

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

News and Events

Volume 1 • Issue 1 • Winter 2011



Have you visited our new location? WGSS faculty and staff are now in the XSB building across from Lincoln Hall in the Park Blocks.

Greetings from the WGSS Director

Welcome to WGSS! One of the exciting aspects of Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies is our collaborative effort to build and sustain a vibrant feminist and queer community at PSU. Community is never a given; it emerges when individuals devote care and commitment to the creation of a shared vision. WGSS is fortunate to have faculty, staff, students, and supporters who contribute to our expanding knowledges of the intricacies of gender and sexuality attuned to increasingly connected local and global realities.

In this newsletter you'll have a chance to meet our most dedicated donor, Robert Mercer, who explains how relationships with feminists changed his life. Please take the opportunity to say hello and thank Robert when you see him on campus. You'll also hear from one of our WS majors, Meera Norris, about how she expanded her feminist knowledge by creating an empowering space for young Muslim women at a local community center. And to help you think about your own prospective practicum placements, check out Shelly Merry's column, *Practicum: What You Make of It*.

To keep a community vital it is important to have new inspirations and ideas in circulation. And who better than students to make that real for all of us! In reading the call for papers for the upcoming Student Colloquium, imagine yourself as part of a vibrant discussion about global feminisms, queer advocacy, intersectionality, or whatever your feminist/queer visions and versions may be. That's the Colloquium: a space for exchanging fresh ideas, compelling theories, and creative innovations, all in the name of feminist and queer challenges to the ordinary way we do things. Be part of it this spring as a presenter or join the conversation as an audience member—everyone is welcome!

Also this spring we're hosting two great events that will enhance our community work. In early March PSU alum and storyteller Sassafras Lowrey will join us. Awarded a place on the American Library Association's Over the Rainbow book list for 2011 (and included in their Top 11 Books of 2011), her new anthology, *Kicked Out*, gives voice to the narratives of queer youth who are experiencing homelessness. Meet Sassafras and hear more about her award-winning book on March 10th at 7:00 pm in SMSU 296.

We're also excited to have Professor Sue Rankin from Pennsylvania State University as a guest speaker at our April 22 Feminist Pedagogy conference. Professor Rankin is a tireless advocate for LGBTQ people and for the creation of an inclusive environment in higher education. She's the lead researcher of a new report titled "2010: The State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People" and co-author of a forthcoming book entitled *The Lives of Transgender People*. For more information on the conference please read Sally Eck's piece in this newsletter.

Thanks to all of you who make our WGSS community stronger day by day!

In Solidarity,

Sally McWilliams

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Editor: Kari Smit

The WGSS newsletter is published biannually with content contributed by faculty, students, and community partners. Help us stay current with student achievements, events, and other WGSS news by emailing smitk@pdx.edu. News received between publications may be advertised via student and faculty listservs.

Save the Date!

"Say My Name" Screening

Friday, January 28
7:00 pm
5th Avenue Cinema

WGSS Open House

Thursday, February 3
10:00 am-12:00 pm
SMSU 238

Sassafras Lowrey Lecture:

**"Nobody Loves You.
Now What? Queer Youth
Homelessness and Creating
Chosen Family"**
Thursday, March 10
7:00-9:00 pm
SMSU 296-8

Feminist Pedagogy and Social Justice Education Symposium

Friday, April 22
9:00 am-6:00 pm
Location TBA

WGSS Student Colloquium

Friday, May 13
9:00 am-5:00 pm
Location TBA

Spring Celebration

Saturday, June 11
6:00-9:00 pm
SMSU 238

Keep up-to-date on new
event announcements by
visiting our website:
www.ws.pdx.edu

Upcoming Events

2nd Annual Feminist Pedagogy and Social Justice Education Symposium

Last April WGSS hosted our first annual Feminist Pedagogy and Social Justice Education Symposium. The conference was open to anyone interested in the topic of creating socially just and feminist classrooms. We held several sessions packed with roundtables on topics ranging from interrupting oppression to understanding privilege to grading as a tool (not a weapon!) and the student as a spiritual being. The participants appreciated the experience so much we decided to do it again! This year the Symposium will be held on April 22 on the theme of "Resistance." Presenters will unpack and analyze this concept from multiple angles: resistance to the dominant paradigm, resistance to this resistance, and everything in between. We are also incredibly excited to be bringing Sue Rankin as our keynote speaker. Be sure to check the WGSS website for more information. See you there!

5th Annual WGSS Student Colloquium

Mark your calendars and get ready to be impressed by the powerful, provocative, and inspiring body of work that will be on display in a variety of forms during the 5th annual Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Student Colloquium. Scheduled for Friday, May 13, the Colloquium includes a variety of presentations, an art exhibit, and song and spoken word by WGSS students.

Last year's event featured more than a dozen stimulating presentations of student papers and posters addressing race and racism, transnational feminisms, queer history and theory, personal healing and its connection to feminist identity and practice, and community-based activist praxis. Provocative visual artists imprinted the day through their contributions to an art show mounted in the main gathering room, and the event ended with the voices of thrilling performers and spoken word artists. Jensine Larsen, social media entrepreneur and founder of *World Pulse* magazine, offered a rousing keynote talk that called us to deepen and celebrate our commitments to feminist action in our world.

This feminist event has been brought to you each year by incredibly thoughtful teams of WGSS students who read and select session proposals, schedule the day, create the environment, and ensure that the event welcomes and involves ever-growing numbers of the WGSS and affiliated communities. This year's Colloquium team is now forming, and we'd love for you to join us. For more information, contact Vicki Reitenauer, faculty advisor to the Colloquium, at vicr@pdx.edu. And keep your eyes and ears open for a call for proposals for this event.

The Colloquium is a celebration, a gathering place for your voices and visions, your questions and answers, your intellectual and creative engagements. Join us on May 13 as a presenter, an exhibiting artist, a creative writer, a participant—and see how, individually and together, we shine.

Planning to Graduate Soon?

Be sure to follow these five simple steps:

1. Meet with your WGSS advisor to be sure you've fulfilled all your requirements. Call the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies office at 503-725-3516 to schedule an advising appointment today!
2. Attend to any outstanding grade issues.
3. Submit a degree application two terms before you plan to graduate. Spring grads, this means you need to act ASAP. Summer grads, plan to submit your applications by April 1st.
4. Register for commencement (the graduation ceremony).
5. Order cap, gown, announcements, and class ring, if desired.
6. Attend the WGSS Spring Celebration on June 11th where we celebrate you—WGSS graduates!

For more information, please visit <http://www.pdx.edu/registration/graduation>.

WGSS Faculty Accomplishments

Sarah Dougher has an article forthcoming in *Current Musicology* entitled "Sex and Laughter in Women's Music, 1970-77." She is also organizing a conference at USC in February, "Work It: Gender, Race, and Sexuality in Pop Music Professions," which will assemble music journalists, scholars, musicians, and music industry professionals to discuss the changing role of gender, race, and sexuality in the pop music world.

Sarah, also an accomplished musician, has received a commission to write a choral piece based on the poetry of Language-school poet Leslie Scalapino. *Fin de Siècle* will be performed in Portland in April, and will then tour to Bard College, New York City, Mills College and San Francisco through the summer.

Roslyn Farrington has been awarded a grant through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health to lead a workshop on Women, Love and Self Care during National Women's Health Week in May. Roslyn says, "This workshop will offer women in the greater Portland Metropolitan Area the opportunity to explore and analyze aspects of love, self-esteem and self-care. We will examine how our culture challenges women's efforts to be self-loving and self-affirming. We will teach participants tools for self-care. We will explore practices that can support our conscious efforts toward self loving and affirming on a daily basis. In addition, together, we will make connections between care of our mind and spirit and better health overall. These practices will enhance all aspects of our lives. These practices will also empower women to get healthy by taking action to improve their physical health."

Vicki Reitenauer will give a presentation entitled "Service Learning as Relational Learning: Creating a Space for Benevolent Relationships" at the Jon C. Dalton Institute for College Student Values in Tallahassee, Florida. Vicki is currently also co-writing an article called "Permanently, Positively Changed" for the *Michigan Journal for Community Service Learning* with Seanna Kerrigan of University Studies and Ann Fullerton of PSU's Graduate School of Education.

Jamie Ross attended the "Feminism, Science & Values" conference held by the International Association of Women Philosophers in London, Ontario, Canada last July. In November, she presented her paper, "Interdisciplinary: Feminist Teaching, Research and Activism" at the National Women's Studies Association Conference in Denver, Colorado. Concurrently, Jamie had a paper presented virtually at *The International Conference on Science in Society* in Madrid, Spain titled "The Obvious Invisibility of the Relationship between Technology and Social Values."

Jamie has also been conducting research with PATH for Women, a PSU/OHSU strategic collaboration that uses health policy research and women's health indicators to assess the overall health of women at the national and state levels, identifying key areas of deficiency in women's health status. PATH for Women informs, educates and provides evidence-based technical assistance to Oregon legislators about women's health indicators and policy initiatives to advance all women's health.

Gina Velasco organized a panel titled "Queer Nation, Queer Empire?" at the American Studies Association national meeting in San Antonio, Texas, in which she presented her paper, "Performing the Filipina "Mail-Order Bride": Queer Neoliberalism, Affective Labor, and Homonationalism."

Course Highlights for Spring

Gender & Disabilities

Darlene Eckert

MW 12:00-1:50

WS 399 CRN 64447

A critical analysis of the culture of disability, looking at the political and social forces that are deep-rooted in representations of women with disabilities—both visible and invisible. Examines how disability intersects with gender, class, race, and sexuality, ultimately exploring opportunities for activism and expanding our agency for social change.

Feminist Analysis

Jamie Ross

TR 12:00-1:50

WS 315 CRN 65216

This course will introduce you to feminist praxis, i.e., how theory informs practice. We may examine several areas of research and the strategies used in these arenas of contemporary feminist scholarship such as, Global Women and Money, Women Under the Microscope, and Gender Justice and Global Climate Change.

Queer Diasporas/ Globalization

Gina Velasco

W 5:30-9:10

WS 410/510 CRN 64448

Focusing on the relationship between queer genders and sexualities to migration, globalization, and transnational belonging, this course draws mainly on three bodies of interdisciplinary scholarship: queers of color scholarship, queer globalization scholarship, and diaspora and transnational studies.

Calling all Alumni

WGSS is looking for alumni and friends who are interested in creating a WGSS alumni association. If you miss the women's studies community and our discussions, this is an excellent opportunity for you to reconnect and get involved. Please contact Roslyn Farrington for more information at roslyn@pdx.edu or 503-725-5419.

Our Thanks to Sustaining Donor Robert Mercer

We are truly grateful to CLAS Assistant Dean Robert Mercer for his continued financial support of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Through monthly donations to the PSU Foundation, Robert helps sustain a pool of funding that is critical to WGSS programs and events during our current economic crisis. WGSS corresponded with Robert recently to learn more about the valuable role he plays on our campus, as well as his vision for a more diverse and inclusive campus community.

What role do you currently play in our campus community? What is your favorite aspect of this role, and how long have you been doing it?

Currently I am the Assistant Dean for Student Advising and Success in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. I have been working in the College since 1994—and have been working at PSU for most of the last 31 years. My favorite aspect of my job, and one which, because of administrative responsibilities, I get to do less and less of, is advising students. I love to sit down with students and help them realize their goals. In all the years that I have been at PSU, that has remained my favorite and most fulfilling role.

Why did you specifically choose to support Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies?

It's hard to answer that since WGSS has always loomed so large in my experience here at PSU. I remember the first—then women's studies—course I took back in 1982: 20th Century British Women Writers with Chris Thompson. It turned out to be one of the most memorable classes in my experience—Chris is an amazing teacher and many of the novels remain among my favorites. It was challenging in a way that, naively, I would not have thought. I was one of two men in the class. And being in that minority really made me think about—in often uncomfortable ways—about assumptions of privilege. I will also always be grateful to Johanna Brenner who invited me to teach a class on Gay and Lesbian Fiction back in 1992 (and a few times since). I have such affection and respect for her. Teaching that course was a wonderful experience for me. Also, as a gay man I am so pleased that WGSS has opened the curriculum to topics of sexuality.

How do WGSS courses and programs reflect your values on campus and within the community at large?

I think that the WGSS curriculum, faculty and programs reflect what is closest to my heart and what makes me feel so positive about my experience at PSU. Much of the conversation which has now become part of PSU's mission, around inclusion and diversity, began and flourished in departments like Women's Studies and Black Studies. Beyond curriculum, it also forced the rest of us to think about the diversity of our student population, and to explore ways to respect and foster that diversity.

What words can you offer to other prospective donors to encourage their support of WGSS?

I would ask them to think about their own college experiences. For me the most important piece of my education was the relationships I was able to build—both with students in my major and with faculty members. I think the strong relationships we have during critical times in our life remain among the most powerful and telling. Without going into a complete list, three of those people for me were faculty in Women's Studies: Johanna Brenner, Chris Thompson, and Nancy Porter. Because of them I see the world differently and my life is better for having known and studied with them. I support the WGSS program in my small way to honor those women, and to help provide opportunities to others to have a similar experience.

"I think that the WGSS curriculum, faculty and programs reflect what is closest to my heart and what makes me feel so positive about my experience at PSU."

–Robert Mercer
Assistant Dean,
College of Liberal
Arts and Sciences

Interested in supporting WGSS through a gift to the PSU Foundation? Every little bit helps, whether through a one-time donation, or a recurring monthly or yearly gift. Visit our website at www.ws.pdx.edu for a secure online donation link, or mail your contribution using the form on the back of this newsletter. Our students, faculty, and campus community appreciate your consideration.

Gifts in Action

Generous contributions from our donors benefit the department at large, as well as these resources for our students and our campus community.

Scholarship Opportunities

WGSS is currently accepting scholarship applications for the 2011-2012 academic year.

Linda C. Hummer Scholarship: For Women's Studies majors who have demonstrated academic excellence, performed outstanding service to Women's Studies and the community, or overcome barriers to pursue their educational goals. One-time award amount: \$300. Application deadline: May 3, 2011.

Lancy C. Jen Scholarship: Awarded to majors in Women's Studies who plan to pursue study or career paths related to math or the natural/physical sciences. Eligible students must also demonstrate financial need and potential for academic success. Annual award amount: \$4,000. Application deadline: May 1, 2011.

Frances Lenore Jones Scholarship: For majors whose education has been interrupted by, or is organized around, family responsibilities. Eligible students must also demonstrate financial need and maintain at least a 3.0 GPA. Annual award amount: \$4,000. Application deadline: May 1, 2011.

Meg Eileenchild O'Hara Scholarship: For Women's Studies majors or certificate students who have had a significant interruption in their education and who demonstrate financial need. Eligible students must also have a high school diploma or GED and maintain at least a 2.5 GPA. Annual award amount: \$350. Application deadline: April 8, 2011.

Applications are available on the WGSS website at www.ws.pdx.edu, or from our new office in XSB 150.

Portland's Walk of the Heroines

As you walk toward Hoffman Hall you've no doubt encountered the fountain and benches surrounded by lovely seasonal plants. There among all of this beauty are the names of many women: mothers, activists, scholars, and leaders. This innovative space—the *Walk of the Heroines*—is designed to give artistic recognition to women's vital contributions to our society and to daily life. And now we're heading into a new phase of development—a new website, outdoor educational kiosk, and public stage! Watch for announcements about celebrating this expanded world of women in Portland.



Practicum: What You Make of It

Student Shelly Merry Gives Advice for How to Make the Most of Practicum

The Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program has been hard at work internationalizing the practicum experience for WGSS majors. The program has reached out to a plethora of diverse organizations in an effort to build internship-based relationships between Portland State University and organizations doing globally-focused social justice work based in Portland. These organizations work with issues such as education for Tanzanian children, health perspectives on sex trafficking, fair trade merchandise, support for refugees, and global women's media. And although our timing has not always been appropriate for establishing internship-based relationships with these organizations, our relationships will manifest over time as WGSS's search for partners continues.

This is exciting news for the program, indeed. As our world moves toward a global focus and as WGSS students find innovative ways to express their feminism and work toward social change, the program must be prepared to provide new opportunities for students to learn. Certainly, experiential learning can be some of the most valuable time students spend working toward their major. It provides an opportunity for hands-on experience and inside knowledge that only an internship in one's preferred subject or field can accommodate. Few classrooms are prepared to teach students in this manner, which is why it is imperative for students to utilize their time beneficially in working toward their practicum credit. Indeed, your practicum becomes the experience you make of it.

"As our world moves toward a global focus and as WGSS students find innovative ways to express their feminism and work toward social change, the program must be prepared to provide new opportunities for students to learn."

–Shelly Merry
WS Major

In contemplating how to earn your six credits (160 hours) worth of practicum, be sure to plan ahead and keep in mind what you hope to get out of it. Also remember that there are individuals in the program here to help you. Start off by thinking about your interests, goals, and the experience and skills you hope to obtain. Search around for organizations and/or supervisors or mentors who will be able to provide resources, support, and feedback throughout the process. This search for an organization and supervisor can take time as many of the organizations and individuals you wish to work with are very busy. You may reach out to an organization only to find they do not have the time or resources to help you. Planning ahead at this point of your practicum is extremely important as there are sometimes roadblocks you may not have been prepared to encounter. But once you have these things lined up, talk with WGSS advisor to work out the details for how you will earn the credit.

Also keep in mind that you don't have to earn all six credits in one term, or even one year. Space things out! Be realistic with how much time you can effectively put into your practicum experience per term, keeping in mind your other obligations, health, life, and sanity. Build your experiences: perhaps one term you might focus on social change at PSU, and then spend the next term working on a global issue close to your heart. Spacing out your credits and experiences will help you build knowledge and test the waters in a variety of ways.

Advising

Thinking about becoming a Women's Studies major/minor or Sexualities, Gender, and Queer Studies minor? Need help navigating the program requirements? Schedule a one-on-one appointment with one of our advisors by contacting the Women's Studies office at (503) 725-3516. Appointments last 30 minutes and provide detailed answers to your questions. For help with quick questions, you can also stop by our advisors' drop-in hours. Check our website for advisor schedules at www.ws.pdx.edu.

Let Knowledge [Truly] Serve The City:

Student Meera Norris's Account of Community Engagement Through Practicum

Driving up Broadway on my way to class spring term, I was distracted by the big etched quote on the skybridge—“LET KNOWLEDGE SERVE THE CITY”—and I asked myself if PSU actually applied this philosophy. What part of the city were we as students really serving? Because all I saw us serving was coffee, retail clothing, a burger, or a lap dance. And if we are serving the city, who are we serving? Who was benefitting from our overpriced education?

Putting PSU to the test I decided that I would approach the WGSS department with an idea for a creative alternative to traditional practicum credits. Roslyn Farrington and Sally McWilliams supported this idea and helped construct a plan to make the most impact I could.

So this summer I spent over 16 hours a week at the Muslim Community Center of Portland on MLK Boulevard. As a woman who identifies as Muslim as well as a feminist, I was full of excitement, fear and an ever-growing feeling that for once in my education I was able to actually learn by doing! I helped create an organic garden with the children who attended this mosque, while giving a lesson on diet and the importance of taking care of all creation from a spiritual perspective.

Every week I held an empowerment circle for Muslim women (but also included and welcomed all faiths to join) in this blossoming garden. I promoted my circle every way I could, from using online social networks to talking to Muslim women I met at the grocery store. Before each class I created a class plan, printed out readings or found inspiring videos and took deep breaths that did—well, nothing for my anxiety. But when I looked into the different colors, ages, backgrounds, and circumstances of these women and saw the hunger for sisterhood I realized, this type of learning went far beyond As and Bs. We discussed taboo issues, we cried, and we got mad (I never thought I would be so happy to see people mad).

The challenges I faced went far beyond workplace confrontation; I was publicly called names by almost complete strangers because of my initiative to create a circle of this sort. I had never led a circle like this and lacked the inner resources to solve the animosity I was experiencing by certain members of the Muslim community. I turned to an elder of mine who looked straight at me and smiled and said “Meera, never let anyone stand in the way of positive change.” Ultimately this empowerment circle became such an awakening for many of my sisters that we are still holding them as well as many other activities.

How many times have you met a university graduate from a university and heard them complain that their degree isn't doing anything for them? And although the job market might be less than thriving right now, this practicum has led me to have a deeper understanding that we have to get highly engaged in our education in order to benefit.

In watching myself go through this experience I realized how conditioned we are not to believe we can truly make huge change with the knowledge and resources we are given through the University. Each one of us has a community, friends, family, or roots we represent; therefore, we cannot keep our education to ourselves. We must speak out, act, and to put it in simple terms: we cannot call ourselves activists and not actually be active!

“In watching myself go through this experience I realized how conditioned we are not to believe we can truly make huge change with the knowledge and resources we are given through the University. Each one of us has a community, friends, family, or roots we represent; therefore, we cannot keep our education to ourselves.”

–Meera Norris
WS Major



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- WGSS Department Lancy C. Jen Endowed Scholarship Payout Fund Linda C. Hummer Scholarship
 Meg Eileenchild O'Hara Scholarship Portland's Walk of the Heroines Fund

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 Charge my Visa MasterCard Discover American Express

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