

WGS NEWS

Women's and Gender Studies Department at UMass Dartmouth

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from WGS faculty and affiliates

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An update from Sasha Sanders

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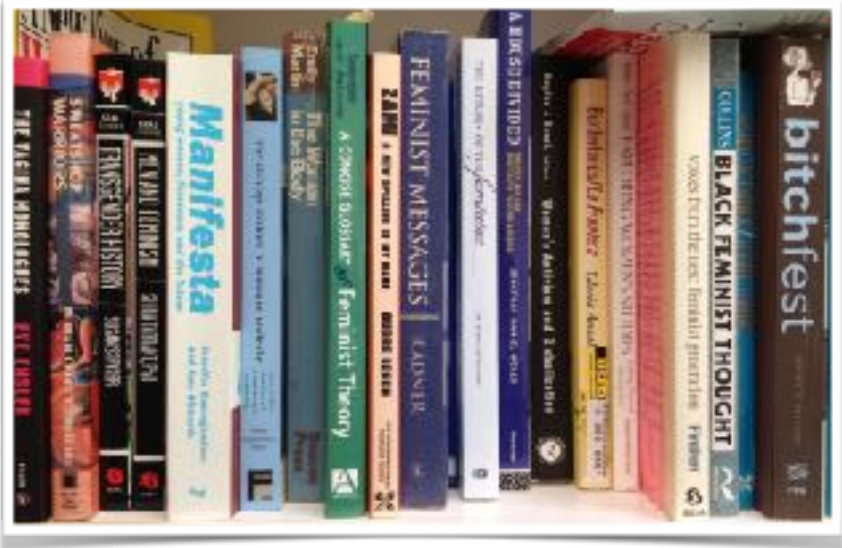
Events

Robyn Ochs, "Beyond Binaries"
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Leadership Breakfast

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Dear Friends of Women's and Gender Studies,

I want to begin by thanking outgoing co-chair, Stephanie O'Hara, for her notable contributions to the department.

We are very pleased to move the department into new territory as we welcome our first sole WGS tenure-track hire, Prof. Nishant Upadhyay. Women's and Gender Studies is more relevant than ever! Thank you for being part of our community.

Warmly,

Heidi M. Berggren,
Chair, Women's and Gender Studies Department

Faculty News

New Faculty

Nishant Upadhyay

I finished my Ph.D. in Social and Political Thought at York University, Toronto in June 2016. My research and teaching draws from intersectional, woc, critical race, and transnational feminisms, qtoc critiques, postcolonial, decolonial, and anticolonial theories, critical ethnic studies, diaspora studies, and American Studies. Right now, I am working on a few different projects. My primary project is based on my dissertation project where I studied Indian diasporic formations in the settler colonial state of Canada. The project theorizes complicities of Indian diasporic communities in ongoing processes of colonization of indigenous peoples by the Canadian state. I am working to turn the dissertation into a book. My second project is looking at how queer and trans people of color can be complicit in settler colonial processes. I am currently finishing revisions on a paper looking at RuPaul's Drag Race and how it reproduces settler colonial modalities. Finally, I am starting new research on the intersections of caste, race, gender, and sexuality in the making of Indian diasporic communities in the U.S. More specifically, I am looking at how right-wing Hindu fundamentalists are organizing in the US.

I am looking forward to making connections and community with folks who are invested in fighting not just the current US government but also structures of cisheteropatriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism. My primary goal here is to support students who have traditionally been marginalized in the academy, more specifically I want to support Black, Indigenous, Chicana/Latina, Muslim, and other students of color, queer, trans, and gender non-conforming students, and poor and disabled students.



Lindsay Davis

While my original academic “home” is in American Studies, I have always been invested in the questions, research, and debates of Women’s and Gender Studies. My current project, “Lessons in Captivity: A Cultural History of Women and Incarceration in America, 1930-1974,” explores the cultural roots of the imprisonment of women in modern America. I analyze common sense understandings of American female prisoners, prisons, and carceral technologies depicted in news media, novels, and popular film. Even though women prisoners represent the fastest



growing sector of the American prison population today, increasing at triple the rate of male prisoners, scholars offer limited historical context for this dramatic growth, placing women at the periphery of their analyses. Always inspired by this topic, I teach a variety of courses, including “Women and the Media” and “Legal Storytelling: Gender, Race, and the Law.”

FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Anna Klobucka, WGS and Portuguese

In July 2017, Anna Klobucka co-organized a three-day seminar at the annual meeting of American Comparative Literature Association on the topic of "Crossings and Corruptions: Transnational and Counternational Queer Agencies in Lusophone Cultures." In the seminar, she presented a paper of her own on "Transnational Circulations of Lesbian Desire in Portuguese Modernism." Together with her co-organizer, César Braga-Pinto (Northwestern), she's currently editing a special issue of the *Journal of Lusophone Scholarship* on queer transnational and counternational practices in Portuguese.

Cristina Mehrtens, WGS and History



An important area of my scholarship is devoted to teaching world history with a special focus on gender, race, and identity, as well as the comparative focus on Latin American studies. During the 1990s, I researched and published on the different aspects of the work of Brazilian women professionals. I revisited the oeuvre of two Brazilian artists (Anita Malfatti and Tarsila do Amaral) and developed that exploration into a chapter, "Gendered Metaphors: Historicizing Female Professionals in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil," which was published in the

New Biographies in World History by Andrea Felber Seligman in the February 2017 issue of *Online World History Connected* ([WHC](http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/14.1/forum_mehrtens.html)) *Journal*, University of Illinois, http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/14.1/forum_mehrtens.html. Funded by the College Board, *WHC* is the e-journal for world history and reaches a broad audience of world history scholars and students. This article also expands and refines my contribution on a path I had already visited in previous works, such as in *The Brazil Reader* (Duke 1999) and in the *Unedited Diaries of Carolina Maria de Jesus* (Rutgers 1999).

Shannon L. Jenkins, Political Science

In February, I gave a presentation at the American Political Science Association's 2017 Teaching and Learning conference. It was "Why Don't Women Rule The World? Engaging and Preparing College Women for Political Leadership" with Candice Ortvals, Lori Poloni-Staudinger, and J. Cherie Strachan. The presentation focused on a trial run of classroom political engagement activities designed to encourage college women to become involved in politics, as research demonstrates the sharpest drop in women's political ambition comes in college. These activities will be included in our book on women and politics for which we have a contract with CQ Press. It will be coming out in early 2019.

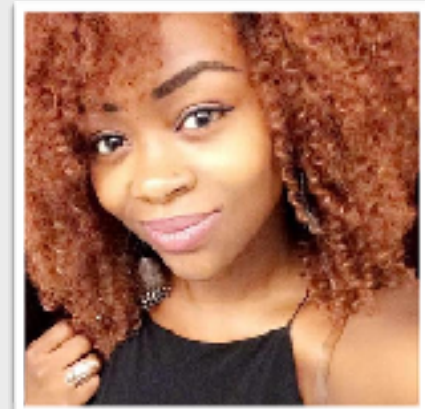
Christopher Larkosh, Portuguese

I gave a keynote lecture at the conference "Translating for Sexual Equality" in Valencia, Spain, in October 2016, and another panel presentation on gender and South Asia for the research group Thinking Goa at the University of São Paulo around the same time. I began the year speaking on women writers in the context of the Global South at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago, and gave another invited talk in French at Queer Week in Paris in March of this year with the title "Translating Leather/ traduire en cuir." I was asked to give the keynote at the New England Translators' Association conference in May on the queerness of translation, held at our sister campus UMass Boston in May of this year, and toured the Azores with three of my undergraduate and grad students in the Azores, giving another invited lecture on Portuguese-American literature and culture, highlighting the contemporary author Katherine Vaz. I also gave a talk on Goan women authors writing in English at the American Comparative Literature Association conference in Utrecht, Netherlands in July, and taught a one-week advanced seminar on queer theory and translating 20th and 21st century US queer poets into Spanish at the National University of Mar del Plata, Argentina, in August. Closer to home, I also coordinated a weeklong series of events here at UMass Dartmouth with two Brazilian women scholars under the auspices of the Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture with the title "Radicalization, Gender and Precarity: Decolonizing Luso-Afro-Brazilian Studies."

Alumni

As a young black woman, from a low-income minority neighborhood in Boston, MA, and the first person in my family to attend college, I felt it was my duty to reach the milestone of receiving my degree - not just for myself and my family - but also for my community.

I'm not ashamed to say that I was unprepared for college, and I'm not ashamed to admit that I was ready to give up on multiple occasions, but the mentorship and support of my incredible advisor Jen Riley, wouldn't let me do that. Professor Riley was not just my academic advisor, but also a true mentor to me. She was an incredibly attentive listener, and gave me invaluable advice - she is also the reason that I decided to accompany my major with WGS.



Through my WGS studies, I learned to look at the ways in which the intersectionality of many societal factors oppress us, in classes taught by amazing instructors such as Cathy Gardner and Juli Parker. Now as a graduate, I've dedicated my life and career as a community advocate for education, women's rights, mentoring, and many other causes.

Now living in NYC, I am Founder/CEO of a mentoring program called "Take Me There Mentoring", which provides various mentoring services to communities and programs in need. My journey as a student at UMass Dartmouth has undoubtedly shaped my current life and career and I am very proud to say of where I am now.

Thank you for helping shape who I am today,

Thank you for helping shape who I am today,

Sasha Sanders, Class of 2013

WGS Students

Julia Suchy, WGS Major



Feminism is so often misunderstood in our society and one of the reasons I decided to enter in to this field because my goal is to change that perception. People often don't realize that feminism isn't man-hating, loud, obnoxious butch lesbians who don't shave. Changing this misconception of feminism has become very important to me because feminism is so important to everyone's lives, not just women.

"Feminism is the simple idea that everyone deserves equality, regardless of any socio-demographic factors or identities."

To someone just entering the program, my advice would be to continue to stand up for feminism and to ignore the backlash you will receive. When I first started telling people that I was majoring in Women and Gender Studies, the often negative reactions that I would get would break me down and make me not want to advertise my major. Over time, however, I realized that this is one of the very reasons why feminism is so important. Bringing awareness to the issues that feminism fights against is something that isn't done enough. To someone who decides to declare a major, or minor, in Women and Gender Studies my advice would be this: Do not back down and let what people have to say about your field of study deter you from being the best feminist that you can be.

Kaz Almeida, WGS Major, interviewed by Maria Caramadre

What drew you to this major?

Hopefully to be a voice for people who don't have it...to see that there is such hate for people who cannot control how they are is awful. There are a lot of social injustices in the world and I want to be able to help people get past that.

For someone who's not in this major, what are the benefits of being in this major?

It has a lot of connections: you could go into law, sociology, government, human services... it's rewarding to help people who have been wronged and being able to fight against their stereotypes...



If you take anything away from your studies and experiences being a WGS major, what is it?

Things aren't as they seem. Learn to question things, it helps me learn and discover more about myself. There are so many things you don't know about yourself until you question what society thinks you should be doing. Until you learn that you're your own unique person and you're not what society says you are, you'll never really be your true self.

Erin New, Online BA in WGS

While years of meticulous examination of my surroundings have proved valuable, it wasn't until I began working toward my Women and Gender Studies degree did I actualize a remodeling of myself from passive spectator to social activist.

I am disheartened to see women, minorities, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ afflicted by discrimination through unfair work practices and unjust legislation. Courses such as Sex Roles and Politics and Third Wave Feminism allowed for further exploration of these topics. Studying Ecofeminism encouraged me to be mindful of my everyday choices and to explain to others how our decisions may either damage or restore women and the environment alike. While my initial draw toward studying women's rights was rooted in my passion for Reproductive Justice, I have since broadened my ambitions to include other shared feminist goals. I want to help, I strive to educate, and like feminism, I have evolved. My work as a WGS major has facilitated those ambitions and taught me how to engineer plans that are attainable to me and for my community.

Moreover, I am grateful to UMass for offering this degree entirely online. Without the flexibility to work when time allows, this particular journey of self-discovery would not have been attainable.



Events

Robyn Ochs's "Beyond Binaries"

by *Alannah J. Mellon*

In this lecture Ms. Ochs asked us if we thought humans were complicated creatures. The resounding answer of the entire room was a boisterously loud "YES!". Ms. Ochs then passed out familiar scales of which we had already seen in

our own class, WGS 104. She discussed the Kinsey Scale, and how it was too linear. That it leaves out different types of sexualities and how its vagueness of sexuality proved ineffective. She then talked about the Klein Scale, and how she liked that added how it accounts for different stages through life, as sometimes sexuality might become more obvious to us as we mature.

In *Beyond Binaries*, Ochs helped us understand sexuality by engaging in a survey and activity where participants take a survey similar to the previous scales... When we finished answering, Ms. Ochs collected our questions and redistributed them randomly so we would not know whose we got. For each question, we would stand in the marker that corresponded with the number for each question the individual answered. This activity showed in a visual format that while some people do identify as heterosexual, some might have homosexual fantasies or even be asexual or extremely sexual. Thus, challenging the heteronormative standard and the gender binary we all assume as "the normal," but is in actuality more diverse and complex... The way she created it, it was certainly a fascinating experience for me.



Women's Fund Leadership Breakfast

Building it Up: The Economic Blueprint for Women

On October 25th, the Women's Fund of Southeastern Massachusetts held their annual Women's Leadership Breakfast in Woodland Commons, "Building it Up: The Economic Blueprint for Women." Speakers included Executive Director of the Women's Fund Valerie Bassett, President of Bristol Community College Dr. Laura Douglas, and Sheida Elmi, Senior Associate with The Pew Charitable Trusts' family financial security and mobility project.

Below are excerpts from the speech given by The Women's Fund Executive Director, Valerie Bassett:

"The Women's Fund started because of one donation by a woman who was able to get through law school with the help of her women friends, who provided child care, took turns cooking and other sharing of the necessary work.

The Economic Blueprint for Women is today's version of the same circle of friends helping another woman- only on a much bigger scale. We want to continue to help individual women - while also making larger social change so that child care and other necessary supports are there for all women to go to school and work fully and successfully..

What is this Blueprint building?

- It's a blueprint for how to build a society that values and creates economic opportunity for women.
- A blueprint for building a future in which women and families can count on public and affordable child care so they can work and go to school.
- A future in which there are smooth and wide onramps to education and training that leads to a living wage.
- A future in which women's work is paid equitably and at a living wage and in which we don't suffer regularly from sexual harassment and exploitation.
- A future in which women are safe from violence, with healthy bodies and minds and control over our own bodies.
- A future with strong supports to help women move out of poverty - like housing, legal services and support to save money.
- A future in which all women see ourselves reflected in leadership and where we are mentored and supported to lead.

This vision is where the Economic Blueprint for Women will take us. You can read more details on our website, but **I want to give you an update on what's happening in the early stages of action.**



- The need for free or affordable early education and child care emerged as a critical priority.
- We are advocating with others for more funding at the state level and for this to be a local priority. This is an area we will definitely invest more in - especially to strengthen advocacy efforts.
- To move forward equity in employment and benefits, we are supporting efforts to pass and implement paid family and medical leave in Massachusetts.
- There's been a lot of activity in the area of expanding living wage-focused education and training, including financial education.
- We expanded the LifeWork Project from a 3-year pilot to a full five-year program and are committed to working with partners, in particular BCC, to sustain it going forward.
- BCC and UMass Dartmouth began important work to help students who transfer from BCC to UMD succeed.
- We worked with the Southeastern MA Building Trades Council to apply for a MassDOT grant to create a pre-apprenticeship program in the building trades with a focus on women.
- And the Women's Fund and the YWCA Southeastern MA are co-sponsoring a local session of MA Treasurer Goldberg's Women's Economic Empowerment Series. *This free evening of workshops will come to Our Sisters' School on Wednesday December 6.*
- And there was a fire lit under the group working on increasing women's civic and political leadership. I can't imagine why. This spring and summer, they organized a well-attended forum and a weekend workshop for women interested in running for office or working on campaigns...



We are in it for the long haul, because this is change that takes time. It also takes you...

As an individual, you can be an advocate and join groups that are working for policy changes that improve conditions for hard-working women, such as Action for Women of Southeastern MA and Coalition for Social Justice. Maybe you will run for office, or support a woman's campaign...

Please consider where you fit in and do your part so that Southeastern MA is a model of women's economic strength, not women's poverty and limited opportunity."

To get involved, contact the Women's Fund

<https://www.womensfundsema.org>; Phone (508) 717-0283