

MARY & WILLIAM

THE GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

FALL 2021/SPRING 2022: ISSUE 18

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LIT & ART MAGAZINE

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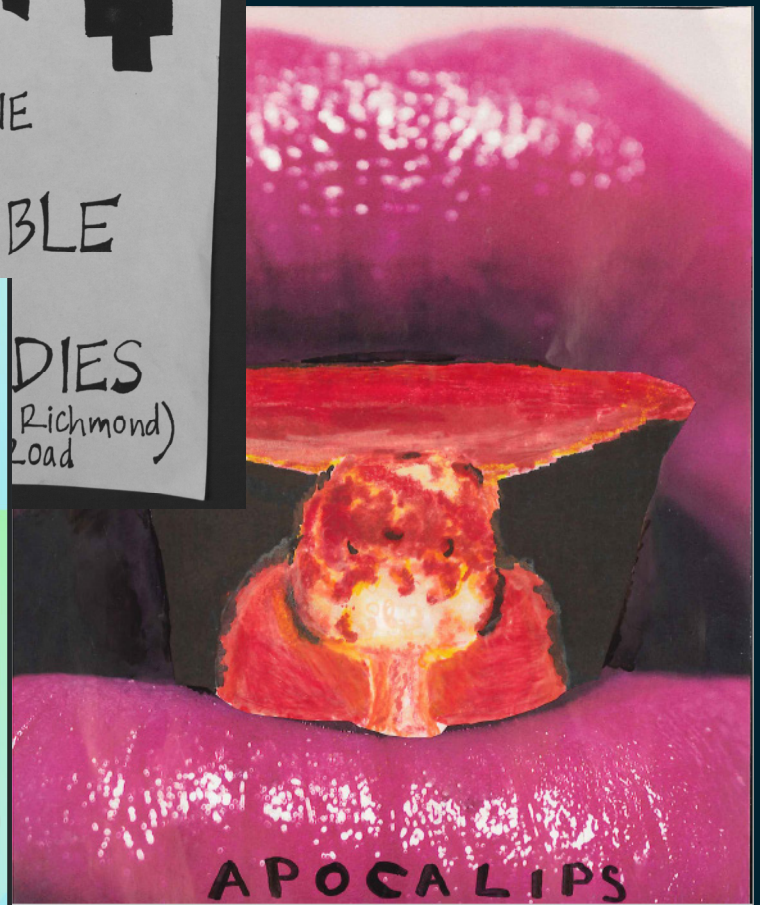
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LIPS

NEW BEGINNINGS

Spring 2022: From Dawn Until Dusk

VOL. 1



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Students, faculty, and staff at William & Mary are still getting used to the new normal. Or I guess we get ready to one new normal until that one changes. We’ve gone from classes on Zoom last year at this time to classes in person, with some students unmasked. Many meetings, at least for faculty, are still on Zoom, as are many guest speakers. I’m afraid the pandemic left most of us feeling a bit isolated and out of touch with our feminist community. But a few weeks ago, a student come into my office to declare her GSWS major and she told me, “The biggest reason I want to declare a major is because of the community.” This gives me hope that we’re back, that we’ve figured out how to create and maintain community even as COVID keeps us all a bit uncertain.



Sure, things looked different this year. But we also got the opportunity to listen to and meet with speakers who may not otherwise have been able to come to campus: W&M and GSWS alum Annie Brown (’10), founder of Lips, a social media platform with a mission, and Beth Ritchie, professor of Criminology, Law, & Justice and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. We got to do some long-term planning that might not have happened had we been caught up in the usual rush of GSWS-sponsored events. Our undergraduate office assistant, the fabulous Simmi Cilluffo, was able to use some of her time in the office (along with GSWS major Joey Houska and the rest of the Lips Editorial Board) to produce our own Lips, a zine focused on sexuality, identity, and resistance. And, after a year on Zoom, we got to know our students better. Their faces might have been partially hidden behind masks, but we were all a bit raw this year, a bit more open with our feelings, our worries, our exhaustion. I know I was. Our willingness to share and to continue to do the work—academic work, sure, but also the work of social justice—is the core of this community. That hasn’t gone away.

And thank goodness it hasn’t. The pandemic has only strengthened my sense of the importance of gender, sexuality, & women’s studies. In recent months we’ve seen the criminalization of gender-affirming medical treatment for transgender youth and severe restrictions on abortion rights, particularly in southern states. State violence against communities of color continues largely unchecked. There’s a lot of work to do and, for students and faculty who want to do it, the GSWS Program is the home for you.

Front cover: From top to bottom: Winged Nation Zine Cover, 1995; Lips Zine Cover, Fall 2012; Lips “New Beginning” Issue Cover, Spring 2022

Thanks as always to Latasha Simms, our amazing fiscal and administrative coordinator, for making everything run smoothly in the GSWS Program. Thanks also to our core and affiliated faculty, especially Diya Bose, Victoria Castillo, and Claire McKinney, for their extraordinary commitment to teaching and scholarship—and for just making coming to work fun. And thank you to our students, for being the reason for it all.

Congratulations to our 2022 graduates! I’ll see the rest of you in the fall semester.

In solidarity,

Jennifer Putzi

PRIZES AND AWARDS

Dean’s Prize for Scholarship on Women

This prize is awarded to an undergraduate and a graduate student for work that advances our knowledge of women or the politics of gender.

Undergraduate: Simmi Cilluffo
“A Sociological Analysis to Period Poverty: A Policy Memo”

Graduate: Emily Wells
“Beyond the Classroom:Reconstructing the Spatial Imaginations of Girls in the Early Republic”

Student Activism Award

This prize is awarded to an individual, student organization, or group that has done outstanding feminist activist work outside the classroom.

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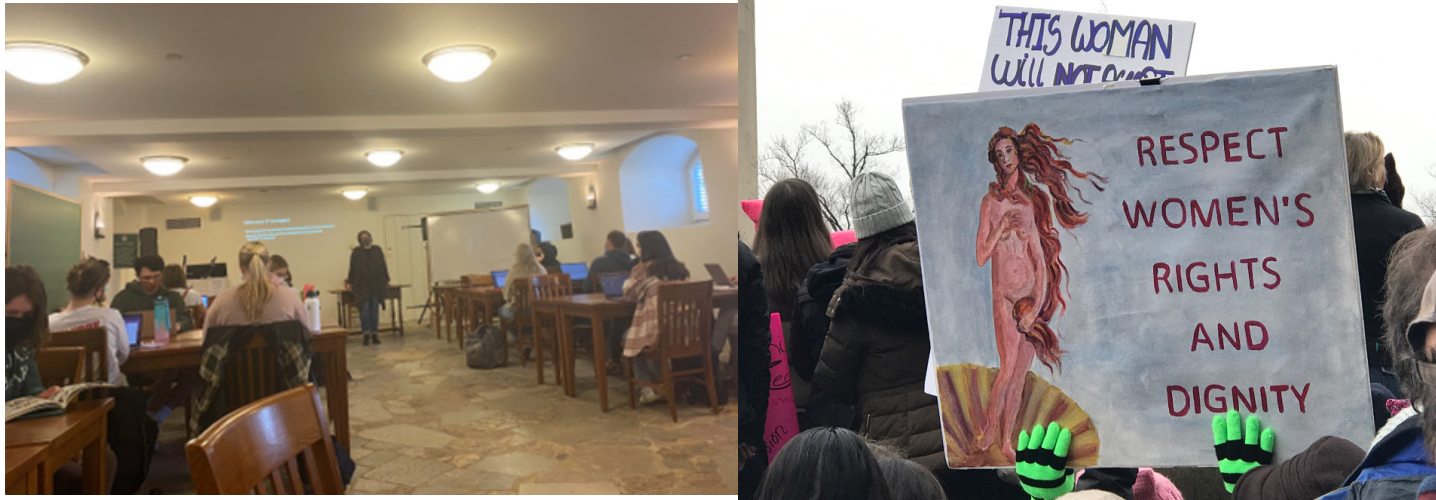
Nancy Gray Prize

This prize is awarded to one graduating seenor in reecongition of acadmic and activist achievements and their commitment to the ideals of the Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Program.

Simmi Cilluffo

To support Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies prizes, you can contribute online at www.wm.edu/as/gsws/support/index.php.

Class Spotlight: Politics of Reproduction



Photos: Left, Politics of Reproduction, photo by Simmi Ciluffo; Right, Women's March 2017, photo by Claire McKinney

by Simmi Ciluffo

Every Tuesday and Thursday morning William and Mary students of GOVT and GSWS academic backgrounds gather in the basement of Wren to meet for the Politics of Reproduction. The course is taught by Professor Claire McKinney, whose expertise on political theory, gender, and politics, aligns perfectly with the course topic.

McKinney pushes her students to think beyond the binary the pro-life, pro-choice debate and towards reproductive justice initiatives. Though, despite what you might think, the class is about so much more than abortion. The course grapples with the many ways reproduction interacts with various social justice movements, political debates, and court cases. The course pushes students to expand their understanding of how heteropatriarchy norms and values shape societal perceptions of morals, relating to reproduction, to adopt a more social justice approach to ensure sustainable change in reproductive politics.

Course readings vary from a variety of authors and academics including Margaret Atwood's **The Handmaid's Tale**, Dorothy Roberts' **Killing to Black Body**, various Supreme Court majority and dissent discussions, and A.K. Summers' **Pregnant Butch** (to name a handful). Students have learned about various issues, from an intersectional approach; the topics

include: disability testing and abortion rates, the development of birth control, sterilization rates, and the history of scientific eugenics and racism in the US.

McKinney spends a small portion of the class lecturing, then she allows students to discuss the readings in small groups, before moving on to a class discussion. The classroom environment allows for a variety of opinions; McKinney ends each discussion with an anonymous google form where students have the space to either disagree with "class consensus" or ask further questions. Professor McKinney then starts the following discussion addressing these comments. The questions students actually serve as a tool for students to "shape" the class learning to meet topics they are unfamiliar with or interested in. Even course assignments allow for student initiative, students can choose any topic relating to the course to create either a traditional project or creative assignment; some project formats include modern dance performances, social media pages, websites, and blogs.

It's not just me who loves this class ... I asked senior Paige Maxa their opinion of the class; she wrote to me: Professor McKinney creates a very engaging environment in the classroom with very relevant course materials and challenges me to think about reproductive politics in a more inclusive and diverse way.

Class Spotlight: Decolonizing Sexualities

By Bibiana Mirones

GSWS 490: Decolonizing Sexualities: Paradoxes and Possibilities is taught by assistant Professor Diya Bose. The course explores concepts of decolonization and understanding how colonialism and imperialism created hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality. Bose has set up the class to analyze and focus on how these hierarchies are presented differently depending on which country is being looked at. The class has examined countries like the Philippines, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, and countries in Latin America. The class examined the ways that colonialism has impacted perceptions and understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality.

Additionally, the class analyzes the post colonial legal presence and it's construction of social norms today. This allows for students to understand how ideas of nationalism and family structures can fulfill a much larger agenda of colonialism today. The class focuses on the ways that western understandings race, sex, and sexuality as well as organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World

Bank have intervened in countries in the "global south".

The class is heavily discussion based and allows for students to hear how others understood the class readings. It's completely led by students so that they can take the conversation where they want to. This allows for flexibility and any questions to be answered. The class has weekly discussion posts and a weekly student lead that provides guiding questions. Furthermore, there are many videos, interviews, and documentaries of the authors read in class. The videos are used to facilitate conversation but also understand more about what the author really meant by their reading. The class offers a refreshing approach to decolonization, a topic that should be more heavily incorporated in class here at William and Mary. Professor Bose incorporates decolonization in all of her class content in this course and all her other courses as well. The readings provide a foundational and extensive understanding of what decolonization entails.



Senior Spotlights

Margaret Donnan

Hometown: Covington, VA

Favorite GSWS Memory: In the fall of 2020, I took Intro to GSWS with Professor Castillo, and it was my only in-person class that semester. Attending class was one of the highlights of my week, every week, because I loved discussing GSWS topics with a small group of people who created a sense of community I really needed during a challenging year.

Post-Graduation? I am a Biology major, and I am SO excited to have the opportunity to work at a camp for the summer and teach kiddos about ecology, conservation, the environment, and more.

For future GSWS Majors/Minors: One of the things I love most about the GSWS department is all of the interesting readings and ideas with which we get to engage. So, to all future GSWS majors and minors, I want to share a quote I've been thinking about a lot recently from bell hooks' essay, "Love as the Practice of Freedom:" "The moment we choose to love we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others."



Anna Pope

Hometown: Chester, VA

Favorite GSWS Memory: Probably just all the freedom I've had in final projects. I love how so many GSWS classes allow you to pursue creative options for finals- I feel like I learn so much and have fun doing it!

GSWS Book Recommendation: Stone Butch Blues (!!!!!!!)

Post-Graduation? I'm excited to eventually move out of my parents house, live somewhere new, and figure things out on my own.

For future GSWS Majors/Minors: Talk to your professors and make friends with your classmates! Enjoy the material and share it with others!

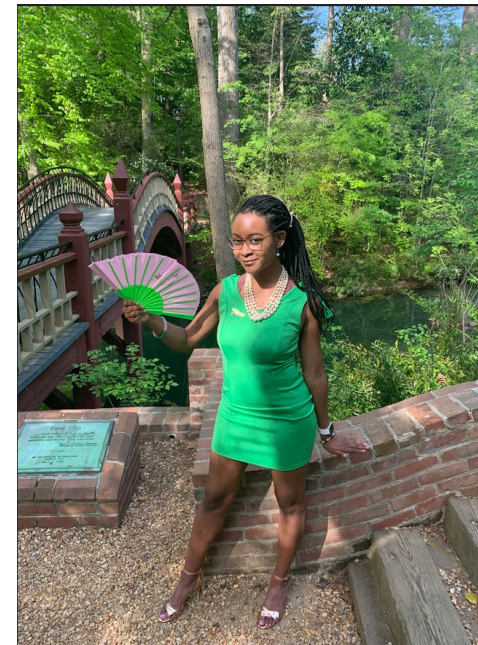
Abby Greene

Hometown: Falls Church, VA

GSWS Book Recommendation: On Intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw

Post-Graduation? I am excited to apply what I've learned into the real world!

For future GSWS Majors/Minors: Listen to others.



Kayla Burton

Hometown: Charlottesville, Virginia

Favorite GSWS Memory: My favorite memory was going to Blue Talon to eat with and talk to Professor Putzi and Professor Alicia.

GSWS Book Recommendation: Hood Feminism by Mikki Kendall

Post-Graduation? I am excited to start graduate school in the clinical mental health program at the W&M school of education.

For future GSWS Majors/Minors: The GSWS department creates a supportive environment and has allowed me to grow significantly in my knowledge and theorizing.

Lucy Greenman

Hometown: Sterling, VA

Favorite GSWS Memory: Being so blown away by the other students in my COLL400 <3

GSWS Book Recommendation: Like a Mother, Angela Garbes

Post-Graduation? I'm excited that I'm moving to a new part of the country.

For future GSWS Majors/Minors: You will never see the world the same way again!



Senior Spotlights

Kate Arnold

Hometown: Woodbridge, VA

Favorite GSWS Memory: My first presentation in Intro GSWS. It was my first presentation in college, and I was extremely nervous, but Professor McKinney and my peers made the room such a comforting environment.

GSWS Book Recommendation: The Power by Naomi Alderman

Post-Graduation? I'm excited to go to my little sister's high school graduation! We both are graduating the same year a few months apart.

For future GSWS Majors/Minors: Lean into the topics that interest you! If you hear about something in a course that you want to learn more about, chase the interest. The professors in our department are always willing to connect you with resources, research, and others that share your interests!



Alyssa Castronuovo

Hometown: Manhattan Beach, California

Favorite GSWS Memory: I think my favorite memory is from Jay Watkin's Sex in America class this past semester. We spent a day watching and critiquing old sex education videos from the 20th century, and it was so enlightening, frustrating, but also strangely hilarious to hear everybody's stories of their own sex education contextualized with these historic examples.

GSWS Book Recommendation: Kai Cheng Thom: "Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars"

Post-Graduation? I'm excited to move in with my partner, we're going to get a cat!

For future GSWS Majors/Minors: Be prepared: this department will challenge a lot of the preconceived notions that you came into college with. It's exciting and wonderful, but can also get intensely personal. Don't fear! These were often the moments I was thankful to be in a department that equally fostered academic and personal growth.



Vanessa Cartagena-Clemente

Hometown: Chesterfield, VA

Favorite GSWS Memory: Going to grab free GSWS books with my friends!

GSWS Book Recommendation: In the Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez

Post-Graduation? I'm excited to be moving to NOVA!

For future GSWS Majors/Minors: Form meaningful relationships with your GSWS professors!



Elaine Godwin

Hometown: Chesapeake, VA

Favorite GSWS Memory: This isn't one specific memory but I am truly grateful for the queer community I was able to have throughout my GSWS Senior Seminar with Dr. A. She is an amazing professor who introduced me to the beauty of queer theory and made me want to be a GSWS student (and allowed me to explore my gender queerness in a supportive, affirming environment!)

GSWS Book Recommendation: Manhunt by Gretchen Felker-Martin OR In the Dream House by Carmen Maria Machado

Post-Graduation? I'm excited to continue my non-profit work and advocate for greater equality in the LGBTQIA+ community. I am also at the perfect place in my life to begin my transition, knowing that I am surrounded by people who support and see the real me! I could not have gotten to this point without the ideas and stories of others who came before me, stories that I may not have interacted with if I had gone another academic route.

For future GSWS Majors/Minors: In lieu of advice (I'm only 22 and know nothing lol), I'd like to quote from one of my favorite authors, Carmen Maria Machado. "Many people live and die without ever confronting themselves in the darkness. Pray that one day, you will spin around at the water's edge, lean over, and be able to count yourself among the lucky." With that said, confront yourselves in the darkness, so that you may find the light.



Senior Spotlights

Katie Grotewiel

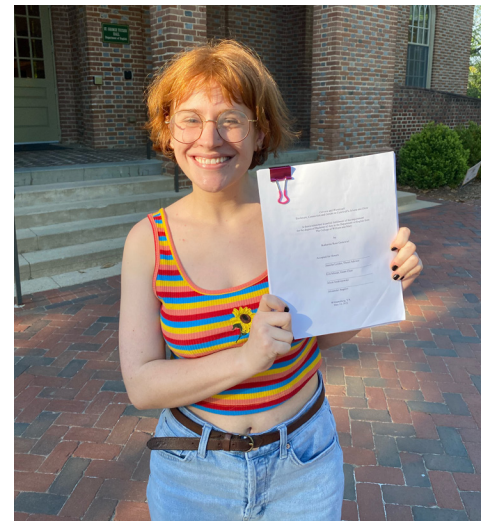
Hometown: Richmond, VA

Favorite GSWS Memory: The GSWS library cleanout!!!

GSWS Book Recommendation: "We Do This 'Til We Free Us" by Mariame Kaba

Post-Graduation? I'm excited to be able to read as much as I want.

For future GSWS Majors/Minors: Don't keep your interest in gender issues restricted to your course of study. Look outside the classroom and courselist and find opportunities for praxis!



Simmi Cilluffo

Hometown: Vienna, VA

Favorite GSWS Memory: Feminist theory! The sense of community in that class was something really special for me.

GSWS Book Recommendation: This is How it Always Is / The Vanishing Half

Post-Graduation? I am excited to spend quality time with my family this summer & travel in the upcoming year.

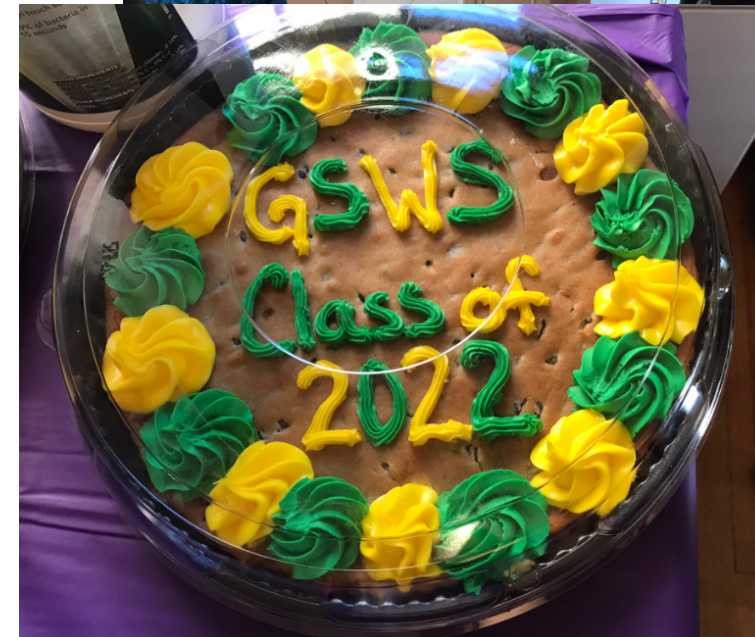
For future GSWS Majors/Minors: Go to ALL of the GSWS events and on that not any event WM is hosting that you're interested in...I promise every time you will come out feeling like it was well worth your time. Take advantage of the sense of community that GSWS classes create... make friends, don't be afraid to be too eager, ask them to attend an event with you... Join LIPS! You can make a lot of friends, be social, learn, and be a part of an amazing project.



Congratulations to all these and our other graduating majors and minors!

Chloe Allen
Kenna Campfield
Ashlynn Mullis
Heather Natterer

GSWS 2022 Graduation Dinner



WHY MAJOR IN GENDER,



Pulitzer Prize-Winning Journalist Jodi Kantor Visits with Intro to GSWS Students

About the Program:

Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (GSWS) courses **look at history, art, society, and culture through the lens of gender.** The study of gender and sexuality will challenge your preconceptions and change your perspectives, moving beyond static thinking and restrictive boundaries to **gain insights that are valuable in many fields, including law, education, politics, business, social action, the arts, and medicine.**

Some GSWS Courses Offered:

- GSWS 205 - Introduction to Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies
- GSWS 290 - Mermaid Tales
- GSWS 390 - Women in Leadership
- GSWS 393 - Politics of Reproduction
- GSWS 405 - Feminist Theory
- GSWS 414 - African American Women Writers

MINNIE BRAITHWAITE LECTURE

The GSWS department's annual Minnie Brathwaite lecture commemorates Minnie Brathwaite's courage to attempt to attend classes at the College of William and Mary in 1896 after being denied entry to the school and celebrates the admission of women to the College in 1918.

Past Lectures

2022 Lecture

Beth Richie

"Reflections on Gender Violence and Structural Racism: The Demand for Abolition Feminism."

2018 Lecture

Shatema Threadcraft

"Spectacular Black Death: Lynching, Lethal Police Violence and the Black Female Body"

SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN'S STUDIES?

Reflections from Students

Kayla Burton '22

"I decided to minor in GSWS because the courses **exposed me to new ideas** and feminist theories that I was never exposed to prior to college. **The students and faculty of the GSWS department are so accepting and supportive.** It truly gave me a safe space where I could **learn from Black theorists** about my intersection of being a Black woman."

Gail Conk '23

"I chose to major in GSWS because **I have never felt seen and heard by any other department the way I do the GSWS department.** It truly feels as though my peers, advisors, and professors consider me a valuable part of this community and **studying GSWS has given me the tools and frameworks to allow me to give back.**"

Alyssa Castronuovo '22

"I decided to major in GSWS the spring semester of my Freshman year after taking the intro course with Professor Putzi. I felt that the GSWS department emphasized learning from individual experience that I did not get in some of my other classes, and **I loved finding a place where I was pushed to grow both academically and personally.**"



Margaret Donnan '22

"I love studying GSWS because through everything I read and learn **in my GSWS classes, I gain new tools to better understand myself and the world.** I also love having the opportunity to discuss these ideas with groups of supportive peers; **the community is absolutely one of the most special parts about the GSWS department!**"



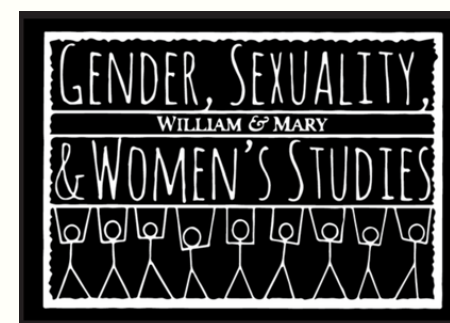
Joey Houska '24

"I decided to major because of **the community and connections** I found here. I feel like **the department knows me personally and is constantly pushing for my success.** The professors here have opened up a lot of doors for me, including leadership positions, job opportunities, and connections with alumni. **I would recommend the GSWS department here to anybody!"**



Zeta Atoigue '23

"I chose to major in GSWS because of **the comfortable environment** that was created in my intro to GSWS class during my freshman year. **The professor and my peers at the time made me feel valid in my frustrations towards gender issues, especially as a woman of color, while simultaneously educating me about them.** For the first time in my life, it felt like **I was being heard** which changed the way I viewed myself and my interactions with these issues."



2022 Minnie Braithwaite Lecture

The annual Minnie Braithwaite Lecture commemorates Minnie Braithwaite’s courage in attempting to attend classes at the College of William and Mary, and celebrates the admission of women to the College.

by Anna Pope

Content Warning: Mentions of experiences of harm/ gender violence

On April 20th, GSWS hosted Professor Beth Richie of the University of Illinois in Chicago for the department’s annual Braithwaite Lecture. Professor Richie is the Head of the Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice, as well as a professor of African American Studies. Her activism and scholarship center around black women’s experiences of violence in communities and by state institutions. Co-authored with Angela Davis, Gina Dent, and Erica Meiners, Professor Richie’s newest book, **Abolition. Feminism. Now.**, explores queer, anti-capitalist, internationalist, grassroots, and women of color led feminist movements that have helped define abolition and feminism today.

Professor Richie opened with the quote, “In the midst of a hostile society, a society that wants our labor or our death, we live in pursuit of justice, the pursuit of freedom, and longing for a bit of grace. How shall we live? How shall we treat each other? How shall we treat our compatriots, some of whom are guilty of crimes against us?” She explained that this quote defines what abolition feminism means to her. How should we move forward, in order to create an abolition feminist world? The audience was invited to come into the space and try on the identity of a peacemaker, a freedom fighter, an abolitionist, while Professor Richie described five different themes in her work.

First, it was necessary to establish that persistent, profound harm is caused by gender violence. Second, responding to this violence while



engaged in a prison nation is impossible to do without furthering the harm done. Professor Richie described that we live in the nation with the highest incarceration rate in the world, which is actively targeted at people who are disadvantaged. Third, it is the exportation of carcerality into places like schools, homes for disabled individuals, and around borders, that turns issues once understood as social problems into crimes. This mass handling of issues burdens not only the criminal, but also the survivor, as they are not given the restitution and voice they deserve.

In the fourth frame, Professor Richie offered a critique of carceral feminism, in that this way of thinking allows us to ignore violence from the state itself. She posits that carceral feminism consists of “knowing its [the prison state] harmful and dangerous and believing that it will somehow solve the problem.” Thus, abolition feminism takes a firm stance not in harm reduction, but in total reform.

Finally, Richie resolved with black abolition feminism as the way forward. In this framework, oppression is viewed as interlocking, and violence is known as something that will only

end when state power is challenged. Black abolition feminism aims for everyday praxis of broad based strategies that take into account root causes of problems while focusing on individual harm.

Professor Richie concluded the lecture with the idea that we need to live with “one foot in the world we live in, and another foot in the world we want to create.”

LIPS: A New Era for a W&M Zine

Interview by Kayla Burton (edited for length)

Lips, a club founded by Annie Brown (they/them) in 2007, has come back with the resoluteness of co-directors Simmi Cilluffo (she/her) '22 and Joey Houska (any pronouns) '24.

Kayla Burton: For those who are not familiar, can you provide an introduction of Lips and what you all do or plan to do as a club?

Joey: We’re a new, old organization that publishes semesterly zines. And through these, we aim to uplift and center marginalized and their experiences. We aim to build a community of diverse people who have a platform to express themselves and are mobilized to engage in things like political activism and discussion such as participating in shared educational efforts. We also want to support our wider William Mary community through collective action. So much of what we do revolves around the zine making process at this time. We also host weekly consciousness raising events and creative workshops as well. This semester, we created a collaborative collage on holistic wellness that we were able to display in Swem and hosted a Q and A session with a guest speaker Nyasha Kaye, who is a black female collage artist.

KB: What motivated or inspired you all to reinstitute Lips?

Simmi: Lips was started when Annie Brown was at William & Mary as a part of their introductory GSWS course final project, and they were told to identify a problem on campus and what they identified was sexual representation for marginalized groups, specifically LGBTQ+ and minorities. So Annie reached out to the GSWS program, and that’s where I got involved because I actually worked there. Jenny, Latasha, and I worked to initiate this at William & Mary, again with the help of Annie. And then I had Joey who became co-director with me and has been amazing and so helpful in this process. So, I was motivated and inspired because I feel like a zine was kind of lacking at William and Mary. Like I think it’s a space that needed to be filled at William Mary, where you can kind of intersect activism with arts and creativity and a space to do activism through a way that’s sometimes like a space for healing. I also felt like as a person with so much privilege and with the resources from the GSWS program and with graduating, I wanted to make this space because I knew that I could through working in the GSWS program, but I also knew that I wanted it to last. It’s been amazing that I feel like we’ve created this space for marginalized identities and minorities, you know, to talk about just what’s going on in their life. What’s going on in their sex life, what’s going on in their relationships, what’s going on in their friendships, you know, the stuff that professors are saying to them kind of just a space for healing, but also anger. That’s been really rewarding to me and the most rewarding thing from this entire project.



LIPS: A New Era for a W&M Zine (cont.)

Joey: For me personally, I was motivated to help restart Lips after attending an Annie Brown zoom talk last semester on their social media platform. Annie was the original founder of Lips back in 2007 and they asked if anyone would be interested in restarting the organization after their talk. And I had been wanting to get more involved on campus for a while, but I never really felt like I fit in anywhere. After freshman year, all of my friends joined Greek life on campus, and I really saw Lips as an opportunity to create my own community. Although, of course, it isn't my community, it's really all of ours. And that was the point to come together and create a space where various people with different backgrounds could feel like they belonged and to make something together that we're really passionate about. I really feel like we're as much of a social community as we are a publication or a club. And that was really important to me from the start.

KB: What are your goals for next year?

Simmi: For our LIPS members, we plan to have more speakers come and do one big event per semester, which might look like a slut walk, a drag show. It's kind of just dependent on what our group really wants to do. We also try to do social things; we want the club to be a community thing. And that's kind of how the whole zine has been made. It's been really collective. Every single person has a say in what goes in the zine, what they want our editors note to be, how they want to pair pieces together, what pieces go in, what the theme is. So that's really important to us that this whole thing is collective; leadership is collective. Anyone who wants to be involved can be involved and however much they want to be involved.

KB: What are zines and what is your favorite thing about them?

Joey: Zines are just alternative publications to traditional magazines. They're generally made by hand and printed on a limited basis. As alternative publications, there's a lot more freedom in terms of what we can do in terms of form and content. Zines fuse activism and art and they serve as a dialogue between and within marginalized communities. They're basically a way of documenting the experiences of people who have been overlooked by mainstream content, their way of saying we're here. We always have been, this is what we go through. This is what we care about. I just really like how much flexibility zines provide and how they capture a snapshot in time of a given community.

KB: What workshop topics would you like to have?

Simmi: So, we actually didn't get to have total workshops, but we had some really cool presentations. Pelumi Sholagbade (they/she/he) did one. It was called Ain't I (I Ain't) A Woman: Race, Gender, and Sexuality. Their presentation was phenomenal. Then, Kaylin Brown (she/her/he/him) did one called Polyamory and Open Relationships and that was really awesome too. We like had plans to do more on topics such as SSRIs and sex, mental illness, gender and sexuality, reproductive justice, ability, disability, and neuro diversity, sex self-discovery access to healthcare, focus on immigration status, self-discovery body image, acceptance/positivity/neutrality, countering fat phobia, compulsory heterosexuality, sexuality, and gender discovery, feminine anger, queer inclusive in sex education, the dual control model, managing sex and stress response cycles, lesbianism trans people, communism, anti-capitalism, and leftism, environmentalism, and sustainability: intersections with race, culture and spirituality, intersection of religion, spirituality and gender black sexuality, indigenous sexuality, queerness and non-Western cultures, witchcraft and the politics of sexuality, education and activism. These are some of the topics that we didn't get to, but we will next year.

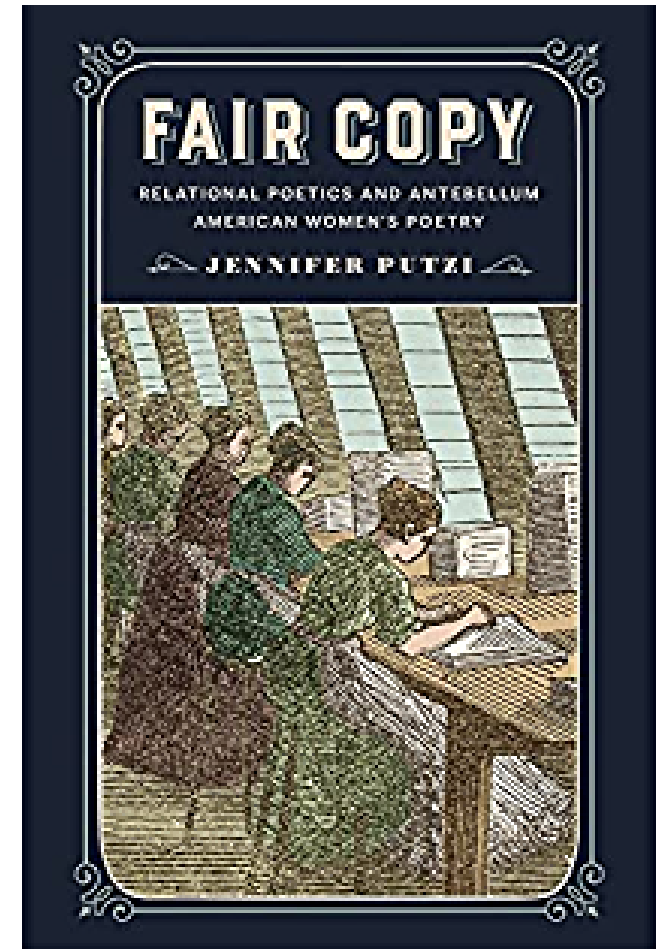
Celebrating W&M GSWS Scholarship: Jennifer Putzi's *Fair Copy*: Review

Review by Jess Atkinson

William and Mary's Director of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's studies, Jennifer Putzi, recently published a book on poetry written by women during the 19th century. This book titled **Fair Copy: Relational Poetics and Antebellum Women's Poetry** delves into the topic of how poetry has both shaped and been shaped by American women's lives during this time period.

Putzi chooses to focus on the poetry produced by working women and women of color specifically. This shift away from centering White women as poets allows the reader to more accurately explore and engage with the writing that was popular and circulating at the time. What I find to be most interesting about the book is Putzi's engagement with the lives of working women and how it affected the topics, themes, and style of their writing. In particular, the discussion of female factory workers and their relationship to flowers in chapter two demonstrates how the themes in their poetry directly relate to their personal experiences and relationships. In this case, that meant factory workers trading flower cuttings with one another and helping new recruits to start their own window garden as a "medium of social exchange among workers" (80).

Fair Copy guides its readers on a journey through the lives of these women and how poetry acted as a site for community and greater collaborative efforts. The analysis of the relationships present between poetic texts and lived experiences of these 19th century women clearly displays not only the amount of research, hard work, and time that went into producing a work such as this, but also Putzi's dedication to making the voices of historical women heard.



Fair Copy: Relational Poetics and Antebellum Women's Poetry. Penn Press. ISBN: 9780812253467
Published: October 2021

Those who enjoy *Fair Copy* may also be interested in reading *The Journal of Charlotte Forten Grimke*, which follows the niece of Sarah Louisa Forten from chapter three. Additionally, students that want to learn more about 19th century women's writing may be interested in Professor Putzi's class, 19th-Century African American Women's Diaries.

Celebrating W&M GSWS Scholarship: Jennifer Putzi's *Fair Copy*: Interview

Interview by Emma Evans
Interview has been edited for length.

Emma Evans: What inspired you to write this book?

Jenny Putzi: I was working on another project with a colleague, I was editing the letters of a writer named Elizabeth Stoddard. Stoddard was a fabulously grumpy fiction writer. She wrote some poetry, but she was mostly a novelist and a short story writer, and she was just really bitchy and she loves other bitchy women, and so she was corresponding with this woman, Elizabeth Akers Allen, who was primarily known as a poet, and they just kept talking about this poem called "Rock Me to Sleep," and how people had stolen it and I had no idea what they were talking about. I found out that Elizabeth Akers Allen (under the pseudonym "Florence Percy") had published this poem in 1859 and it became so popular that people came out of the woodwork to say it was their poem and they came up with all these convoluted stories about how they had actually written it. If somebody publishes a poem now it's assumed that whoever's name is attached to it wrote it, so I started to get interested in the ownership and authorship of poetry, and what kind of text a poem was if somebody could claim to have written it. The more I found out about Elizabeth Akers Allen, I was really interested in the fact that she was a working-class woman writer. She worked in a book bindery when she was younger, and at the time she wrote the poem she was doing everything she could in the newspaper business in order to survive after she had been abandoned by her husband. So that became a part of the story, to what extent do working class women and women of color have a looser sense of authorship or ownership over their own poems, which brought me to this larger idea that I call



relational poetics and thinking about how those kinds of women's poems—how they own them and don't own them, how they circulate, who reads them, things like that.

EE: Why does 19th century American poetry interest you? Who wrote and why did they write?

JP: It didn't interest me for a long time, so I sort of had to retrain myself as a poetry scholar. But nineteenth century poetry, everybody wrote it and everybody read it. That's one of the things that was amazing to me about this book, I don't think we can even begin to understand how poetry suffused the lives of 19th century Americans. These people could quote lines of poetry like it's a song lyric, and essentially that's what it was. I'm not as much interested in issues of aesthetics, I'm really interested in what was popular, what people read, and what meant something to people. I try in this book to read poems that other scholars find unreadable:

Putzi Interview, cont.

sentimental poetry, poetry by one woman that looks the same as the poetry of another woman. Why does that happen? Why do we need five million poems about dead babies? That sounds grotesque, but infant mortality was high at the time, so there were countless poems about dead or dying infants because that's what mattered to people, so then it matters to me. So often scholars lament that there is no poetry by working-class women, or there isn't a lot of poetry by African American women, and there actually is, it's just not poetry that people want to read. My challenge for myself is "okay here it is, and what do I do with that?"

EE: What existing work was there to build off of related to working class or antebellum women's poetry?

JP: There's a really exciting small group of scholars working on this, and there's a lot of people that I cite in the book, like Paula Bennett, Eliza Richards, Elizabeth Petrino—there are a lot of scholars whose work I've really depended on. There are other scholars I work with really closely, like Alexandra Saccharides, who published her book the year before mine, and we edited a collection of essays on 19th century American women's poetry, and her thinking about poetry really influences mine. It's a small group of scholars, but it's really supportive.

EE: What did your research process look like for this book? Did you find anything that surprised you?

JP: Oh god, my research process was so long. My son is 14 now and I was pregnant with him when I started the research on "Rock Me to Sleep." There were a lot of rabbit holes and diversions, and the book took a lot of different shapes. I have some friends who call me the queen of the case study because I really love to find the perfect story. I have a chapter on a servant poet—this Welsh woman named Maria

James—and she was placed as servant to this wealthy Methodist family in New York when she was about 7, and she grew up with them and started writing poetry as a teenager and into her early 20s. The family helped publish her poems, but it's suffused with all this rhetoric about class. There's an introduction by a minister who works with the family and it's all about how "it's great that she writes poetry, but her poetry never took her away from her work! Don't worry, she's not going to stop being a servant or anything!" I was trying to find out more about her and I actually found the letters of a woman she worked for. I went to the archive not knowing what I would find and there were all of these letters about the making and publication of the book and that was really exciting. I think that was my most exciting archival moment. Again, women academics with children, it takes a long time and it's a long process. Probably not just women, but you have to work it in with all the other things you have to do.

EE: In your archival research did you find anything really interesting that you didn't get to include in the book?

JP: The spiritualism stuff [the idea that you can commune with people beyond the grave]. One of the really interesting things was guy who claimed to have written Rock Me to Sleep—he was a spiritualist, so he claimed it [the six stanza poem] was a part of a twelve stanza poem which he published in his pamphlet, which is hilarious because it's her six stanza interspersed between these other six really crappy stanzas. Her poem is sometimes called "Rock Me to Sleep, Mother," and it's about a woman who's really exhausted by life and she tells her dead mother "rock me to sleep, rock me to sleep," and it's kind of like a death wish poem in a way, but it's about how life and grief can be overwhelming for mothers. But he takes this poem as having a masculine speaker and makes it a spiritualist poem by saying "rock me to sleep so that I can see you

Putzi Interview, cont.

and the rest of our family and people that love me” and all that stuff, and it really pissed her off [Elizabeth Akers Allen] because she was not a spiritualist at all. So, I got kind of interested in whether spiritualists really read this poem and what it meant to them, so I started looking at this spiritualist newspaper that was incredibly popular in the 19th century called “The Banner of Light” and I started reading all the poetry published in it and it was fascinating. Spiritualism is so interesting, and it was so popular in the 19th century. I went off on a whole huge kick about that, and at some point, maybe I’ll write something about it, but not in this book.

EE: Has your research for this book led to any changes in the way you engage with poetry?

JP: I think it’s shaped everything I do in that I’m always going back to the sources. Even in my classes, we go back to the manuscripts, and when I teach poetry I always have people go back and look at it in newspapers. I feel like that original source is really important, you can’t understand a poem without knowing where it was originally intended to be published and what sort of circulation it had. Like “Rock Me to Sleep,” we might read that and think it’s kind of a sentimental and trite poem, but knowing that millions of people read this poem—it wasn’t just a couple newspapers, it was reprinted all over the country, so what did it mean to people? I don’t think we can know what a poem means without understanding what it meant to the people who read it.

EE: What do you want people to take away from your book?

JP: I think if I would say one thing, it would be that we’ve got to read this poetry. It’s not enough just to say that Black women wrote poetry, or working-class women wrote poetry,

but that it’s got to be read and it’s got to be taken seriously in order for us to understand it. It was shaped for this particular environment that no longer exists, and if we don’t reconstruct that we can’t understand what it’s doing.

EE: Is there anything else you would like to share about the book?

JP: I would like to say something about the dedications. I dedicated it to five women in my field who, for ten years before the pandemic and then again this summer, we went away every summer for a long weekend to read one another’s work and then at the end of the weekend we would make five-year plans with each other. We all met, I worked with one of them, I met two of them at this summer Dickinson thing I went to, one I met at a conference, and at some point, we thought we should be in a writing group and then kind of jokingly said we should go away for the weekend, so we started doing it. The book took shape over the course of my friendship with them, and I don’t think I could have written it without them. You work in isolation for the most part, I’m lucky because I have my partner, but the work feels very isolating at times, but they were incredibly supportive, and I could always talk over ideas with them. At some point I had brought my introduction to them and we were talking about it and they said “you have to be more assertive about what is so great about your book,” and I was crying, “I don’t know what’s so great about my book,” and they literally sat down and together they wrote the first paragraph of my introduction, like that paragraph that is in my book right now and it’s all about how important my book is. It was just so cool, and it just felt so affirming. Especially with the pandemic going on, it felt really important to me dedicate it to them, so I think that’s one of my favorite things about the book.

Faculty Spotlight: Leisa Meyer

Interview by Erin Rollins

Interview has been edited for length.

Erin Rollins: Can you give a short introduction about yourself, your teaching interests, or your research interests?

Leisa Meyer: Sure, I’m Leisa Meyer. I am currently the director of the American Studies department, I am jointly appointed in the History department, and I have been jointly appointed in the GSWS department as well. As for my background, I have a PhD in U.S. History from Wisconsin, and there I was in the first Women’s U.S. History Program. So Women’s History and Gender History has always been a compelling interest to me. At the same time, I have a Women’s Studies Bachelor’s degree. I was the second person

to get the degree at the University of Colorado Boulder. So I’m a very interdisciplinary person in terms of my approaches and my classes.

Initially when I came here I taught Women’s History and Military History because my book was on the Women’s Army Corps during World War II. But my interests from graduate school onwards have been to talk and teach about sexuality studies and LGBTQ studies. Finally about 12 years ago, I got to do that and that’s where I made my book.

In American Studies, we have a series of introductory courses that are thematically taught by each professor’s fields, so I teach Sexuality in Americas. That course looks at American culture through the lens of sexuality. I also teach a freshman seminar, Introduction to LGBT Studies and continue to teach the U.S. Women’s Histories course, and I teach a course called Queer and Present Danger about nonnormativities. I’m an intersectional scholar so race, class, ethnicity, nativity, and religion all get intertwining in terms of anything I teach.

In terms of my research, I did a book on the Women’s Army Corps during World War II. Since then, I’ve been more of an article writer than a book writer. I have since co-edited an anthology marked the twentieth anniversary of Mathew Sheppard’s death or murder.

I’m kind of eclectic, my other work has been on Chicana Studies because I like to interrupt the Anglophilia that is rife on the East Coast from my West Coast perspective. I try to bring some Latinx materials into my work and classes. I have also published some pieces on Black popular culture, one is called Strange Love on the parallel of True Story. I should also say that I am the organizer and co-advisor of the William and Mary LGBTQ Research Project: Discovering the LGBTQ Past of Virginia, an originally archival, ultimately oral history project.

ER: That’s great, obviously very interdisciplinary but I would say that’s the nature of American Studies and GSWS generally.

LM: Absolutely, I think you have to be. Personally, I believe that disciplines are always too narrow. Interdisciplinary programs tend to place value on how people’s subject positions and their past experiences inform where they are and how they engage in issues. They see it all as equally valid sources of information.



Faculty Spotlight: Leisa Meyer cont.

ER: Certainly, they're typically generalizations in a sense, but that doesn't mean you can't create avenues for nuance. So, you touched on your degrees already, but what was your actual collegiate experience like? What are some memories that you have taken away from that time and how has that influence your scholarly direction?

LM: Well, I started out at the Air Force Academy and was kicked out two years after I began for being a lesbian. When I was an undergrad though, I was initially an engineering major and switched to Women's Studies fairly late in the game. That was my first book. After getting kicked out of the Air Force Academy, I applied to CU Boulder for graduate school, but I took a while to decide to actually go. So grad school wasn't something that I thought to myself, "this is what I want to do." But obviously, my experiences at the Air Force Academy had a great deal of influence on my topic of study. Women's Studies really spoke to me. I really enjoyed the literature, which got me into a little bit of trouble because I was in a History program but that obviously has shaped my trajectory. I also was an activist from being there at the Air Force Academy and being a feminist, I saw a lot of misogyny and sexism. I was in the fourth class of women there, so they were still working out the kinks. So all of those things have certainly shaped where I am today. But I never thought I would be in the South, quite frankly. That was not something I ever imagined for me. In fact, when I first got the job here, I thought it would be temporary. I always wanted to be in the mountain west or the southwest where I was from. But you go where the jobs are.

ER: And I feel like William and Mary, and Williamsburg in general, has a very palpable culture that is open minded to an extent. However, it's still thoroughly embroiled in southern culture.

LM: And Anglophilia! I mean as an institution there are British influences everywhere.

ER: Absolutely, it's taken as a given so often. What specifically called you to teach GSWS courses?

LM: I've been a feminist for what feels like my whole life, but certainly since I've been young. Part of that was about coming out, part of that was trying to figure out what it was to be a lesbian in the 1970's when there weren't a lot of scripts or models. Then, reading the materials in Women's Studies looked at the ways that female authors thought about literature, history, philosophy, and feminist theory. It asked for the explanations and the ways that we engage these continuing challenges like endemic sexism. Women's Studies has often been the birthplace for other interdisciplinary studies, like LGBTQ and sexuality studies in particular. They have been nurtured in that space, so I have been able to intellectually explore, rather than just experientially explore, what it means to be a lesbian there. So that's always been driving me.

ER: Somewhat of a funny follow-up to our discussion earlier about teaching in the South, what then is your favorite part of William and Mary?

LM: The students. I get a lot of energy from the students. I think if you talk to most of the faculty here, they would say the same. With students I am able to interact and produce new knowledge together. It's a collaborative enterprise, I learn from students and students learn from me. Even when I lecture, I'll never just be talking at students—otherwise I might as well be talking to a mirror. What I try to do when I teach is let my students' questions lead me into a particular direction that they are interested in.

ER: Oftentimes when there is that conversational element between professors and students, it comes to a confluence point where the professor and students' questions they are interested in investigating are the same. How do you approach the oftentimes sensitive material implication within GSWS and American Studies curriculum? Relatedly, how do you construct a space that enables the study of difficult topics while cultivating a comfortable and inclusive environment?

LM: What I try to do is always talk about the need for respect, learning, and listening to set expectations. Especially when we're talking about sexuality and LGBTQ-related issues, there might be a lot of points of disagreement which is fine. This issue is how we disagree, so we need to give each other some respect. I give a spiel about that, but then we have a conversation about how people can learn differently. I also try to respond to questions and comments from students, whether that be in person or online discussion board posts, to make everyone feel included and that they are helping guide the course conversation. There should be no indication that there is a dismissal, you can't dismiss what others are saying.

ER: Kind of switching gears, what do you see in the future for Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies? What distinguishes GSWS from other academic disciplines and perspectives and why is this valuable?

LM: Like a lot of other interdisciplinary programs, GSWS is like a "boat-rocker"." They're interveners between moments of "icky" incidents within our national ethos. I imagine that GSWS will continue to do that. Part of the issue is that this makes it draining, to always be intervening and challenging. It takes a lot of energy to do that, but it is so vitally important. The United States is a democratic institution, and American culture is hegemonic. But hegemonies are changing, they aren't static. How hegemonies change is through push-back, making the hegemony adjust. Without that push, the hegemony doesn't adjust. It is vital for there to be those individuals and programs who intervene and, to use a military term, hold the line.

ER: Absolutely, the nature of GSWS as a discipline is that it is inherently resistive.

LM: And humanistic! Humanistic inquiry gives people the opportunity to learn how to live in the world that we're in now and that we will be in in the future.

ER: It does train you to take a critical approach to lived experience, to question what has been purported as truism. To conclude, if you could hypothetically design any GSWS-related course to teach, what would it be?

LM: For me, it would probably a course on lesbian studies. It would be history and it would be literature, and something that looked beyond the United States. It would look at how we think about women's intimate relationships with other women throughout time. It would look at the trajectory of these relationships. The model of this kind of inquiry has so far been looked at primarily in regard to relationships among men, but this class would do that with women.



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