

FEMINIST GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES



LISA LOWE DELIVERS 35TH ANNUAL DIANE WEISS '80 MEMORIAL LECTURE

The 35th Annual Dianne Weiss Lecture was given by Lisa Lowe on March 24, 2022. Professor Lowe is Samuel Knight Professor of American Studies at Yale University, where she is an affiliate faculty in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and in Ethnicity, Race, and Migration. An interdisciplinary scholar whose work is concerned with the analysis of race, immigration, capitalism, and colonialism, she is the author or co-editor of four books, including *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Duke UP, 2015).

In her talk entitled "Colonial Domesticity and Social Reproduction," Lowe considered "the centrality of forms of domesticity, such as family, kinship, and schooling, to the social reproduction of colonialism and racial capitalism in the U.S.." Lowe argued that "colonial and capitalist social relations are materially reproduced through feminized care work, household, and biological labor. While homes and households are primary sites for the invisible and mostly unwaged labors of colonized, racialized, and immigrant women that reproduce human beings, social reproduction takes place on plantations, in schools, factories, on assembly lines, in hospitals and prisons and in other institutions, at both intimate and global scales."

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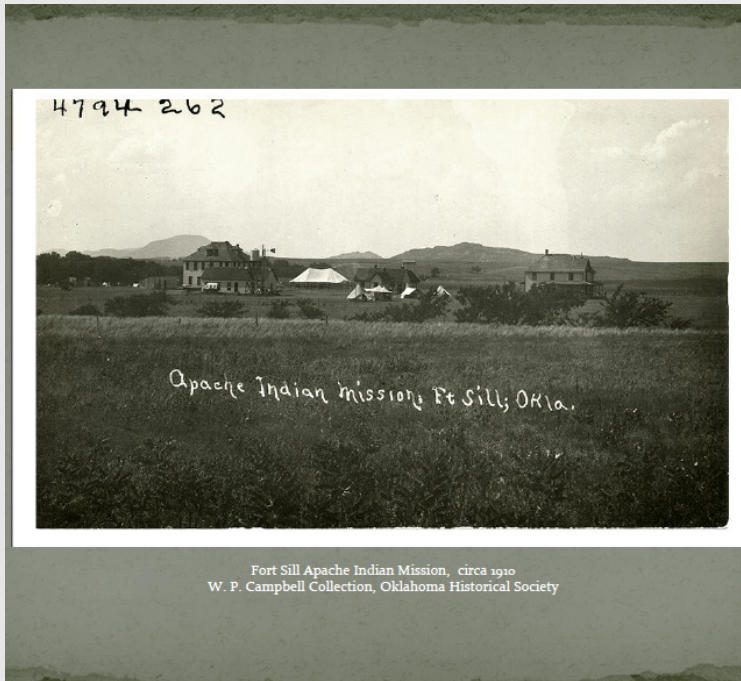
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Lowe joins a host of impressive scholars who have delivered the lecture in memory of alumnus Diane Weiss '80, who graduated as one of the first women's studies majors at Wesleyan University. Lowe's lecture, held as a webinar, was attended by over 70 people from the Wesleyan community. Among them were seven undergraduates whom we invited to write about their reactions to the lecture.

Lowe's discussion of Fort Sill, which in 2019 saw protests against its reopening as a migrant camp for children, sparked much interest. Biology and Neuroscience and Behavior major Elsie Zhao '22 noted that the talk "began with an overview of family separation in the past and present, showcasing the repetitive usage of Fort Sill as detention campus, boarding school and immigration detention center, all on historically Native American land. The persistence of colonial ties is appalling."

Petra Leite '25 reflected on "how deeply the damage of colonialism runs through many different communities within our society... [and] how unpaid labor has always been essential to colonialism and reproduces itself throughout society." Lowe's lecture described how "much of this unpaid or low wage labor takes the form of reproductive labor. Minority women are most commonly subjected to this labor because of the long-lasting effects of colonialism and slavery."

Maggie McCormick '23, double-majoring in Psychology and Science in Society, sees "connections between [Lowe's reference to] a 'crisis of the organization of care' and the work we have been doing in class studying race and gender." "This had me thinking," McCormick writes, "about how women, especially women of color, have their competency in caring for others, especially their children, constantly thrown into question.... Our ideas of domesticity and sexuality are colonial in nature."

Some students addressed how Lowe's scholarship resonated with their own experiences. Hwi Yeo '22 wrote that "My lived experiences of bouncing around various immigrant communities and being raised by the weathered hands of older migrant women of post-war backgrounds fit so strongly into the schema of social reproduction Professor Lowe was sketching out." Yeo, a Science in Society major, said that "It felt meaningful to gain both language and rhetoric that helped me better understand my own positionality."

Others took note of the theoretical critique Lowe's analysis employed. English major Svend Phillips '23 remarked that "One substantial lesson I came away from the talk with is how deeply early constructions of Marxism and labor theory discounted or ignored domestic forms of labor." In a similar vein, Megan Perkins '23 wrote, "As an environmental studies major, the majority of my philosophy-based classes center around the pitfalls of capitalism as it pertains to the environmental sector... This talk opened my eyes to a new critique I had not previously considered: how capitalism is dependent on women's unwaged reproductive labor, [which is] a condition of possibility for the waged work in society and then in turn, the accumulation of surplus value."

Letter from the Chair

BY VICTORIA PITTS-TAYLOR

Recent events have prompted me to reflect on the importance of feminist, gender and sexuality studies and its far-reaching resonance. State legislators recently proposed defunding Gender and Women's Studies and all related curricular and co-curricular activities at the University of Wyoming - every class and every event addressing the topics. The politics of deep red Wyoming may seem very distant to us at Wesleyan, but they signal a new front for far-right conservatives' culture war, which turns education into a battleground over gender and sexuality as well as race. In Florida, the recently passed HB 1557 outlaws references to sexual orientation or gender identity by public elementary school teachers. At least 15 other states are considering similar or more expansive legislation, which would target instruction, books, or student clubs that center on LGBTQ themes in public education. Instruction about systemic racism is being targeted by bills in at least 36 states.



Some bills like Pennsylvania's HB 1532 cynically depict teaching about racism and sexism as the indoctrination of racism and sexism. Though many of these fights have taken place over K-12 schools, according to a recent report by PEN America, this and 20 other such bills that target colleges and universities were introduced between January and September last year. Attacks on gender studies are also rampant in some parts of Latin America and Europe. In Hungary, gender studies programs have been banned or lost accreditation, and in Russia they are being registered as "foreign agents," leading to their closure or eviction from universities.

What would a ban on gender and sexuality studies and related activities mean at our university? It is hard to gauge all of the far-reaching effects such a ban would bring to the intellectual and cultural life of this institution. The curriculum is replete with the study of gender and sexuality, feminist and queer theory. In addition to those course that are part of the FGSS core curriculum, cross-listed courses are offered by an incredibly wide range of departments, programs and colleges at Wesleyan. This year they included courses on the histories of women in revolutions, the LGBTQ movement, and gender and slavery; on the depiction of family life on television, on melodrama in global film, and on gay Latin American art and culture; on women's fiction of the 1970s, on the senses in poetry and cinema, and on Japanese women's writing; on African-American theater and on curating and performance; on Black political leadership and women in politics; on South Asian dance; on animals in literature, art, and philosophy; and on the study of sexualities in early modern English literature and in Christian theology. New cross-listed courses are being added every year; for 2022-23 these include feminism and technoscience from the Science in Society program, while FGSS will offer new courses on Black feminist and trans theories, performance studies, and decolonizing gender and sexuality, among others. The list keeps changing as research interests emerge and develop among existing and new faculty.

Part of our task in FGSS is to draw synergistic connections across a wide range of disciplines, fields and methods that theorize and examine gender, sexuality and social constructions of difference and inequality. Beyond the classroom, the university hosts many events that grapple with gender and sexuality, from lectures, symposia and workshops to readings, film screenings, and performances. Those organized by FGSS this year include the Fall Symposium, which focused on Decolonial Feminisms and addressed political struggles in Pakistan, France, Uganda and Senegal as well as the U.S.. Our annual Weiss Memorial Lecture featured Lisa Lowe, an acclaimed scholar from Yale whose research examines colonialism, race, and immigration as well as gender and social reproduction. These events drew many students, faculty and community members. (In this newsletter you can read about how students linked these lectures to their own diverse studies and experiences.) We also hosted faculty salons -- one on historian Jennifer Tucker's research on U.S. gun culture, and another on Afiya Zia and Elizabeth Kolsky's study of femicide and the legal legacies of colonialism in Pakistan and India. These workshops gathered scholars from religion, history, South Asian studies, queer studies and other fields for intense discussions of works-in-progress. In May we organized a "tertulia," an event consisting of talks and readings by faculty in FGSS, sociology and education studies, African-American studies, English and creative writing. We also, of course, fostered student research, including undergraduate conference presentations and a summer internship.

Of course, a wide array of events on gender and sexuality themes were organized by colleagues across the campus, some of which we co-sponsored, such as the screening of a documentary on reproductive and human rights violations in women's prisons (organized by Film Studies), a talk on U.S. policy in Afghanistan (organized by South Asian Studies), a panel on queer nightlife (sponsored by American Studies), and a guest lecture on reproductive politics in Africa (for a History course). All of this rich and innovative work and collaboration cannot be taken for granted. In too many places, similar work is endangered by anti-democratic efforts to restrict teaching and learning about gender and sexuality, as well as race and systemic racism, mainly (but not exclusively) through defunding public schools, colleges and universities.

Given this difficult broader climate, which is also still shaped by the global pandemic and other crises, I write with a deep sense of gratitude for our program's successes this past year. We have been fortunate to host Afiya Zia, a researcher and activist whose work centers on feminism and women's rights in Pakistan, as a visiting assistant professor. Dr. Zia taught upper-level seminars on human rights and decoloniality and offered her considerable expertise at many public events throughout the year. We are also excited to welcome Henry Washington, Jr., who joins us in the fall as an assistant professor in race, gender and sexuality. Professor Washington, who earned his Ph.D. in Modern Thought and Literature at Stanford, examines the emergence of the criminalized Black body in the sciences and in policing practices, paying attention to the role of purported sexual difference of Black female bodies in casting Black people as "perpetual perpetrators." He also examines Black literary and artistic voices and Black expressive culture as a complicated "archive of resistance." Professor Washington will teach upper-level seminars and a gateway course that introduces students to themes of race, gender, and sexuality through the lens of performance studies. This year, we also partnered with alumni who successfully raised funds to create a new lecture series in honor of Sheila Tobias, whom you can read about in this newsletter. We also celebrate our graduating FGSS majors and those who have won awards, including the new Christina Crosby Award in Social Justice Feminism, named in honor of our beloved colleague, a writer, mentor and educator and a fierce advocate for feminist, gender and sexuality studies.

FGSS WELCOMES PROF. HENRY WASHINGTON, JR.

The FGSS Program welcomes Henry Washington, Jr. as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Feminist, Gender and Sexuality Studies beginning Fall semester of 2022. Professor Washington received his Ph.D. from Stanford University in Modern Thought and Literature, with Minors in Feminist, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Theater and Performance Studies. His dissertation was entitled, “Enfleshing the Criminal: Producing and Policing Black (Sexual) Deviance in the Criminological Imagination, 1871-1960.” He has recently published in the journal *Women & Performance*.

Washington will teach two courses in Fall '22. *Black Feminist and Trans Theories of the Hu/Man*, an upper-level elective, provides an introduction to “Black feminist and trans theories’ interventions into the modern Western category of the Human and its violent exclusions,” according to Washington’s course description. Washington created the course as a graduate student at Stanford, where he won the Outstanding Mentor and Teaching Award from the Program in African & African American Studies. The course will allow students to “develop broad knowledge of Black feminist and trans theories’ provocations regarding the intersecting identity categories that organize our world, and will be encouraged to develop their own critical approaches that are attentive to the hegemony of racialized gender and its attendant violences.”

Washington also created a new course for the FGSS program called *Performing Identities*, which is open to all undergraduates and will serve as a Gateway for the FGSS major. The course “uses ‘performance’ as a lens through which to better understand the constructedness of identity. Further, it explores how minority artists and theorists mobilize art and ‘performance’ in their efforts to scrutinize these identity categories’ coherence and authority.”

Professor Washington will spend Spring 2023 as a Faculty Fellow at Wesleyan’s Center for Humanities (CHUM). CHUM Faculty Fellows pursue an original research project that coincides with the theme for the semester, which in Spring 2023 will be “Take Care,” an exploration of intimate labor, carework, caring relations, political, cultural and aesthetic economies of care and related themes.





FGSS FALL SYMPOSIUM ON DECOLONIAL FEMINISM

BY SOPHIE PENN

The annual FGSS Fall Symposium for 2021–22 centered on decolonial feminism, a framework that considers the relation between gender and coloniality and seeks to disrupt the power relations of colonialism, settler colonialism and racial capitalism. Featuring lectures from Dr. Bhakti Shringarpure (UCONN), Fania Noël (NYU), and Wesleyan’s Frank B. Weeks Visiting Professor of FGSS Dr. Afiya Zia, the hybrid event on October 1 drew a crowd of students, faculty and alumni, both in person at Judd Hall and streaming online. Our account below includes responses from a few of them.

Shringarpure’s talk entitled “Anti-Colonial Hauntings: Mati Diop and Jennifer Makumbi’s African Feminist Revenants” explored haunting, ghosts, and the afterlife as a rhetorical method for representing subjugated identities and as an allegory for feminist agendas. Both the Senegalese/French director Diop, whose film *Atlantics/Atlantique* won the Grand Jury Prize at Canne in 2019, and the Ugandan novelist Makumbi, author of *A Girl is a Body of Water*, use supernatural storytelling. Shringarpure, who is author of *Cold War Assemblages: Decolonization to Digital* and a professor of English and women’s, gender and sexuality studies, discussed the importance of engaging with non-Western and indigenous epistemologies and looking for new sites of knowledge production as a way to decolonize historiography. Abby Nicholson ’23, an English and Government major, was struck by Shringarpure’s analysis of how “the west has imposed a ‘cerebral way of knowing’ on the world,” which is disrupted by attention to ghosts and spirits in African feminist literature and cinema.

Fania Noël, a Haitian-born, Paris-raised Afrofeminist organizer and a doctoral candidate at The New School, highlighted the Nyansapo Festival, the first Black feminist festival in France, which was held in 2017. Her talk, titled “Afrofeminism in France: Political Autonomy as a Compass,” centered on the precarious politics of Afrofeminism in a French context. She laid out a history of Black feminist political spaces in France from 1944 onward, culminating in the Mwasi Collective, a feminist group fighting for Black liberation. She recounted how French authorities made continual efforts to ban their festival under claims that it was “anti-white.” Using the prefix “Afro-” instead of the French “noires,” Noël stressed a shared history of activism between the French Afrofeminist and other postcolonial movements. Many audience members appreciated Noël’s sustained focus on activism. College of Letters and Science in Society major Rowan Beaudoin-Friede ’22 remarked, “As someone involved in direct-action, I found this part of the presentation refreshing and exciting, especially in the context of the academy which often doesn’t do enough to explore what it means to champion the ideas it produces.”

To conclude the symposium, Afiya Zia addressed the task of decolonizing academia. Dr. Zia is author of *Faith and Feminism in Pakistan: Religious Agency or Secular Autonomy?*, and teaches courses on women's political and sexual revolutions in the Middle East and South Asia and decoloniality, and human rights. Working as both an activist and a scholar, Dr. Zia argued that Western academia sometimes exceptionalizes South Asian women, treating the Global South as a sort of homogenous colony and South Asian women as dehumanized survivors.

Proposing a variety of solutions, both theoretical and praxis-based, Dr. Zia suggested that we engage subalternity, call out western feminists for their engagement with capitalism, and identify the flaws even within syllabi and conversations deemed "decolonialist." Beaudoin-Friede noted that "although Zia's presentation on disjunctures in decolonial feminisms was rooted in critical evaluation of theory, it was at the same time, concerned with the real-world effects of the theory and challenges to it."

The symposium was especially valuable for its exploration of decoloniality from three distinct angles. Nicholson noted that "I have occasionally heard the term 'decolonial' thrown around in academic and activist spaces without fully understanding what it means. After listening to the talk, I have a much better sense of what decolonization is..." FGSS alum Vianca Perez '21 found the symposium "full of insight because it showcased praxis [and] theory."



TWO FGSS MAJORS ELECTED TO WESLEYAN'S GAMMA CHAPTER OF PHI BETA KAPPA

BY BLYTHE GUECIA

In Fall 2021, fifteen Wesleyan seniors were elected to the University's Gamma Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest national scholastic honor society. India Finley Dixon, a double major in Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Philosophy, was among them. As an FGSS major, India completed a Senior Essay during her final year at Wes. India's essay centers around queer coded villains in Disney movies. India grew up watching Disney and Pixar movies with her sister, and she was first introduced to the topic of queer coded villains and queer futurity through her high school's Gay-Straight Alliance club. Later on, as sophomore at Wesleyan, India revisited her passion for analyzing animated films in a final project for "Introduction to Queer Studies."

India's final project investigated how queer coded villains were handled in Disney movie remakes. This project would serve as the starting point for her future Senior Essay. India's multifaceted essay investigates the history of censorship in Hollywood, dating back to the Hays Code, tracks the display of queerness in Disney films, and analyzes the ways in which the presentation of queer coded characters has historically centered around violence, death, disobedience, and disgust.



Natalie Lobach, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Philosophy double major, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in Spring 2022, an honor limited to the top 12 percent of graduating seniors at Wesleyan. In their thesis, "Transmythologies," Natalie uses a philosophical framework to analyze 20th century myths pertaining to sex and gender. Throughout their project, Natalie has specifically explored myths concerning transsexuality and the ways in which they can be used to destabilize our understanding of sex, gender, subject-hood, knowledge, and the world around us.

In addition to receiving Phi Beta Kappa for their work at Wesleyan, Natalie presented their thesis at the Johns Hopkins University's third annual Richard Macksey National Undergraduate Humanities Research Symposium in April. The symposium offers students across the country the chance to gather and disseminate their interdisciplinary research on a national scale.

FGSS TO HOST NEW LECTURE SERIES IN HONOR OF SHEILA TOBIAS

Wesleyan University was coeducational from 1872 to 1909, but due to pressure from male alumni, who believed that the university's reputation was harmed by the presence of female students, women were barred for more than half a century, until 1968. That year, women transfers were allowed. (Only a few years earlier, in 1965, Wesleyan actively recruited African-American students for the first time, creating the Vanguard Class of 1969). In 1970, the university admitted a coeducational first-year class. To manage the inclusion of women students, Wesleyan hired Sheila Tobias, a former journalist and instructor at Cornell, as the Associate Provost at Wesleyan University. Tobias served in that position from 1970 to 1978. As the first woman senior administrator in the history of the university, Tobias worked on hiring women faculty and advocating for salary and promotion equity. Tobias also taught a women's studies course at Wesleyan, one of the first in the nation, and brought well-known feminists to give lectures. Tobias' friends Louise Knight '72 and Jerry Stouck '77 recall, "When Gloria Steinem spoke in McConaughy Hall, the place was packed. It was a time when the nation was wrestling with the meaning of feminism and many were eager to know more."



Tobias' career after leaving Wesleyan focused in part on barriers to participation in STEM by women and other marginalized groups. Her first book *Overcoming Math Anxiety*, based on a study she co-authored which found that math was perceived by students with 'math anxiety' as a white male discipline, was published in 1978. Tobias spent much of the next decades working on science education and feminist activism. Her books include *Breaking the Science Barrier* (1992) and *Faces of Feminism: An Activist's Reflections on the Women's Movement* (1997).

In honor of Tobias, who passed away in 2021, Knight and Stouck spearheaded a fundraising effort to create a lecture series to be organized and hosted by FGSS. Knight and Stouck describe the lecture series as honoring "Tobias's love of Wesleyan University" and carrying forward "her commitment to feminist writing, lecturing, and activism." With the goal of \$25,000 already surpassed, FGSS will host the first lecture in 2023. Speakers will include feminist organizers and thought leaders whose impact is mainly outside the academy.

The Olin Library houses the Sheila Tobias Women's Studies Collection, which contains materials about feminism and the women's movement, mainly from 1969–1977.

ALUMNI NEWS

Grace Kredell Class of 2010

Grace Kredell '10 works as the Program Director for The Golden Dome School, a non-profit educational and curatorial platform dedicated to studying the relationship between art, ecology, and mysticism. She is currently finishing up an M.A. in Womxn's History at Sarah Lawrence College.

Allegra Heath-Stout Class of 2012

Allegra Heath-Stout '12 serves as the Director of Young Adult Fellowship and Disability Initiatives at JOIN for Justice, the Jewish Organizing Institute and Network, in Boston. Having focused on disability studies and activism at Wesleyan, Allegra is thrilled to be able to bring a disability justice focus to JOIN. She has launched multiple fellowships for Jews with disabilities and is incorporating anti-ableist education for all participants. In 2020, Allegra organized with co-workers to unionize as part of the Nonprofit Professional Employees Union. She also serves on the board of the Disability Policy Consortium. Allegra lives in Arlington, MA with her partner, Laura Heath-Stout '11, and their baby.

Alex Ketchum Class of 2012

Alex Ketchum '12 is the Faculty Lecturer for the Institute of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at McGill University. Ketchum also serves as the Director of the Just Feminist Tech and Scholarship Lab. Her work at the lab integrates food, environmental, technological, and gender history. Ketchum is the founder of the The Feminist Restaurant Project and the co-founder and editor of "The Historical Cooking Project," a website dedicated to food history. Ketchum is the author of *How to Start A Feminist Restaurant* (Microcosm Publishing 2018) and *How to Organized Inclusive Events: A Handbook for Feminist, Accessible, and Sustainable Gatherings* (Microcosm 2020). In 2022, Ketchum will release her first peer-reviewed book, *Engage in Public Scholarship!: A Guidebook on Feminsit and Accessible Communication* (Concordia University Press, 2022), which examines the power dynamics that impact who gets to create certain kinds of academic work and for whom these outputs are accessible. Ketchum's second book, *Ingredients for Revolution: American Feminist Restaurants, Cafes, and Coffeeshouses, 1972- 2022* (Concordia University Press, Fall 2022), is a history of lesbian feminist restaurants, cafes, and coffeeshouses in the United States from the 1972 to present. In 2021, Ketchum was named one of the 100 Brilliant Women in AI Ethics.

Ella Dawson Class of 2014

Ella Dawson '14 is now an official Patreon Ambassador. Dawson also recently signed with Jamie Carr, a literary agent at The Book Group, and is working on her first novel.

Gwendolyn Rosen Class of 2015

Gwendolyn Rosen '15 sits on the board of Directors for SHIP, a nonprofit that seeks to provide sexual health education and a space for people to engage in open dialogue about sexuality. Rosen studies at the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health and will graduate this May with a MPH and a certificate in Sexuality, Sexual, and Reproductive Health.

Rachel Eccles Class of 2018

Rachel Eccles '18 is the Senior Account Executive at Joele Frank, Wilkinson, Brimmer, Katcher, a public relations firm in New York City. She provides communications support to both public and private companies across a broad range of special situations, including mergers and acquisitions, restructuring and bankruptcies, shareholder activism defense, management changes, IPOs and SPAC transactions, cybersecurity incidents and general crisis management. She also assists clients with ongoing investor relations projects and general corporate communications. Eccles joined Joele Frank in 2018 and currently resides in DUMBO, Brooklyn.



Rebecca Goldfarb Terry Class of 2019

Rebecca Goldfarb Terry '19 is starting her BSN-MSN program at UPenn in the fall of 2022. Her MSN will be a concentration in gender-related health and midwifery. She will graduate as a certified nurse midwife and women's health nurse practitioner. Terry currently works at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia as a Clinical Research Coordinator for Dr. Sandra Amaral, who is the medical director of the kidney transplant program and also a Wesleyan alum!

CAROL B. OHMANN AWARD

AWARDED FOR EXCELLENCE IN FEMINIST, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

India Dixon '22 (BEST ESSAY) Vianca Pérez '22 (BEST ESSAY) Natalie Lobach '22 (BEST THESIS)

THE CHRISTINA CROSBY PRIZE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE FEMINISM

TO RECOGNIZE AN FGSS MAJOR WHO EXEMPLIFIES OUR BELOVED COLLEAGUE CHRISTINA CROSBY'S DEDICATION TO THEORY FORGED BY ACTION AND COMMITMENT TO INTERSECTIONAL ACTIVISM

Killian Cimino '22

MEET MEGHAN



Meghan Demanchyk joined Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Science and Society Program as the Administrative Assistant. Meghan recently graduated from Merrimack College in 2020 where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies with a Minor in Social Justice. Meghan began her administrative career at Merrimack where she worked in the Women's and Gender Studies department from 2016-2020. After graduating from Merrimack College, she began working as a Fieldwork Coordinator for Josh Elliot's campaign for State Representative. Outside of her work at Wes, Meghan volunteers with Pro-Choice Connecticut in Hartford, CT. Meghan is a Hamden native and some of her favorite weekend activities include hiking in Sleeping Giant State Park, searching for new vintage or antique stores, and trying new restaurants and coffee shops! Meghan is currently attempting to bake her way through *Dessert Person: Recipes and Guidance for Baking with Confidence* by Claire Saffitz. After working in the FGSS department for nearly one year, when asked what the most inspiring aspect of her job was, Meghan shared "my favorite part is that I get to work in a setting where I am able to continue pursuing my passion, while also supporting students and faculty. It's the best of both worlds!"

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