. Even though my trips outside the confines of my home or neighborhood were few and far between, I was, at times, very paranoid that the virus would somehow, through some manner of folly, infiltrate my home.

As a UMass Dartmouth student, learning on Zoom became an interesting endeavor. In many of my classes, most of the students would have their camera off, and only a handful of students would have them on, usually to allow the professor to feel as though they are not merely talking to black squares with names. Unless it was a lecture where no one was supposed to have their camera on, I, despite being very reserved, left my camera on most of the time to ensure that the professor did not feel alone. Participation over Zoom was usually awkward; often I was hoping someone would turn on their mic and say something. It was primarily due to not knowing who was going to speak next - should I unmute? I did not want to talk over anybody or interrupt.

This was truly a time of isolation, as I rarely left my house, or my neighborhood to go for walks outside, and even though I lived with my family and saw everyone at least once a day, I did not always have time to talk because so often I shutttered myself in the computer room until I got my work done. Sometimes I did not understand why I felt so busy and overwhelmed - it is not like I was out going places or having any fun, and it is not because I had to walk to class every day or walk back, none of this happened - so why did I usually feel so pinched for time? In addition, the concept of time was rendered nearly

useless, as I would stay up into the wee hours to work, and often never felt tired because I was awake almost all day regardless.

At home, I shared a desk with my dad, so whenever he was home and not at work, he would take the computer room for his own Zoom meetings. This, at times, became challenging when I really needed a quiet space to work and I did not have the comfort of my own enclosed room. Since both of our paper notes were on the desk, there was limited space to write or read, posing a challenge when all five of my classes, and an internship, demanded space for me to take notes on paper (a habit that did not leave me, even during the transition into fully remote learning). Nevertheless, I made it through the second half of my second semester of freshman year, and my entire sophomore year, on Zoom.

Learning During the Pandemic, Anonymous Submission

My experience, as illustrated in the photograph, connects to my own intersecting identity, as well as the intersecting identities of my family, friends, and my partner. I was afraid of getting an in-person job during the pandemic, so I did not want to spend a lot of money. My family is middle-class, so, thankfully, money was never a huge issue, but we decided to be very frugal to avoid frequently going out. My dad, needed a new laptop for his own work. We were not in the best position financially to afford a brand new laptop, so oftentimes he would borrow mine. Sometimes, I had to wait hours for him to finish, even when I had work due that night. Another way that the transition from in-person to online learning impacted a facet of my identity was losing access to Pride Club. As a queer woman, it was very difficult to lose my support group, and even if there was an online equivalent, it would not have helped as much as socializing in person. It felt very lonely at times.

Despite my own hardships, I am fully aware that others had it much worse during the pandemic.

If you have a story you'd be willing to share about your experience teaching or learning during the pandemic, consider contributing to the [Documenting Covid-19 at UMass Dartmouth](#) project.

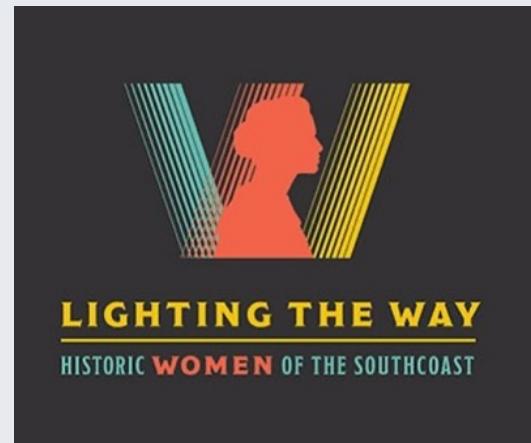
Dr. Elizabeth Lehr



Elizabeth Lehr's 10-year journey to a Doctorate in World History ended on August 27, 2020. Taking the view that all history is gender history, Elizabeth embedded frequent reminders about gender in the dissertation entitled *Seeking Sovereignty: Colonial Ambitions and Colonial Control in the French Congo, 1880-1905*. This dissertation is about the small actions devised by French colonizers to incrementally seize all land rights over inhabited land in central Africa during the first years of colonization. While the historical colonial documents archived in Aix-en-Provence revealed the story of land under colonialism, Elizabeth was privileged to reconnect with the French language and the luxury of outdoor dining at a favorite French bistro, served by an Algerian-descended, non-pied noir during a period of intense anti-Arab sentiment in France. Such inherent and noteworthy paradoxes frequently accompany us as researchers, as does the privilege of the encouragement and support by Elizabeth's colleagues at UMass Dartmouth.

WGS Lecturer Elisabeth Arruda partnered with the New Bedford Whaling Museum's Lighting the Way, Historic Women of the Southcoast project for her Fall 2021 WGS/HST 300 course, Women's Activism and Social Change. Students conducted primary source research in the UMass Dartmouth archives and in the community, collecting the previously untold stories of local women. Some of the profiles that students co-wrote has already been published online by the project, more are to follow.

Elisabeth Arruda



This semester, she has partnered with the Umass Dartmouth archives' Documenting Covid-19 at UMass Dartmouth project. Students in her Spring 2022 U.S. Women's History course are conducting oral histories, documenting and preserving the stories of students' experiences learning during the pandemic. In her Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies course, students are contributing photographs and narratives documenting their own pandemic learning experiences.

Dr. Kristen McHenry



WGS is pleased to announce that Dr. Kristen McHenry has published an article in the Autumn 2021 issue of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, the leading international journal in Women's and Gender Studies. Her article "[Getting Fracked: Gender Politics in Fracking Discourse](#)," examines a series of moments in which gender has appeared in the public discourse about fracking. She argues that the fracking debate is framed through a gender perspective in ways that have produced knowledge about the nature of science, objectivity, and gender itself. The issue of *Signs* in which Dr. McHenry's article was published also contains a special commissioned symposium on Covid-19, including the work of Cynthia Enloe, Evelynn M. Hammonds, and many other remarkable feminist theorists.

Dr. Bridget Teboh

Media Appearances and Interviews

2021, Ambazonia TV (ABC Amba TV), The Horizon Program: Voice of AmbaZonia WoMan on ABC Amba TV. Topic: Staying the Course with Guest Speaker, Prof. Teboh, B. "[Cameroon Crisis in Historical Context](#)," Friday April 23, 2021 @ 12:00 -2:00pm.

Publications:

Bridget Teboh, "Ambazonia Rising: Southern Cameroons Identities in the Making of a 'New Nation.' In *Journal of West African History (JWAH)*, Michigan State University. *Forthcoming* 2022.

Bridget Teboh, Guest Editor, Special Volume *JWAH* on, "Crisis in the Cameroons." *Forthcoming* 2022.



Conference Presentations:

2021, presented, "History of Vulnerability & Neglect: The Effects of COVID-19 on Women in Africa and her Diaspora (the Case of Cameroon)" on the Panel, "The Gendered Effects of COVID-19 on Africa and the Diaspora" at 63rd ASA Conference, *"Re-Centering Africa: Resistance and Renewal in a World Beyond COVID-19.* Virtual Event, November 16-20, 2021.

2021, presented, "Historical Maps and Appellations in the Cameroons: Perspectives on the Anglophone Crisis and the way forward" at the 63rd Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, *The Hour of Decision: Power, Persistence, Purpose, and Possibility in African Studies*, November 16-20, 2021, Washington Marriott Wardman Park. (Virtual Conference).

External Grants & Awards:

Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship (CADF) 2021/2022: \$15,000

approximately. During summer 2021, I was awarded the prestigious, highly competitive Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program Fellowship (CADFP). That CADFP Award allowed me to spend 82 days "giving back" to Africa through higher education efforts at an African Institution. Consequently, from May 16 to August 14, 2022, I was a Carnegie Fellow at BSUM-Benue State University-Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria (my Host African Institution). While there, I mentored students and junior faculty, gave lectures and seminars, developed and strengthened curriculum for the History Department, and helped set up a newly approved Archaeology and Diaspora & Heritage Studies Program. My stay and activities at BSUM were facilitated by The Vice Chancellor, Professor Tor Iorapuu, Deputy Dean Post Graduate School, Professor Mrs. Regina Samba, Dean, College of Arts, Prof. Doki, and The HOD, History Department, Dr. Gabriel Nyityo. Special thanks to colleagues Department of History, Junior and Senior Lecturers/Faculty across campus, and all BSUM students and staff for the hospitality!!



Events



Organized by the Center for Women Gender and Sexuality for Women's History Month, students in Elisabeth Arruda's WGS 101 class met Judith Arcana via Zoom in the Library Grand Reading Room. Dr. Arcana answered questions about her experiences with The Abortion Counseling Service of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union (1968-1973), also known as the Jane Collective. What started out as a referral service for women seeking abortions evolved into an underground illegal abortion clinic. All the women who worked at the clinic were "Janes."

Dr. Arcana reflected on the success of the anti-abortion movement in the United States, the uncertain future of Roe vs. Wade, and the ways that a group of committed activists can make a difference in their community.

An accomplished author, Dr. Arcana has published several books of fiction and poetry, inspired by her time as a Jane and her experiences of sexism/ageism.