

FEMINIST GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES

Wesleyan University 2018-2019



Feminist, Gender & Sexuality Studies Hosts, **Black Lives & Health Symposium: Writing Hidden Histories**

Written by **María Frías Vellón '20**

On November 2nd, 2018, upwards of 50 people gathered at Russell House for the FGSS Fall Symposium: “Black Lives & Health: Writing Hidden Histories.” Speakers Linda Villarosa, Director of the CUNY Journalism Program, and Khary Polk, Assistant Professor of Black Studies and Sexuality, and of Women’s and Gender Studies at Amherst College, graced us with thought-provoking conversations centered around the intersection of black and brown queer bodies, HIV/AIDS, and the military.

Linda Villarosa took the podium first. She began her talk in 1985, when HIV/AIDS was still sometimes known as Gay-Related Immune Deficiency (GRID) and she, a young journalist eager to make her mark, was asked to write about it for *Essence* magazine. Interestingly, the article she wrote, for which she interviewed an ill black woman in the Bronx, became the first reported article about HIV/AIDS that focused on an ethnic group. Today, 33 years later, as she noted, black and brown queer bodies are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS due to negligence and erasure of their narratives.

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Letter from the Chair

Written by **Jennifer Tucker**



As the 2018-2019 academic year winds down, it is inspiring to look back at the many projects, conversations, and events in FGSS in 2018-2019. It has been another busy year in our program. I especially want to congratulate our seniors, for their many accomplishments and achievements at Wesleyan.

This year the FGSS Program will graduate 17 majors - among the highest number ever! Seniors wrote theses and essays on a range of pressing topics and presented their work to us at the senior reception in May. They shared their intersectional explorations of feminist and queer thinking in the form of creative performances, including film, dance, plays and theater. Students put their learning into practice in community work, volunteering and activism in Middletown, and beyond. Their work here leaves a vital legacy, & we are excited to see what they do next!

FGSS activities this year began even before the start of classes on Labor Day. Professor **Christina Crosby's** latest book, *A Body Undone: Living on After Great Pain* (2016) was unanimously selected by the First Year Matters Committee at Wesleyan to be the common reading for all first-year students joining Wesleyan in the fall. During Orientation week, faculty and student leaders led discussions about the book, exploring her reflections on community, grief, loss, love and the meaning of living on after the 2003 bicycle accident that left her paralyzed. (A discussion with Christina about her book may be found online at this link: <https://video.wesleyan.edu/videos/video/5804344983001>).

The FGSS Program enrolled nearly 600 students in over 30 FGSS courses this year. Faculty taught courses on queer politics in Russia, women's work and global capitalism, Black feminisms, activism and theories of change, art and politics, biopolitics, robotics, surveillance, queer temporalities, performance, and more.

Together we hosted and collaborated on more than 40 campus events addressing current political situations as well as historical lessons and imagined futures. These included a panel on legal power, gender, and rights in the U.S. Supreme Court; our FGSS Fall Symposium ("Black Lives and Health: Writing Hidden Histories"), film screenings, discussions, a book panel with Professors **Inderpal Grewal** (Yale) and **Caren Kaplan** (UCSC); and our annual Diane Weiss '80 Memorial Lecture event with Professor **Robert Reid-Pharr** (Women's and Gender Studies, Harvard). Prof. **Ellen Nerenberg** (Prof. of Romance Languages/FGSS) led a panel discussion about her research with **Nicoletta Marini Maio** (Dickinson College), **Catalina Rojter** ('19) and **Alice Goldberg** ('19) on the animated TV series for teens and girls, *WinxClub*.

We also collaborated on a number of projects with student groups, including the Muslim Student Association, Latinx Student Association, Ujamaa, Wesleyan Doula Project, Student of Color Art Collective, Asian American Student Collective, Take Back the Night Committee and many others.

After spring classes had finished, our activities continued. On May 12 the program held our first FGSS "Tertulia," an afternoon of conversations and a panel chaired by Prof. **Victoria Pitts-Taylor** and featuring Prof. **Bhakti Shringarpure** (U-Conn) as commentator. To this event, held at Center for the Humanities & made possible in part by the Amy Schulman Fund for Women & Gender, we invited

faculty and postdocs in all of the equivalent FGSS programs & depts in Connecticut. The panel featured Wesleyan assistant professors **Claire Grace** (Art & Art History) with “Fuming: Thinking Toward an Art of Feminist Air”; **Mitali Thakor** (Science in Society) with “Digital Flesh: Policing, Child Pornography, and the Algorithmic Management of Innocence”; **Roman Utkin** (Russian & East European Studies & FGSS) with “The Lyrical Is Political: Contemporary Queer Russian Poetry in the Streets and the Classroom”; and **Gabrielle Ponce-Hegenauer** (College of Letters), with “Women Patrons, Female *Ingegneri*, and Early Modern Pastoral Literature.”

Altogether, since the program first began awarding majors in 1991, FGSS has graduated over 300 majors. Next year, we will welcome 20 new majors. The FGSS program continues to build on decades of work to create and sustain feminist, gender and sexuality scholarship. Beyond Wesleyan, FGSS alumni are extending their passions and talents in so many ways, helping make progress on social justice, technology issues, health care, the environment, reproductive rights, immigrants, race relations, and poverty, and more. Our alumni are working in publishing, education, labor activism, law, medicine, technology, sexual health, policy, journalism, arts, sports, social work, and many other areas.

I want to acknowledge and thank our excellent FGSS faculty across campus. In addition to teaching classes this year, FGSS core and affiliated faculty published scholarly articles, taught classes, mentored students, advised and evaluated thesis projects, gave keynote lectures and invited talks at national and international conferences, participated in student panels and events, and were elected to leadership positions at Wesleyan, and beyond.

We were thrilled to welcome two new Wesleyan professors as new members of the FGSS core faculty: **Lisa Cohen** (English) and **Kerwin Kaye** (Sociology). Prof. Cohen has helped the program spearhead our new FGSS concentration in art and activism, in addition to teaching her course, “Queer Times: Poetics, Activisms, Temporalities.” Prof. Kaye is an inspiring instructor who teaches a course on “Sex Work and Sex Trafficking” and advises senior projects.

I’ve enjoyed the chance to chair this dynamic and important program for the past two years, and I am delighted to welcome back **Victoria Pitts-Taylor** as FGSS Chair next year. Professor Pitts-Taylor is a leading feminist scholar of science, medicine, technology and the body. Her many books and articles include the prize-winning book, *The Brain’s Body: Neuroscience and Corporeal Politics* (2016). She came to Wesleyan in 2014 as FGSS’s first fully appointed faculty member in the program, and we are extraordinarily grateful for her leadership, vision, teaching and expertise!

We have been very fortunate to work with **Nicole Potestivo**, who joined us as FGSS/Science in Society Program Administrative Assistant last spring. Nicole brings extensive experience as a former Pride Center coordinator at Eastern Connecticut State University and has helped us brainstorm how to connect our students with opportunities for community work, volunteering and activism. I thank her for her hard work with our students and faculty, and for helping us create our new FGSS Facebook page. For all their help preparing this newsletter, I would like to thank Nicole and students **Lena Mitchell** (’20), **Jackie Manginelli** (’19), & **María Frías Vellón** (’20).

As we go our separate ways this summer, I am reminded of something that Sara Ahmed wrote, that “Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future. Solidarity requires commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground.”

Thanks for a great year! Looking forward to seeing many of you at Commencement and in the future.

Wishing you all a bright and inspiring summer.

All my best,

Jennifer Tucker
Associate Professor of History & Science in
Society Program and FGSS Chair (2017-2019)
She/her pronouns

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Villarosa also talked about the particular circumstance of Jackson, Mississippi, one of the cities with the highest percentage of POC queer men affected with HIV/AIDS. She spoke about several grassroots initiatives that aim to provide support to the large population of men affected in the area and told the story of Cedric Sturdevant, whom she had profiled in her June 2017 New York Times Magazine essay, "America's Hidden HIV Epidemic." Sturdevant takes care of a number of black gay and bisexual men with HIV/AIDS personally and as part of his work for a local social services nonprofit, delivering their medications, taking them to medical appointments, and leading support groups. She concluded her segment by recalling a moving conversation with one of the men she interviewed for the article. The man was asked: "What can we do? What do you need?" to which he responded: "This is the thing I need. It's love." Villarosa reflected on what love entails in this context, how it manifests itself in the work that Mr. Ced, as he is known, does for the community, saying: Change "takes activism, it takes anger, it takes movement forward, but it also takes love."



In Khary Polk's talk, he expressed that with his writing he attempts "telling stories that don't always get told." Focusing on the intersections among race, queerness, and the military, he narrated the life of Perry J. Watkins (1948-1996), a black and openly gay

Army veteran who became the first person in American history to win a lawsuit against the military. Despite discrimination and countless obstacles, Watkins became an excellent soldier by all accounts, earning the respect of his peers and superiors. He also became a drag performer, entertaining civilian crowds and Army sponsored shows abroad, as "Simone." Nearing the time of his retirement, however, he was discharged on the grounds of his homosexuality, which meant that he would lose his benefits as a veteran. Watkins sued the Army for its unconstitutional ban on homosexuals, won, and was reinstated with full honors and benefits.

Nevertheless, some years later, when advocates for LGBT participation in the military campaigned for the right to serve as openly queer, Watkins was not asked to be a spokesman for this activism. He was, Polk said, silenced due to queer respectability politics and racism. Polk uses Watkins' story to highlight the need for POC representation and inclusion in queer narratives and advocacy involving the military, especially given the disproportionate amount of black and brown bodies affected by the military industrial complex. He concluded: "We might return to these histories in a re-engaged homonationalist critique to consider how in our contemporary moment, new national projects of inclusion and exclusion in the military are afoot with the trans military ban fast approaching approval in federal courts, while immigrant recruits, recruited across the globe for language and medical skills and promised a fast-track to citizenship in exchange for this service, have been quietly discharged from the Army over the past twelve months."

The lectures were followed by a panel discussion with Professor Lisa Cohen, who had invited Professors Villarosa and Polk to Wesleyan, and a conversation with audience members. A lunch reception ensued, which allowed for informal yet equally riveting conversation between the audience and speakers and further opportunity to address our shared questions and concerns.

Faculty Spotlight

PROFESSOR LISA COHEN



Lisa Cohen, newly appointed Core Faculty in FGSS and Associate Professor of English, is a writer whose work has often concerned queer lives and archival afterlives, as well as modernist to 21st-century writing, performance, film, and fashion. Her widely reviewed group biography, *All We Know: Three Lives* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012) was a finalist for National Book Critics Circle, Lambda Literary, and PEN/Weld awards, and was a New York Times Notable Book and Editor's Choice. Her current book project is a meditation on queer friendship, grief, questions of evidence, and Enlightenment legacies in the context of the long history of HIV/AIDS. Professor Cohen's memoirs, poems, and essays on literary and visual culture have appeared in numerous anthologies,

journals, and magazines, including *Women in Clothes*, *Queer 13*, *The London Review of Books*, *The Paris Review*, *Vogue*, *the New York Times*, *Ploughshares*, and *The Vassar Review*, among many other publications. She began teaching at Wesleyan in 2007; in 2015 she was appointed to the Douglas J. and Midge Bowen Bennet chair. Her teaching, like her writing, explores varied approaches to language and looking as we inhabit our own bodies and care for others. Her nonfiction workshops attend to the poetics of prose, introducing students to a wide range of published writers/works and encouraging them to experiment with form. For FGSS most recently, she has taught the interdisciplinary seminar "Queer Times" and her workshop on biographical writing, "Writing Lives," which focuses on the history of the genre in English and its recent revisions by writers of color and others committed to broadening the possibilities of archival work and life writing. (In past years she has also taught the seminars "Stein and Woolf" and "Fictions of Consumption.") In her work with FGSS this academic year, she organized the Fall Symposium, "Black Lives and Health: Writing Hidden Histories," with journalist Linda Villarosa, of the City University of New York, and scholar Khary Polk, of Amherst College, and for Spring semester, invited Michelle Memran, director of the acclaimed documentary "The Rest I Make Up," a portrait of the late playwright and teacher Maria Irene Fornes, to campus for a screening, Q&A, and class visit.



Judging Gender: Power & Rights After Kavanaugh

Written by **Johanna DeBari**

Director of the Office of Survivor Advocacy & Community Education, Wesleyan University

Leading up to Justice Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation, our nation, and our campus, was electrified by these hearings. With the courageous testimony of Dr. Christine Blasey Ford describing her experience of sexual violence, and identifying Brett Kavanaugh as the perpetrator, the hearings and public discussion became less about a Supreme Court seat and more about unpacking dynamics of sexual assault, believing survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable. From my point of view as the on-campus survivor advocate, the tension felt inescapable on campus as survivors and those connected to survivors experienced deep emotional responses to this debate; witnessing power, privilege, and prestige outweigh narratives of victimization, violence, and trauma.

In response, the FGSS program organized a teach-in to offer analysis of the political climate and strategies for moving forward, called "Judging Gender: Power & Rights After Kavanaugh." Invited by FGSS faculty Professor Victoria Pitts-Taylor, the panelists engaged in varied sectors of social justice work such as activism, social policy, legal scholarship, and advocacy, gathered to explore the common activist mantra: "now what?" One panelist, Dr. Sarah Croucher, Executive Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut, shared her take on the importance of political organizing as a tool to "limit the damage" of this confirmation, informed by her experience organizing around abortion rights. Even after outlining the many challenges facing female-identifying

folks accessing their legal right to abortion, Croucher's message was still one of hope, encouraging folks to stay engaged in politics and activism.

Dr. Judith Resnik, the Arthur Liman Professor of Law at Yale Law School, was the other panelist, providing a historical take on how women's equality at the Supreme Court level has been discussed, and in particular, asking questions about this topic is now standard to the justice confirmation process. Notably, she served on Anita Hill's team during the Clarence Thomas Hearings, and drew parallels between the two confirmation hearings. A nod to calling out dynamics of power and privilege, Resnik discussed the trend of more women and men of color in positions to ask these questions, destabilizing the "old white boys' club" paradigm. Echoing Croucher's emphasis on hope and organizing, Resnik reminded us of [a letter signed by 2,400+ lawyers across the nation](#), raising concerns regarding Kavanaugh's nomination, which was vetted by Columbia undergrads and highlights the power of student-led organizing and advocacy.

Our campus needed this conversation, and in particular, the reframing and hopeful call to action to stay engaged and resist offered by panelists. I'm grateful to have moderated this panel and learned from and with everyone in the room.

“The Rest I Make Up” Film Screening & Director Q&A with Michelle Memran

Written by **Jackie Manginelli '19**

FEMINIST, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES PRESENTS



“The Rest I Make Up” Film Screening and Director Q&A with Michelle Memran

Tuesday
February 12, 2019
6:00 P.M.

Powell Family Cinema
301 Washington Terrace

María Irene Fornés is known as “America’s Great Unknown Playwright.” When she stops writing due to memory loss, a friendship with a young writer reignites her visionary, queer, creative spirit, triggering a film collaboration that picks up where the pen left off.

On February 12, 2019, FGSS brought filmmaker Michelle Memran to campus to screen her acclaimed documentary film, “The Rest I Make Up” (2018), in the filled-to-capacity Powell Family Cinema. “The Rest I Make Up” is a portrait of the critically lauded—yet too-often forgotten—Cuban-American playwright, María Irene Fornés. It gives the viewer a unique glimpse into the rich past and everyday life of a brilliant woman who fostered sustaining and challenging connections with everyone around her—friends, lovers, collaborators, students, and audiences. It is also, crucially, the story of Fornés’ late-in-life friendship with Memran.

The film turns on and returns again and again to questions of memory, creativity, and intimacy. As it becomes clear that Fornés is losing her memory to Alzheimer’s and is no longer able to write, it is also richly evident that she is still in many ways able to sustain a life of creative connection. “Memories are like dreams,” she says. She gestures to the camera and says, “The camera is the one who remembers.” The film draws on Fornés’ abundant archive—decades worth of materials she saved—and itself becomes a kind of archive for viewers, for Fornés, and for those who were close with her.

“The Rest I Make Up” also centers around questions of queer love and partnership. We hear from some of her lovers and students, see her return to Havana with Memran, listen to her describe her love for Cuba and the complexity of being both gay and Cuban. The many conversations between Fornés and Memran, both probing and improvisatory, encourage us to rethink what it means to be present and to engage fully with another person. We see their relationship bloom, even though Irene’s memory loss often causes her to forget Michelle’s name. In its structure and its themes, the film compels us to view it in the moment.

The screening was followed by a conversation between director Michelle Memran and Professor Lisa Cohen, who had invited her to Wesleyan, and then a Q&A session with students. The discussion covered the director’s life as a queer woman and how it was shaped by her friendship with Fornés; Fornés’ recent death and how it has shaped Memran’s experience of the film; her recommendations for other fantastic female playwrights to read; the relationship between Fornés’ memory and the film’s nonlinear structure; and the persistence it takes to work on long projects (“The Rest I Make Up” took 15 years to complete). Memran continued her dialogue with students the next day in Professor Cohen’s seminar, “Queer Times,” where she shared some of the archival materials she used in making the film, answered more questions, and helped the class experiment with one of Fornés’ writing exercises.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY Co-Sponsored by the Office of Equity and Inclusion, Office of Student Affairs, Writing Program, Theater Department, and Center for Film Studies



Photos taken by Ginger Hollander

Book Panel: Transnational Feminist Practices Against War

Written by **Jackie Manginelli '19**

Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan were invited to speak about their newest books and their academic collaborations. Assistant Professor of Sociology Abigail Boggs ('02) an FGSS alumni introduced both of the speakers, Caren being her graduate mentor, in a reunion across generations of FGSS scholars.

Caren Kaplan began the book panel by describing her own background as a professor at University of California at Davis and how she had met Inderpal Grewal, who is now a professor at Yale University. Kaplan and Grewal were both working at Georgetown University in the English Department and found the programs and curriculum isolating and insufficiently stimulating. Through their shared discomfort in the department, they grew closer, especially through their shared interest in travel literature, imperialism, gender, and how these topics intersect with one another initiated conversations that have endured for decades. In each other they found intellectual and work “buddies.”

In their respective work, Kaplan and Grewal examine the implications of living in an “increasingly global world,” one in which there is a vast circulation of goods and people. Specifically, they both look at the period after 2nd wave feminism-- a period a little after the Cold War--which they believe is rich with a

critical history of travel. At this point in time there was a movement towards “Coalition Politics,” as well as the emergence of the neo-liberal movement. The over-arching question that still drives their research is: How do we come to think about gender through a transnational lens? Kaplan’s scholarship has turned to a consideration about aerial images, military warfare, and drones. Whereas, Grewal’s work centers on how imperialist states produce different subjectivities as well as how we think about NGOs both within the context of the United States and in states where NGOs are larger than the state.



Diane Weiss '80 Memorial Lecture

“This Grey Gulf: James Baldwin and the Making of American Celebrity”

with Professor Robert Reid-Pharr (Harvard University)

Written by **Jackie Manginelli '19**

On April 18, 2019, the Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program hosted its annual Diane Weiss '80 Memorial Lecture in Russell House. Professor and Chair of FGSS, Jennifer Tucker, introduced Robert Reid-Pharr, the lecturer for the evening. Robert Reid-Pharr is a specialist in African American culture and a leading scholar in race and sexuality studies. He is currently a Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (the first fully appointment faculty in WGS at Harvard!) as well as, African and African American Studies at Harvard University. The room was overflowing for his lecture entitled, “The Grey Gulf: James Baldwin as American Icon.” In his talk, Reid-Pharr explored the ways in which James Baldwin negotiated the uneasy and precarious terrain of being a “celebrity,” as well as the fraught relation of Americans to the term “celebrity.”

In his talk, Reid-Pharr investigated Baldwin’s portrayal on the cover of TIME magazine in relation to the Civil Rights Movement at the time of its publishing. Reid-Pharr called attention to Baldwin’s image being used by TIME to bridge the gap between the white liberal readers of the magazine and the immense violence against Black individuals in Birmingham, Alabama and in the Civil Rights Movement at large. TIME portrayed Baldwin as an “eloquent centrist” between Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Yet Baldwin had to negotiate this tension of his image and status leveraged for certain white liberal ends, as well as his own relationship to his artwork and status.

The manipulation of Baldwin’s celebrity status to fit the needs of white liberals resulted in sheer exploitation at a time when the United States was in upheaval, Reid-Pharr argues. Yet, Baldwin was aware of and involved in this manipulation and negotiation of his celebrity status. Reid-Pharr interrogates this “comfortably liberal” version of Baldwin and attempts to understand Baldwin’s own involvement in the reframing of his status. Although Baldwin recognized that he is implicated in his own reframing, he confessed that he hated TIME magazine. Reid-Pharr calls into question why Baldwin was involved with this article in the first place.

A lively question and answer session followed Robert Reid-Pharr’s engaging lecture. Questions arose on Baldwin’s queerness and effeminacy and thought was given to how homophobia was constituted during Baldwin’s life. Reid-Pharr also fielded questions on the intersections between Baldwin’s sexuality and the religious sentiment of civil rights leaders. Vivid discussion around the “archive” and around Blackness’ relations to “double consciousness” concluded this year’s Diane Weiss '80 Memorial Lecture.

FEMINIST, GENDER, & SEXUALITY STUDIES PRESENTS THE 31ST ANNUAL

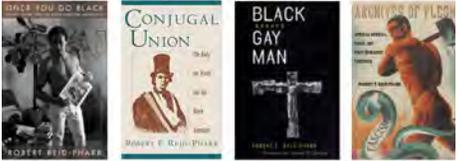
**Diane Weiss '80
Memorial Lecture**
WITH ROBERT REID-PHARR

April 18th | 4:30 PM | Russell House

**This Grey Gulf: James Baldwin and
the Making of American Celebrity**



A specialist in African American culture and a prominent scholar in the field of race and sexuality studies, Robert F. Reid-Pharr is Professor of Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality and African and African American Studies at Harvard University.



WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY



Eating Her Words: The Relationship between the Production and Consumption of Feminist Food and Texts

Written by **Jackie Manginelli '19**

Wesleyan alum and FGSS major, Alex Ketchum '12, returned to campus to give a lecture entitled, "Eating Her Words: The Relationship between the Production and Consumption of Feminist Food and Texts." Today, Ketchum is a faculty lecturer at the Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. She is the founder of The Feminist Restaurant Project, the co-founder of The Historical Cooking Project, and the co-founder of Food, Feminism, and Fermentation. While at Wesleyan, Ketchum was a manager at Long Lane Farm and co-founded the program house, Farm House. The lecture that she gave at Wesleyan centered around the tension between capitalism and feminist consumption and production, specifically using feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses, as her sites of research. As a historian by trade, Ketchum seeks to contextualize these feminist sites within the broader context of capitalist history both in the United States and Canada.

Ketchum began her discussion focused on the first feminist restaurants that formed in the 1970s and 80s. She explored the significance of their origins, explaining that hostile attitudes towards business ownership by women and the fact that women could not access credit cards

to fund a space constrained early efforts by women to become feminist restaurant owners. These early pioneers in feminist vegetarian restaurant work nevertheless advocated for a shift from the space of woman's domesticity to a site of woman's production. Ketchum discussed the nature of the emergent feminist food environment and its nature and significance as a single gender space within the context of the feminist movement. These spaces came into fruition in order to serve ethically produced food and provide a space for socialist activism, economics, and community building. A restaurant that she uses as a case-study is the Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Radical separatist feminists came to own and operate restaurants like these and they sought to "build their own society" and thus, build a space that de-centered capitalism, Ketchum explains. Their creators and users saw these spaces as inherently opposed to capitalism, and as ways to challenge capitalism in their day-to-day activities and operations. Ketchum illustrates how they would grapple with questions of how to make money ethically. In challenging capitalism, these spaces would

source their food ethically, keep their prices accessible, and would pay themselves a living wage. However, with capitalism also came tensions and contradictions, and the owners of these early feminist restaurants faced many challenges in trying to survive as a restaurant and yet also be a feminist social space. Ketchum concluded her talk by stating that these restaurants allowed and fostered the feminist movement and yet were also subject to mainstream economics and government regulation.

Ketchum joined FGSS seniors the next day in Professor Tucker's senior seminar and shared how her senior thesis research led to further research, accomplishments and adventures in scholarship, teaching, and popular writing.



Reflection from
**PROFESSOR
 CHRISTINA CROSBY**



When I teach feminist theories, which I've been doing since the mid-1980s, I tell my students that we read theory in order to ask good questions about the objects of knowledge that interest us. Most students take the course in the fall of their Junior year. Another course I teach, Ethics of Embodiment, is a gateway to the major that enrolls mostly first and second-year students. In both courses, students learn that "personhood is networked," as the ethnographers Don Kulik and Jens Rydström write, and that you become "yourself" only in relation to others. Gender and sexuality are both highly disciplined, as any glance at the world around us confirms. Yet genders and sexualities are also imbued with possibilities that give the lie to common sense. In both these courses, what students read defamiliarizes a taken-for-granted world, and opens unthought of possibilities. The effect can be transformative, as I've seen repeatedly in the senior essays and Honors theses in FGSS students have written and performed. It's tremendously exciting.

More Damnable Questions: Brexit & the Irish

Written by **Jackie Manginelli '19**

On April 30, 2019, the Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program hosted a visit from Susan Kent, a Professor of History at the University of Colorado Boulder. Professor Kent specializes in modern British history with a focus on gender, culture, imperialism, and politics. Her many books include [*Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914*](#) (1987); [*Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain*](#) (1993); [*Gender and Politics in Britain, 1640-1990*](#) (1999); [*Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931*](#) (2009); [*The Women's War of 1929: Gender and Violence in Colonial Nigeria*](#) (2011), with Misty Bastian and Marc Matera; [*Gender and History*](#) (2012); [*The Global Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1919*](#) (2012); [*Queen Victoria: Gender and Empire*](#) (2016), among others. Her most recent book, *Gender, A World History*, will appear in 2020.

Her lecture for FGSS concerned the state of national borders in the context of contemporary British and Irish politics and international relations (the subject of two of this year's FGSS senior thesis projects). She gave a lecture entitled, "More Damnable Questions: Brexit and the Irish." In her lecture, Professor Kent worked to understand the Brexit-Irish phenomenon and the ways in which Northern Ireland has affected Brexit negotiations, and how Brexit will affect the Britain-Ireland peace.

As she explained, the Irish Backstop provision has consistently halted Brexit negotiations in their tracks. The current provision as it stands was rejected by Ireland three times. This provision would create a Customs Union and a single market for Ireland and the European Union (EU) and an increase in EU regulations for Ireland. Professor Kent pondered the ramifications of a real border between Ireland and Britain following a deal, if there ever came a deal, and the likelihood that if Brexit came to fruition then Northern Ireland would reunite with the Republic of Ireland and secede from the United Kingdom. Professor Kent predicts that a Brexit deal and the creation of a hard border will reinvigorate violent resistance between Ireland and Britain that will greatly affect the two countries for the foreseeable future.

The lecture followed with an animated question and answer session concerning Gibraltar's relations with Britain, the "culture of soft power," and the implications of Brexit as a generational phenomenon. There is still much more to be said and considered regarding Ireland's situation and Prof. Kent's presentation about the politics of national borders resonates with other discussions that we have had in FGSS this year as we think about and discuss current debates around surveillance, border patrols, policing, and security.



Meet Nicole Potestivo

Nicole Potestivo joined Feminist, Gender & Sexuality Studies as the administrative assistant. She has worked in Higher Education Administration for over a decade serving in the functional areas of Diversity & Inclusion, First-Year Experience, Student Activities and Residence Life. She received a M.Ed. in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration from the University of Vermont. Prior to working at Wesleyan she was the Coordinator for Eastern Connecticut State University's LGBTQIA+ Pride Center. Working with students who are already influencing change and living life with curiosity and a critical lens is among the most inspiring aspects of her work with FGSS. Outside of work Nicole is the Local Coordinator for Special

Olympics West Hartford and is an avid mountain biker and skier. A Staten Island, NY native, she now lives on the quiet shores of Lake Pocotopaug in East Hampton, CT with her partner.

When asked to complete the following sentences Nicole said,

"One thing I know for sure is whenever it's an option you order the tots."

"When I was 12, I was pretty sure I'd be famous when I grew up."

"If I could invent a holiday, it would definitely involve a family therapy session."

"The last book I read was Tipping the Velvet by Sarah Waters."

Faculty Update

PROFESSOR MARGOT WEISS



Professor Margot Weiss served as chair of the Anthropology department this year. Her scholarship brought her to Stockholm, Sweden and San Jose to present on queer anthropology, and to Atlanta to discuss her contribution to The Routledge History of Queer America, "Queer Politics in Neoliberal Times." She conducted archival research over winter break in the Queers for Economic Justice (QEJ) collection at Cornell University—QEJ is one of the organizations in the book she will be finishing during next year's sabbatical, *Queer Otherwise: Making Knowledge at the Boundaries of Academia and Activism*. You can hear an interview with Professor Margot Weiss on the podcast of the Society for Cultural Anthropology, AnthroPod, on "What is Queer Anthropology?" On campus, she taught a new course, cross-listed with FGSS, "Global Queer Studies," and enjoyed teaching intersectional queer studies to first years in cross-listed FYS "Social Norms, Social Power" course.

ALUMNI NEWS

Anna Roberts-Gevalt *Class of 2009*



Anna Roberts-Gevalt '09 lives in crown heights brooklyn, recovering from a busy year of touring with her music project, Anna & Elizabeth. The two released their third record last year, "the invisible comes to us," on smithsonian folkways. The record is a

reworkings of a dozen traditional songs Anna uncovered in an archive, recorded by folklorist Helen Hartness Flanders, who spent the 1930s and 1940s recording elder new englanders singing old traditional songs. Anna & Elizabeth toured the record across the country, and in europe, highlights of which included Carnegie Hall, and singing at the gala of heroine Meredith Monk. She's currently back to school, pursuing an MFA in sculpture at Bard College, is preparing for a fall residency at the Smithsonian, and is amidst writing a new solo show and record.

Steven Kidder *Class of 2018*

Steven Kidder '18 works with the American Civil Liberties Union in New Hampshire. Focused on centering civil rights and civil liberties in the upcoming presidential primary. Optimizing NH's status as first in the nation primary to change the narrative in the primary to include an intentional conversation with candidates with what they'll do to secure and defend civil liberties as president, specifically around immigrants rights, LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive rights, criminal justice reform, privacy rights, and voting rights.

Rachel Eccles *Class of 2018*



Rachel Eccles '18 is a researcher for investor relations firm Joele Frank, Wilkinson, Brimmer, Katcher in New York City. Eccles frequently cites her Wesleyan education for equipping her with the critical thinking skills necessary to thoughtfully approach

financial research. These topics include mergers & acquisitions, shareholder activism, private equity, bankruptcy, and corporate governance. Eccles resides on the Upper West side and is looking forward to summer in the Hudson Valley.

Becca Winkler *Class of 2016*

Becca Winkler '16 recently moved back to America after living in Thailand for the last 2 and a half years working with Mahouts Elephant Foundation developing our community based ecotourism and elephant conservation projects. We launched our pilot project in 2016 and now have two successful projects running! I will be leaving my full time role with Mahouts Elephant Foundation to start my PhD at the University of Pennsylvania in the Fall in the Cultural Anthropology Department.

Grace Kredell *Class of 2010*

Grace Kredell '10 accepted into the graduate program in Women's History at Sarah Lawrence and will be attending in the Fall.

Ella Dawson *Class of 2014*



Ella Dawson '14 is now the Senior Social Media Editor at TED Talks. She is also a sex writer currently working on her first book, a memoir about casual sex, hookup culture and navigating desire as a young woman.

Her short fiction has been published in five erotica collections, most recently Erotic Teasers: A Cleis Press Anthology.

Hannah Barber Doucet & Samantha Doucet



Hannah Barber Doucet '10 and Samantha Doucet '09 live in Boston and are celebrating their 5 year wedding anniversary this year. Hannah is completing her pediatric residency at Boston Children's Hospital and will start fellowship in pediatric emergency medicine at Hasbro Children's Hospital in Providence, RI. She has spent her medical career thus far both creating and researching/evaluating educational interventions for practitioners around diverse patient populations, health equity, and implicit bias. Samantha has received her masters in both teaching and social work since her graduation. She is currently full-time parenting two incredible kids, Olympia (3yrs) and Delphine (5 mos).



CLASS OF 2019

SENIOR THESIS WRITERS

MARISELLA ANDREWS

Thesis Title: *The Consequence of Legislation: An Analysis of Military Sexual Assault*

WILLIAM H. BOSHA

Thesis Title: *Keeping a Str8 Face: Gay Sex, Straight Men, and Hetero Performativity*
Advisor: Victoria Pitts-Taylor **Inspiration:** My experience at an all-boys high school and my fascination with how straight men interact with queer worlds. **Favorite Discovery:** My retheorization of straight men as a queer archetype and my theorization of hetero performativity, or the ways in which gay men appropriate straight-acting masculinity for erotic means. **#Hashtags you would give to your project:** #str8 #gay4pay **Dream reader/viewer:** Jane Ward **FGSS-Related Work:** Studied queer-inclusive family law as an intern at Promundo in D.C.

SELENE CANTER

Thesis Title: *Translating the Ineffable: Deconstruction and the Political*

HOPE FOURIE

Thesis Title: *Tailoring Gender: The Past, Present, and Future of Queer Dress* **Advisor:** Katherine Brewer Ball **Inspiration:** The intersection of costume design and gender performance. **Favorite Discovery:** That self-styling is the key to a queer futurity of clothing. **#Hashtags you would give to your project:** #queerstyling **Dream reader/viewer:** Ezra Miller

ISAAC GOTTERER

Thesis Title: *WARNING* **Advisor:** Katherine Brewer-Ball **Inspiration:** gay people in general **Favorite Discovery:** I'm more traumatized than I thought **#Hashtags you would give to your project:** #concert #queer #trauma #SpaghettiO's **Dream reader/viewer:** José Esteban Muñoz **FGSS-Related Work:** I am a coordinator of Wesleyan's Clinic Escort club.

S. J.

Thesis Title: *Queering China in Cyberspace: Desire, Resistance & Discipline in Imagining Chinese Modern Gayness* **Advisor:** Kerwin Kaye

Inspiration: My dissatisfaction with current scholarly research on topics of China as well as the mainstream political organization centered on "identity" and "rights". **Favorite Discovery:** The creative potential for the "others," the "non-normative," the "outsiders" to work individually and collectively in fighting against social injustice and in changing social realities. They are "abled" social subjects who are not just performing preformed roles and scripts assigned to them, but always transforming meanings and narratives through their labor and voice — they can speak, and they have spoken. **#Hashtags you would give to your project:** #WeCanSpeak **Dream reader/viewer:** Donna Haraway **FGSS-Related Work:** Teaching feminist/queer theories at summer programs in China, web writer/volunteer at various gender/sexuality-related NGOs

JACKIE MANGINELLI

Thesis Title: *Trapped in Transit: Rendering Bodies Subject or Suspect at the Airport* **Advisor:** Jennifer Tucker

Inspiration: I became even more fascinated with critical race and gender studies within security studies upon reading Jason DeLeón's work, "Land of the Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail." **Favorite Discovery:** Hidden architectural deterrence strategies that I outline in my second chapter. Particularly, the use of windows and natural light to highlight individual features in faces so that security cameras can utilize facial recognition technology more effectively. **#Hashtags you would give to your project:** #deterrence #trappedintransit **Dream reader/viewer:** Jason DeLeón **FGSS-Related Work:** On the Wesleyan Student Assembly, I was the chair of the Student Life Committee. One of my projects involved creating post-abortion/post-IUD care kits that are freely distributed at the health center for those students who want one.

KATE MACKEN

Thesis Title: *The Inclusion of Women in Post-Conflict Societies: Pathways to Peace-Building* **Advisor:** Sarah Wiliarty **Inspiration:** Irish political life and gendered effects of colonialism. **Favorite Discovery:** In the negotiations to end South African apartheid, some members of the National Party and ANC became life-long friends. **#Hashtags you would give to your project:** #negotiatingceasefires #inclusivity #wherearethewomen **Dream reader/viewer:** Sara Ahmed **FGSS-Related Work:** Chair of the Title IX Student Advisory Committee

TESHEIA VAN DER HORST

Thesis Title: *Skinny Me is the Real Me": The Neoliberal, Postfeminist Discourse of "Pro-Anorexia" and Fitness Bloggers* **Advisor:** Jennifer Tucker **Inspiration:** Connections between neoliberal politics and postfeminism. **Favorite Discovery:** The history of the medicalization of anorexia is intimately connected to middle age religious histories. **#Hashtags you would give to your project:** #bodyconsciousness #bodyworknormalization **Dream reader/viewer:** Susan Bordo **FGSS-Related Work:** I write on body related issues

RACHEL WILLIAMS

Thesis Title: *Le robó el alma": Male Lovesickness in Early Modern Spanish Literature* **Advisor:** Gabrielle Ponce-Hegenauer **Inspiration:** The ways in which male lovesick behavior is similar to what is generally named "hysteria" in the Spanish tradition, and how this complicates traditional notions of gender expression. **Favorite Discovery:** The ways in which 17th century author Maria de Zayas posits theories of gender similar to what modern feminists believe, though they pre-date any conceptions of feminism by several centuries. **#Hashtags you would give to your project:** #lovesickness, #suffering **Dream reader/viewer:** Marion Wells or Lesel Dawson

FEMINIST GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES

CAROL B. OHMANN MEMORIAL PRIZE

Awarded for excellence in Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies to:

WILLIAM BOSHA, 2019 (BEST THESIS)

HOPE FOURIE, 2019 (BEST THESIS)

ADA MOSES, 2019 (BEST ESSAY)

Thank you to our student contributors,
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Jackie Manginelli



María Frías Vellón



Lena Gwendolyn Mitchell