

WGSS News

Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies Program • SUNY New Paltz • June 2014

Greetings from Southside! What an amazing year it has been for us, thanks in large to the pressure brought to bear on the administration from hundreds of student and faculty advocates during the May 10, 2014 faculty meeting, which resulted in a resolution to make the WGSS program a Department. As

From the Coordinator

As a result of that pressure, the administration convened a number of meetings with me over the summer, to identify the best means to strengthen the program. The end result, while not the Department status the faculty resolution demanded, was an agreement to open a search for a full time, tenure-track person in WGSS. This has always been considered a critical position for us, in terms of the integrity of the program, as well as our ability to deliver the best curriculum to our students. I'm pleased to announce that we successfully com-



pleted that search in March, and will be welcoming Dr. Jessica Pabón to our program in the fall.

WGSS also played host to a campus rally to promote the Governor's Women's Equality Agenda, organized and moderated a SUNY-wide conference on Interdisciplinary Programs and Diversity in SUNY, and sponsored a number of campus talks and workshops. Planning continues for the 2015 conference, on women and the economy, tentatively titled "Sex, Money, and Power," as well as the 2017 conference, cosponsored with CRREO, commemorating the 100th anniversary of women getting the right to vote in the state of New York. To keep abreast of upcoming events, please find and like us on Facebook (SUNY New Paltz Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at <https://www.facebook.com/SunyNewPaltzWomensStudiesProgram>).

Kathleen M. Dowley, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the WGSS Program

Jessica Pabón Joins WGSS Faculty

After an agreement with the SUNY New Paltz administration to hire a full time, tenure-track person, we are pleased to announce that Jessica Pabón will be joining the WGSS Program in the fall.

Jessica has her Ph.D. in Performance Studies from NYU, with an MA in Women's Studies from the University of Arizona. She is an interdisciplinary feminist scholar with specializations in Hip Hop Studies, Latin@ Studies, LGBTQ Studies, and Visual Art. She is currently preparing an ethnography, *Graffiti Grrlz: Performing Feminism in the Hip Hop Diaspora*, for publication. She blogs about her work at www.jessica-pabon.com. Jessica will be teaching *Women: Images and Realities* and *Feminist Theory*, along with a number of upper division electives related to her research.



Alumnae Reflect on Life After Women's Studies

Women's Studies alumnae **Claribel "Bela" Baez** ('08), **Rebecca Mackey** ('99), **Ruth Staber** ('79) and **Alexis (Gowan) VanDeCarr** ('06) returned to SUNY New Paltz on Thursday, April 10 to talk with WGSS majors and minors about their experiences after graduating from the program. About 35 students and faculty came to hear them and were reassured to hear about the enduring value of their experiences here, and its continuing relevance in their personal and professional lives.



Rebecca Mackey

Bela has only recently returned to work after giving birth, as a Service Coordinator for the New York City Housing Authority, working largely to help senior populations find affordable and

safe places to live in the city. **Rebecca** had returned to school to achieve a second degree in history and is now the Director of Operations at Historic Huguenot Street, where she oversees one of our WGSS practicum interns, among her many other responsibilities. **Ruth**, who is the Safe Schools Outreach Specialist for the Hudson Valley LGBTQ Community Center in Kingston, remembered her time here fondly (as one of our earliest major graduates) and the value of the classes she took with Professor **Nancy Schniedewind**.

Our most recently graduated alumna, **Alexis Gowan** (now VanDeCarr) works for the Office of Mental Health at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility as a pre-release coordinator. She advised anxious seniors not to worry about finding that perfect job, as rarely is the first job out of college the final job. She noted that she has found value and learned from each of the jobs she has held, and that there most definitely *is* a Life After Women's Studies.

Economist Nancy Folbre Urges Students to "Woman Up!"

Professor Nancy Folbre, a famous feminist economist and Professor Emerita at University of Massachusetts at Amherst was invited to SUNY New Paltz on 24 April, where she gave a class in Professor **Edith Kuiper**'s course Women & Work, had lunch with a group of Economics and WGSS students, and gave a well-attended lecture titled, "Woman Up! How Feminist Theory can Strengthen Economics".

Professor Folbre earned her Ph.D. from the UMass-Amherst in Economics, where she has been a full professor since 1991. She has widely published on feminist economics, in economic history, history of economic thought and on the topic of care work. Her books, with titles like, *Who Pays for the Kids* (1995), *The Invisible Heart: Economics and Family Values* (2001), and *Valuing Children: Rethinking the Economics of the Family* (2008), ask important questions about the provision of care in our society and provides a framework for their analysis.

In her lecture she talked about the work of William Thompson and Anna Wheeler (1925) and their views on women's economic status, as well as on feminist perspectives on self-interest

and altruistic behavior throughout the history of economic thought. She argued that the valuation and social organization of care work, whether it is for children or for the aging, has largely been ignored and seriously under-theorized. She discussed her two most recent books, *For Love and Money: Care Provision in the US* and *Universal Long-Term Care in the US: Can we Get There from Here?* (2012), and argued that in today's society the benefits of care work go to employers, while mothers bear the greater part of the costs. Economists, in her view, have a responsibility to address these externalities and integrate considerations of care provision in their theoretical frameworks that acknowledge both choice and structure.



WGSS Class Trip to the Lesbian Herstory Archives

WGSS sent a busful of students to the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Park Slope and the Brooklyn Museum, a unique collaboration between Professor Morgan Gwenwald's Queer Women class, and Professor Meg Devlin O'Sullivan's senior seminar. This was the first such trip since the early 1980's when students in the Women With Women course visited it at its original location in the upper west side of Manhattan. This year's trip was organized and sponsored by the program, with the support of the LAS Dean's office, and the idea to do so came primarily from Morgan, who taught for us for the first time this spring, and who is also the program's outreach librarian at the Sojourner Truth Library.

The Archives celebrated 40 years of continuous operation this year as an all-volunteer run organization. It is one of the oldest and largest organizations of its kind and has served as a major research and cultural center for scholars, activists, artists and community members.

Housed in a limestone townhouse on 14th Street, the collection fills two floors and the basement. Students heard from archive volunteer Shawn Smith, who gave them a brief history of the archives, and then from Maxine Wolfe. Max, a retired CUNY Professor and a life-long activist, spoke of her extensive work with Act-Up and the Lesbian Avengers, addressing not only the politics of those organizations and the challenges they faced, but strategies for organizing today.

Our students were then let loose in the Archives to explore the incredible collection of materials reflecting lesbian lives. They surveyed the Special Collections (including the papers of Audre Lorde), the subject files (organized by unique lesbian search terms such as "Butch-Fem"), Periodicals, Geographic and Organizational Files, an extensive library of books and media materials, and the Photo Collection. Students were especially intrigued by the t-shirt and button collections.

After lunch, students were bused to the Brooklyn Museum to view two specific exhibitions: The Judy Chicago Dinner Party and the special display of Lorraine Hansberry's letters to The Ladder, the magazine of the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), the earliest national lesbian group founded in 1955 in San Francisco by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. The Dinner Party is one of the most important feminist art works and is on permanent display at the Museum in the Sackler Center. Students were deeply touched by these displays and The Dinner Party stimulated them to make their own Dinner Party plates, runners, and descriptions as a class assignment.

Students also had time to explore other parts of the museum as well. Witness: Art and Civil Rights in the Sixties, which had just opened, was a favorite, as the powerful art on display connected to many themes of the class. While exhausting, the long day was well worth all the effort, as students were exposed to one of the major destinations for lesbian scholars and an important cultural center for New York City.



Student News

The Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies program would like to congratulate all of its graduating seniors, and acknowledge some of this year's award recipients. The Alice Fix award, to recognize feminist activism, was awarded to **Brendan Wright**, who will be attending NYU this fall in their MA program in Higher Education and Student Affairs.



Brendan Wright, Barbara Cady and Brenna McCaffrey: "Outstanding Graduates."

The 2014 WGSS "Outstanding Graduate" awards were presented to **Brendan**, **Brenna McCaffrey**, and **Barbara Cady** by SUNY New Paltz President Donald Christian on Friday, May 16, 2014.

WGSS majors **Lori Moran** and **Vanessa Zeigler** were honored at the First World Graduation Ceremony on Saturday, May 17 in Studley Theater, while **Brenna McCaffrey** and WGSS minor **Ariana Cember** were celebrated at the Honors Program graduation ceremony Saturday as well.

Double major in History and WGSS, **Zachary Rousseas** was selected from among a competitive pool to be one of the 2014 summer interns at the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic site at Val Kill. Zach applied for this internship because it allowed him to combine his interests in WGSS and History. He will be working with the Eleanor Roosevelt site collections and the Roosevelt site's general staff on their daily duties with archives and collections.

Queer Studies Lecture Provokes Much Discussion

On April 3, WGSS hosted Professor **Jane Ward** (Women's Studies, University of California, Riverside) for our third biennial Queer Studies Lecture. Addressing an over-capacity room of students, faculty, staff and community members, Ward's talk – "Not Gay: Whiteness, Masculinity, and the Remaking of Homosexual Sex" – drew on themes from her forthcoming book (NYU Press).

While the U.S. media has recently been abuzz with commentary about heteroflexibility, most accounts have focused on "girls who kiss girls" for the pleasure of male spectators, or men of color "on the down low" who are presumed to be gay and in the closet. In her talk, Ward asked us to consider where white men—the dominant culture's most normalized and idealized figures—fit in these narratives. Professor Ward traced narratives about straight white men's homosexual encounters across four sites—the United States military, online personal ads, popular culture, and the psychotherapeutic industry—illustrating the unique ways that whiteness and masculinity

converge to circumvent the pathologizing gaze of popular science, the gaze applied to men of color.

Across these sites, Ward argued that straight white men leverage their experiences of homosexual sex to bolster their own heterosexuality and masculinity. She suggested that instead of thinking of them as "closeted gays," we might use their example to think about heterosexuality in new ways—not as the opposite or absence of homosexuality, but as its own unique mode of engaging homosexual sex, a mode characterized by pretense, disidentification, and racialized heteronormative investments. Ward's lively and provocative talk continued to be discussed – in classrooms, university hallways, and on social media – for many days following her visit. We look forward to an equally thought-provoking Queer Studies Lecture in 2016!



WGSS Faculty News

Congratulations to our own **Karl Bryant** (joint Sociology and WGSS), who was promoted to Associate Professor and received tenure in December 2013. Karl also published and co-authored an article, "Power and Vulnerability," in the journal *Research in Social Problems and Public Policy*, and had a book review published in the *American Journal of Sociology* in August of 2013.

WGSS Coordinator **Kathleen Dowley** and former WGSS affiliate **Anita Gonzalez** received a SUNY Explorations in Diversity and Academic Excellence grant to host a SUNY-wide workshop on the role of interdisciplinary women's and ethnic studies programs in promoting diversity on SUNY campuses. With Anita now at the University of Michigan, the Director of Compliance and Campus Climate, **Tanhena Pacheco Dunn**, worked with Kathleen to host the event on March 7, with faculty from Women's and Gender studies programs, as well as Black/Africana Studies and Asian Studies programs at Oswego, Oneonta, Cortland, and Potsdam campuses. Participants strategized ways interdisciplinary programs across SUNY could collaborate to help promote diversity in curriculum, faculty hiring and retention, and student recruitment and retention.

Dr. Juliya Friday, who has been teaching the Women in Popular Culture and Feminist Art and Culture courses this year, presented a paper titled "The Site of (Dis) Orientation: Czechoslovakia in Barricades" (1968) at the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) annual conference at New York University in March 2014.

Heather Hewett (joint English and WGSS) has had a busy sabbatical year. She published two book review essays, one interview (in Boston Review), and three personal essays, one on The New York Times Motherlode Blog, and two in book anthologies: *The Good Mother Myth: Redefining Motherhood to Fit Reality* and *A Slant of Light: Contemporary Writers of the Hudson Valley*. She received a partial fellowship to attend a writing residency at the Vermont Studio Center in March, and presented two papers at the National Women's Studies Association Meetings in Cincinnati in November.

Susan Ingalls Lewis (History) and **Morgan Gwenwald** (Library) co-authored a piece called, "Year of the British Blondes" for the *New York Archives Magazine*, Fall 2013 (Volume 12, Number 2) in a nice show of interdisciplinary campus collaboration. Susan also initiated a blog for the Center for Regional Research, Education, and Outreach (CRREO) *New York Rediscovered: Intriguing Stories from the History of the Empire State*, which included several posts related to women's history: "The Mystery of Emma Waite," "The Eye of Theodosia Burr," "Women Win the Right to Vote in New York State," "Matilda Joslyn Gage: New York's Neglected Suffragist," and "New York: Aviation Pioneer" which included the stories of feminist aviators Bessica Medlar Raiche and Elinor Smith, "The Flying Flapper of Freeport."

During Women's History month this past spring, the NAACP dedicated the final week of March to honoring women who put their lives on the line for justice, including our own extraordinary long time WGSS educator and Daily Kos blogger, **Denise Oliver-Velez**. Denise was part of the Young Lord's Party, which rallied a crew of women that fought for open enrollment in the City Colleges of New York, for the formation of Puerto Rican Studies programs and bi-lingual education in grade schools.



Congratulations Denise!

The fourth edition of *Open Minds to Equality: Learning Activities to Affirm Diversity and Promote Equity* by long-time WGSS affiliate **Nancy Schniedewind** (Educational Studies) and **Ellen Davidson** was recently published. The book presents a theoretical framework and activities to help students understand and change inequity based on race, gender, class, age, language, sexual orientation, physical/mental ability, and religion.

In March **Amy Kesselman** (WGSS faculty emerita) presented her work on New Haven Women's Liberation on three panels at a conference in Boston entitled "A Revolutionary Moment: Women's Liberation in the late 1960s and early 1970s."