

# MARY & WILLIAM

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

FALL 2024/ SPRING 2025: ISSUE 22



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# DIRECTOR'S NOTE



As I complete my three-year term as Director, I do so with much pride in our GSWS faculty, students, and staff. They continue to nurture and grow a thoughtful, caring and intellectually rigorous community, amid the anti-intellectual, anti-immigration, anti-DEI and so-called anti-gender imperatives of the current moment. Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies scholars, activists, and artists have always played critical roles in examining the ways that power is mediated by gender, sex, race, ethnicity, class, caste, nation, citizenship, religion, labor, and ability—and this work creates clarity and possibility in our challenging times.

This newsletter offers a brief glimpse of our many engagements in classrooms, research, activism, community-based learning and programming over the last year. Highlights include the Braithwaite Residency with Dr Sami Schalk (University of Wisconsin-Madison), an important scholar of disability, race and gender who shared her recent work on “pleasure activism,” accenting joy, embodiment and collective care. Putting into practice these teachings, Student Accessibility and Disability Alliance, Drag n’ Drop,

and our student office assistants, curated a queer accessible nightlife event on campus. We also hosted the book talk, “Mean Girl Feminism How White Feminists Gaslight, Gatekeep, and Girlboss” by Dr Kim Hong Nguyen (University of Waterloo), and co-sponsored talks, “Building Sanctuary: Radical Resistance, Liberationist Spiritual Practice, and Revolutionary Freedom Dreams in an Anti-Black and Anti-Woke Political Economy” by Dr Tamura Lomax (Michigan State), and “Raving” by Dr McKenzie Wark (New School).

Our faculty has grown in strength, and we have welcomed into our community Visiting Teaching Professor Melanie Marotta, GSWS affiliates Profs. Archana Kaku, Addie Tsai, Mayank Chugh and Kathrin Levitan, adjunct faculty Profs. Rocio del Aguila Gracey and Veronica Salcedo, and American Studies graduate teaching faculty Carly Barnhardt and Joseph Lawless. We also celebrate Profs. McKinney, Allen and Ferrão for receiving tenure, and Lawless for receiving his PhD in American Studies. The GSWS colloquia has exemplified the expansive and robust interdisciplinary feminist and queer interventions of our faculty—including feminist organizing against sexual violence in Kolkata, Indigenous Women Resistance Movements in Peru, Grindr cultures, Queer Ecologies and *The Tempest*, Queer Black Gothic Doublings in film and literature, to queer bodies, fatness and hunger in contemporary literature. We have offered about a dozen new courses, and our students have been engaged in faculty directed research through “The Black Women's Diary Project: A Digital Humanities Lab” with Prof. Putzi, and “Social Inequality, AI, and Sciences” with our new affiliate Prof. Chugh (Biology).

Over the last year our students have undertaken many immersive learning and community-engaged practices. Prof. Marotta took students to the Museum of African American History and Culture and other DC sites, and Prof. Barnhardt along with other graduate students accompanied our undergraduates to the Duke Feminist Theory Workshop—for many, their first conference experience. We also supported students in community-engaged projects, including Antonia Jara Romero and Anna Arnsberger for women leadership with English Learner high schoolers, and Sofia Strick’s theatre adaptation of *Antigone* set in post-Roe America with Vox. Vox’s important work with reproductive justice was honored as the recipient of our 25’ Activism Prize. I warmly congratulate all our student award winners this year, Linnea Leijon and Xinxu Xu for student scholarship, Katelyn Yen for the Carol Woody Internship in support of her upcoming work as a legislative intern to Virginia Delegate Callsen, and Terra Sloane for the Nancy Gray Prize in recognition of her many academic and activist achievements.

While I will miss serving as Director of this energizing community, I am excited for the future of our program under the leadership of Dr. Kara French. Dr. French will be joining William & Mary in Fall ‘25 as GSWS Director and Associate Professor of History and GSWS. French brings a rich portfolio of leadership from Salisbury University where she has served as both Chair of the History Department and Director of the Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, and has a dynamic portfolio of research in asexuality studies, 19th century American women’s and queer history, religious studies, and the Catholic sexual abuse crisis. We are very lucky to have her.

While my office will shift to Theatre & Performance, I will continue to be involved with GSWS and I am already making preparations with Prof. Jay Watkins to develop a new course and collaborative theatre-making with students around William & Mary's queer histories, presents and futures, based on the long-running queer archival work at WM by Profs. Watkins and Leisa Meyer. I would love to hear from students and alumni interested in being involved.

As always, I thank everyone for making GSWS such an important space of belonging. I am grateful to our undergraduate office assistants—Rebecca Belkin, Chloe Jones and Ava Wladar, who have put this newsletter together and tirelessly supported community organizing, and to Latasha Simms for the smooth running of the program.

Finally, congratulations to the graduating class of '25 who are taking their experiences from GSWS forward to graduate study in fields of education, psychology, and social work and a myriad of professional paths—I wish you joy and resilience, and I look forward to hearing of your future achievements.

In solidarity,  
Claire Pamment, April '25



## **NEW DIRECTOR, FALL 2025 ON**

### **Dr. Kara French**

Dr. Kara French is currently an Associate Professor of History at Salisbury University and serves as both Chair of the History Department and Director of the Gender and Sexuality Studies Program. She has a PhD in History and Women's Studies from the University of Michigan and a BA in History from Yale University. She has research experience in asexuality studies, 19th century American women's and queer history, religious studies, and the Catholic sexual abuse crisis. She has one published book, titled *Against Sex: Identities of Sexual Restraint in Early America*

(UNC Press, 2021), and various articles and chapters, and is co-editing a forthcoming special issue "Perspectives on the Catholic Sexual Abuse Crisis," in the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. Her next projects build on her research and teaching experience, and she expressed interest in developing more public facing work, including a more popular text on the queer kinship between President James Buchanan and his niece, Harriet Lane Johnson, who served as the bachelor president's first lady. She is committed to making her primary sources for this project publicly available and plans to involve students in a digital humanities project focused on this archive. Her record of public facing work includes previous collaborations with Colonial Williamsburg, Maryland Humanities, and the founding of a public humanities program at Salisbury. She is excited to build on the strong work of GSWS to make it a space for student and faculty growth!



## CORE FACULTY



**Diya Bose**

Assistant Professor,  
Sociology & GSWS



**Victoria Castillo**

Teaching Professor,  
GSWS



**Elizabeth Losh**

Professor, English, American  
Studies, & GSWS



**Claire McKinney**

Assistant Professor,  
Government & GSWS



**Leisa Meyer**

Professor, History, American  
Studies, & GSWS.



**Claire Pamment**

Director of GSWS, Associate  
Professor, Theatre & Performance &  
GSWS



**Jennifer Putzi**

Professor, English  
& GSWS



**Suzanne Raitt**

Dean of the Faculty of Arts and  
Sciences & Chancellor Professor,  
English

## Faculty Publications

**Ferrão, R. Benedito.** "The forgotten Black ocean: Trans(continental) travel and decolonial queer ecology in Mojisola Adebayo's *Moj of the Antarctic: An African Odyssey*." *Studies in Travel Writing*, 27(2), 2024, pp. 153-170.

**Meyer, Leisa.** "Trans\*Itions: The Work of Susan Stryker: An Introduction and Comment." *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 36 no. 3, 2024, p. 9-11. *Project MUSE*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2024.a935694>.

**Morse, Debra** (2024). "Victorian Animals in Literature and Culture." *Audible Originals*.

**Pamment, Claire** and Mehrub Moiz Awan. "Mehrub Moiz Awan on Queer Joyful Worldmaking, in Pakistan and Beyond." *Theatre Topics*, vol. 34 no. 2, 2024, p. 177-184. *Project MUSE*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/tt.2024.a932211>.

**Blazer, Annie.** "Religion and Sport: Comparisons and Intersections." *Religion and Sport in Japan*, University of Hawaii Press, 2024, pp. 21-31.

Xu, Rui. *Creating with Roots: Contemporary Chinese National Folk Dance Choreography*. Translated by **Emily Wilcox**, University of Michigan Press, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12912253>

### Administrative & Fiscal Coordinator

Latasha Simms

### 2024-2025 Student Office Assistants

Rebecca Belkin, Chloe Jones, and Ava Wladar

## AFFILIATE FACULTY

Jody Allen, History & The Lemon Project  
Alicia Andrzejewski, English  
Jennifer Bickham Mendez, Sociology  
Annie Blazer, Religious Studies  
Mayank Chugh, Biology  
Cheryl Dickter, Psychology  
Reya Farber, Sociology  
R. Benedito Ferrão, English & APIA  
Aaron Griffith, Philosophy  
Vivian Hamilton, Law  
Kathleen Jenkins, Sociology  
Simon Joyce, English  
Archana Kaku, Government  
Kathrin Levitan, History  
Deborah Morse, English  
Helen Murphy, Biology  
Vassiliki Panoussi, Classical Studies  
Sasha Prokhorov, Russian Studies  
Anne Rasmussen, Music & AMES  
Hannah Rosen, History & AMST  
Francesca Sawaya, English & AMST  
Monica Seger, Italian Studies  
Christina Stancioiu, Art History  
Addie Tsai, English & CRWR  
Erin Webster, English  
Emily Wilcox, Chinese Studies  
Brett Wilson, English  
Laurie Wolf, Theatre & Dance  
Andrea Wright, Anthropology & AMES

## TERM FACULTY

Carly Barnhardt, AMST TA  
Rocio Del Aguila Gracey, Adjunct  
Joseph Lawless, AMST TA  
Melanie Marotta, Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor, English & GSWS  
Veronica Salcedo, Adjunct

## COMMITTEES

### Executive Committee

GSWS Core Faculty: Diya Bose, Victoria Castillo, Elizabeth Losh, Claire McKinney, Leisa Meyer, Claire Pamment, Jennifer Putzi

Arts and Sciences Invited Members: Jody Allen, (History, The Lemon Project), Erin Webster (English), Noelle R. St. Germain-Sehr (School of Education), Helen Murphy (Biology)

Student Representatives: Terra Sloane (GSWS undergraduate), Tijuana Reeve (AMST graduate)

### Outreach Committee

Clare Pamment (Chair), Diya Bose, Jay Watkins, Alicia Andrzejewski, Allison Stovall (student rep)

### Curriculum Committee

Claire McKinney (Curriculum coordinator and Chair), Victoria Castillo, Ava Wladar (student rep)

### DEI Committee

Helen Murphy (Chair), Erin Webster, Cy Butler (student rep)

### Search Committee

Claire Pamment (Chair), Jody Allen, Claire McKinney, Jennifer Putzi

### Personnel Committee

Leisa Meyer (Chair), Aaron Griffith, Simon Joyce, Claire Pamment (ex-officio)

### Prizes and Awards Committee

Reya Farber (Chair), Cristina Stancioiu, Melanie Marotta

## NEW GSWS AFFILIATES



### Mayank Chugh

Professor Chugh is a new visiting Assistant Professor in Biology, coming from a Postdoc at Harvard Medical School. Professor Chugh specializes in cell and developmental biology. His current research in the "ReForm Lab" investigates how social inequality barriers shape biology higher education, scientific research, and innovation. He is directing research with GSWS students, "Social Inequality, AI, and Sciences."



### Archana Kaku

Professor Kaku is an Assistant Professor in Government, whose research focuses on the interactions between the body, violence, and power. Professor Kaku's work examines the ways in which accounting for the materiality of the body changes the terrain of politics, making it possible to ask and answer new kinds of questions. Professor Kaku teaches classes in Political Theory and a GSWS senior seminar, "The Politics of Pleasure."



### Kathrin Levitan

Professor Levitan is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, History. She teaches courses on modern Britain, modern Europe, and British and European empire. Her book, *A Cultural History of the British Census: Envisioning the Multitude in the Nineteenth Century*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan Press in 2011. She is now working on a project on letters and letter writing in nineteenth-century Britain. She will be teaching "Race, Class, and Gender in the British Empire" in the Spring 2026 semester.



### Addie Tsai

Professor Tsai is an Assistant Teaching Professor of English at W&M. Professor Tsai's areas of specialty are creative writing, epistolary fiction and studies, contemporary retellings, dance studies, masculinities studies, black studies, film and media studies, gender studies, and queer studies. They've published two novels, *Unwieldy Creatures* and *Dear Twin*. Their monograph, *Straight White Men Can't Dance: American Masculinity in Film and Popular Culture*, will be released later this year.



# COMMUNITY EVENTS

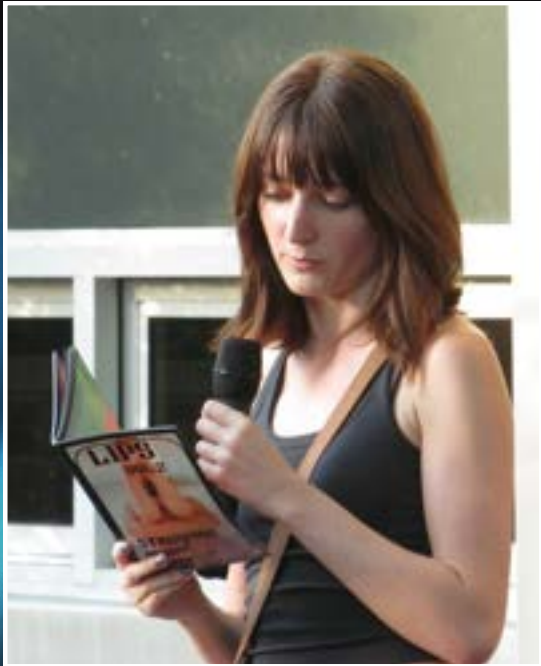
## OA Craft Night

OAs and members of the community enjoyed a series of craft nights with pizza, bracelet making, and conversation!



## GSWS Welcome Party

To kickoff the fall semester, GSWS hosted a welcome party in September as a time to socialize, get connected to GSWS, and feature student organizations! A special thank you to our drag performers (@wmdrag), our core faculty (our Director Prof. Pamment, Prof. Putzi, Prof. Bose, our new visiting Prof. Marotta) and affiliate faculty (Prof. Prokhorov, Prof. Rosen), our Swem Library GSWS liaison Candace Benjes-Small, our administrative & fiscal coordinator Latasha Simms, our OAs Rebecca Belkin, Chloe Jones, and Ava Wladar, and the representatives of student organizations in attendance: @wmdissenters, @lipswm, @wm\_qtpoc, @wm.sada, @wm\_syk, and @wm\_vox!



## GSWS Post Election Huddle

Following the Election, students, faculty, and community gathered to provide comfort, air grievances, collaborate, make art and crafts, and be in space together with uncertain times ahead.



## GSWS Program Hoodies

The OAs worked with administrator Latasha Simms to get majors, minors, and faculty GSWS hoodies to show off our GSWS pride!



## CLASS PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES



### The Making of Queer Spaces

Prof. Meyer's course "Intro to LGBTQ Studies" explored queer space-making on campus. Pictured is one action students did, placing pride flags and stickers around campus.

### Arpilleras and Artistic Expression

In the class GSWS 393 "Experiences from the Margins: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in Latin American and Latinx Artistic Expressions," Prof. Rocío Del Aguila Gracey invited her students to make an in-class artistic activity to reflect upon the roles of Latin American women in denouncing state violence through art. Arpilleras are traditional forms of textile art that originated in Chile during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in 1973. They are a form of political resistance, depicting scenes of daily life, violence, and political struggles. Some arpilleras were made by women who lost loved ones to state violence and injustice using the clothing of the disappeared.





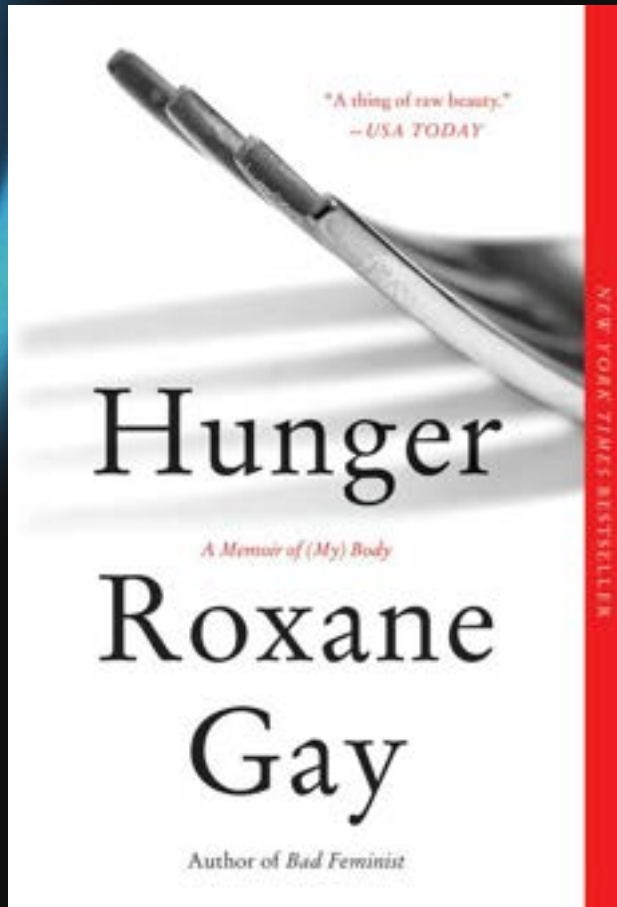
# COLLOQUIA EVENTS

## Prof. Melanie Marotta, “Gothic Doubling and the Haunted Space in Kalynn Bayron’s *You Are Not Supposed to Die Tonight* and Vincent Tirado’s *We Don’t Swim Here*”

Professor Marotta’s discussed how the horror movie trope of the ‘final girl’ as a Black female protagonist defies societal odds and expectations, and provided insight into the role of adaptations and refuge within literature and film. Marotta examined the character of Charity Curtis, a Black, queer girl, as the lead in Kalynn Bayron’s *You’re Not Supposed To Die Tonight*. Charity’s purpose as the ‘final girl’ is to reclaim Black women’s characterization and the rights of women, queer individuals, and Black women in production and society. Charity voices the unknown as she serves as a model for breaking the stereotypical ‘final girl’ character, redefining a lead character with her Black, queer identity.



## Prof. Meagan Thompson, “What Hunger Is: Roxanne Gay and Memoir”



Professor Thompson’s discussed Roxane Gay’s *Hunger*. Specifically, Thompson discussed the chapter ‘Excess’ and Gay’s self-identity as a ‘fat, gay, black woman’ who worked to write about ‘a body that can be loved for who it is.’ Exploring bodies of intersectional individuals meant that the privacy of lives, especially queer lives, were publicized and open to critique from others about the queer body and bedroom. Drawing upon Gay’s alternate use of ‘I’ and ‘we,’ Professor Thompson examined the structure of the memoir, looking at how Gay discusses her weight, fatness, and hunger as located in the body, but also confronting how that hunger manifests, how we respond to it, and how others perceive it.





# COLLOQUIA EVENTS



## **Prof. Diya Bose, “(Who Can) ‘Take Back the Night?’ Politics of Feminist Organizing against Sexual Violence in India”**

Professor Bose discussed the ‘Reclaim the Night’ movement in Kolkata, particularly the discourse over who these movements should be led by, and who they should advocate for.

## **Prof. Rocio del Aguila Gracey, "Resistance of Indigenous Women in Peruvian and Central American Documentaries: A Reading from the Ethics of Care and Solidarity"**

In this talk, Professor del Aguila Gracey analyzed and compared the Latin American documentaries *Máxima* by Claudia Sparrow (Peru 2019), *Sembradoras de vida* by Diego and Alvaro Sarmiento (Peru 2019), *Berta Vive* by Katia Lara (Honduras 2016), *Las semillas de Berta* (2021) from the journalists group CONTRAST and *Cura de la Tierra Guatemala* from Cura da Terra (2021). Her analysis foregrounded how state and patriarchal violence marks the bodies of indigenous women and their territory, while simultaneously serving as a catalyst for their environmental activism and feminist praxis. She also applied thinking about the ethics of care (Held 2006 and Cavarero 2016) and feminist solidarity (Talpade Mohanty 2003) to conceptualize tools to denounce state/patriarchal violence in the processes of reparation, justice, utopia, and the formation of women’s collective struggles.



## **Prof. R. Benedito Ferrão, “Coral, Whale, Shakespeare: Queer Ecology and *The Tempest* in Mojisola Adebayo's *Moj of the Antarctic: An African Odyssey*”**

In his talk, Professor Ferrão discussed his current research with Mojisola Adebayo’s *Moj of the Antarctic: An African Odyssey*. This play offers a speculative approach to the life and experiences of the real person Ellen Craft, who

escaped enslavement through creating a persona as a white man. Ferrão’s presentation foregrounded Adebayo’s exploration of gender and race across Antarctica and oceans to offer an interrogation of capitalism and enslavement. These entangled systems shape our lasting understanding of and relationship with our planet.

# COLLOQUIA EVENTS

## Dr. Joseph Lawless, “Queerness in the Digicidal Interval: Desire, Pleasure, and Ethics in Queer Men’s Digital–Sexual Subjectivity”

In his talk, Dr. Lawless shared his dissertation research on queer men’s sexual engagement with digital mediums like Grindr. As one of the first dating apps created, Grindr significantly impacted dating culture, creating what Dr. Lawless describes as “the digicidal interval.” Within this interval, he argues, queer men are caught within an affective cycle of disappointment with Grindr’s false promise of homonormative monogamy. The compulsive effect of social media applications, Lawless notes, contributes to a repetition of “downloading and re-downloading” the app, further contributing to user’s dissatisfaction and internalization of shame and poor self-image.



## GSWS TALKS

## Dr Kim Hong Nguyen (University of Waterloo), “Mean Girl Feminism: How White Feminists Gaslight, Gatekeep, and Girlboss”

In her talk, Dr. Nguyen discussed her new book *Mean Girl Feminism*, exploring the ways in which white women’s ‘meanness’ takes from women of color’s anger and experiences as a means of perpetuating and upholding white supremacy. The talk examined mean girls in politics as it fosters imperial nation building and far right politics, white feminism’s link to heteronormativity, the performative nature of white women’s feminism, and the ‘trap’ of white feminism as a means of gatekeeping.



## Prof. Tamura Lomax (Michigan State), “Building Sanctuary: Radical Resistance, Liberationist Spiritual Practice, and Revolutionary Freedom Dreams in an Anti-Black and Anti-Woke Political Economy”

Co-sponsored by Africana Studies, GSWS, AMST, Religious Studies, and Arts & Sciences



# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

## Professor Marotta's DC Field Trip

On Saturday, February 22, students from GSWS 405 had the opportunity to visit the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Hirshhorn Museum, and the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. This excursion provided students with a unique opportunity to engage with the historical narratives of slavery, contemporary art, as well as intersections of race, gender, and identity in different contexts. At the National Museum of African American History and Culture, students gained a deeper understanding of how African Americans have challenged negative stereotypes through artistic expressions such as music and photography. Additionally, they also explored the evolution of African American activism over



time and were encouraged to reflect on their own role in shaping a more equitable America. At the Hirshhorn Museum, students were challenged to interact with art in thought-provoking ways. Here, artists such as Basquiat, Banksy, Laurie Anderson, and Barbara Kruger presented art that raised questions about self-representation, power, and social justice through a variety of mediums, such as large-scale installations, graffiti-inspired works, and conceptual pieces. The museums' immersive exhibits allowed students to develop a deeper understanding through reconsidering the boundaries of artistic expression, reflecting on its role in activism, and the importance of awareness in shaping societal narratives. At the National Air and Space Museum, students explored the intersection of science and society. This visit was able to provide insights into the historical contributions of women and people of color in aerospace and engineering. As a result, students were able to reflect on how issues of representation and inclusion persists across different disciplines, underscoring how narratives of progress can at times, overlook marginalized voices. Overall, this excursion provided a valuable hands-on learning opportunity, allowing for students to critically engage with themes of equity, innovation, and the ongoing impact of systemic barriers on representation and inclusion.

# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

## DUKE FEMINIST THEORY WORKSHOP (FTW)

### Congratulations to Spring 2025 Attendees:

Carly Barnhardt

Victoria Gum

Ryan Healy

Logan Mischke

Meagan Thompson

Thirtha Unnivelan

Katelyn Yen

The Workshop offers a unique opportunity for young scholars to interact with internationally recognized faculty and engage in sustained dialogue about feminist theory as a scholarly domain of inquiry.

Keynote speakers for 2025 are **Nicole Fleetwood** (Paulette Goddard Professor of Media, Culture and Communication, New York University); **Farah Jasmine Griffin** (Professor of English and African American and African Diaspora Studies, Columbia University); **Sophie Lewis** (Independent Scholar); and **Linda Zerilli** (Professor of Political Science and Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Chicago).

## DUKE WORKSHOP REFLECTIONS

### Carly Barnhardt, American Studies PhD Candidate

Though many of the keynote speakers at the 18th Annual Feminist Theory Workshop at Duke spoke with a somber tone about "the current moment" and the myriad threats to feminist scholarship and activism (and, indeed, the academy at large), having the opportunity to gather in person felt all the more vital to continuing this work. I left with the following questions at the forefront: How do we protect what is important-- what is sacred-- while embracing (necessary) change? How can we build community in and between times of crisis? How can we accept what we don't know?



## DUKE WORKSHOP REFLECTIONS

### Victoria Gum, Anthropology PhD Candidate

The 2025 FTW was a beautiful, poignant gathering. In the midst of the current political climate, when so much seems at risk, it was incredibly powerful to share a space with so many people who are dedicated to the transformative power of feminist theory. As Dr. Jennifer Nash said in her opening statement, “the work of creation takes decades; the work of destruction is fast.” And yet there are countless people both inside and outside academia who are working to make sure that we do not lose our intellectual ground. All of the keynote speakers in some way spoke to the idea of worldmaking. Worlds are made in community: around kitchen tables, in quiet moments of friendship between times of turmoil, within hopeful imaginations of what could be possible. Worlds are also made through what we say, what we theorize, and what we write down. Dr. Linda Zerilli presented an excellent discussion of creative imagination and its role in reconfiguring how we understand both the past and the present. She reminded us that what exists is not inevitable; it can be changed. What seems unthinkable (following Michel-Rolph Trouillot) can become “newly thinkable” through radical acts of imagining. Worlds – and histories – are also made through narratives. Dr. Zerilli encouraged us to challenge the concept of historical realism and to instead focus on how the present and the past entangle together. Our vantage point in the present is the only place from which we can see the past, but this subjectivity is not a weakness. Instead, it represents a position of strength, from which we can rethink the way things were (and are) and imagine what could be. History in this conception is not defined by closure, but by possibility and potential for the future.

### Meagan Thompson, American Studies PhD Candidate

This workshop is my favorite academic event to attend. Not only are the speakers brilliant and engaging, but it is also incredibly rejuvenating to be in a room full of gender and sexuality scholars who are excited to learn together. This was especially true this year when our field is under threat. Dr. Jennifer Nash remarked on the importance of “thinking together in public” as an act of both resistance and community-building. While the keynote speakers’ subjects varied, the common threads of resistance and community-building motivated me to think more about my own praxis and how I can best show up for and support my communities with(in) my own research.

### Thirtha Poruthikode Unnivelan, '25

Attending the Duke Feminist Theory Conference was an enlightening experience, offering an intricate exploration of the ways in which feminist thought and activism are shaped by both history and resistance. Nicole Fleetwood's discussion around generational knowledge passed through foremothers highlighted the importance of honoring the struggles and wisdom of past feminists, while also acknowledging the need to challenge and reshape these legacies. Speakers like Sophie Lewis and Linda Zerilli delved into the complexities of enemy feminisms and the power dynamics within social movements, urging us to confront uncomfortable truths and reexamine the historical archives we often rely on. Farah Jasmine Griffin reflected on the lives of Black feminist activists and how their female friendships influenced their work and activism. This conference not only expanded my understanding of feminism's multifaceted evolution but also encouraged me to critically engage with both its histories and its future. It was a powerful reminder that social movements are dynamic and ever evolving, requiring constant reflection and renewal.

# GSWS AWARDS

## Student Funded Projects

**Cy Butler, '25**

Cy used GSWS funding in their applications to social psychology PhD and research Master's programs, where they intend to integrate their knowledge of gender, sexuality, and women's studies to push both fields forward. We are thrilled that they have been accepted a place in the PhD program of social psychology at Burnaby, BC.

**Calliope Koesters, '26**

Calliope received funding from the GSWS program in order to continue her professional education in women's reproductive healthcare advocacy, hopefully as a Health Care Assistant for Planned Parenthood in Columbia, SC.

With her double major in GSWS and Psychology, Calliope intends to achieve her Master's degree in Social Work with a focus in Maternal Healthcare and/or Reproductive Justice Advocacy. She believes that GSWS scholars are uniquely qualified to work in healthcare careers, especially reproductive healthcare, because we have studied the systemic oppressions, inherent biases, and barriers of access in our society. With our new presidency and government, Calliope hopes that, now more than ever, GSWS students must take advantage of our educations and the opportunities ahead of us and try to make the world a better place for those less fortunate or, simply, different from us. Not only will this GSWS scholarship allow Calliope the ability to afford to live in a new place for the summer and broaden her community of brains and ideas, allowing her to bring new theory and application to her eventual graduate school and career.



**Icarus Landaker, '27**

Inside Out Theatre, our campus' spoken poetry club, hosted local queer female poet Breanna Dobson. A nationally ranked poet, Breanna just joined Williamsburg's spoken word team, which will be competing nationally this summer. She is also a newly published artist with a book of poetry titled *Little Thistle Girl: A Journey In Growing Up Backwards*. The workshop revolved around persona poems—a type of poem where the writer/performer takes on the role of another

person or object to present a new perspective on a topic to the audience. One such poem that Breanna performed for students was on queer identities through the eyes of someone in the Pulse NightClub shooting. She provided more examples from other poets and older recorded poems of hers that ranged in topics of female, queer, and Black identities through anything like the eyes of a barbie doll to the hands of a clock. After providing templates and a prompt, Breanna had the group break off to write their own persona poems. One student wrote on the difficulties of minority youth through a character in the world of Marvel, critiquing the Young Avengers. Another student wrote about the monster above a young girl's bed, highlighting the physical dangers women of all ages face. Breanna offered advice and performance tips to each student individually, allowing each poet to improve their technique while also putting their own spin on the genre. In a world that is constantly trying to silence minority groups, Breanna showed our students that voices can be heard and stories can be told when young writers are willing to speak up through their art.



# Promoting College Access Among Local EL High Schoolers

**Anna Arnsberger ('25)** and **Antonia Jara Romero ('26)** used GSWS funds in organizing a college visit day for English Learner (EL) high schoolers. This female student-led initiative builds off of an existing relationship with WJCC schools to promote educational success and college interest among ELs. Anna is a senior history and government major who hopes to do immigration advocacy work after graduation. Talia is a senior psychology major and Hispanic studies minor who directs William and Mary Fighting for Immigrant Rights and Equity and plans on working in education.

As they explain, "Our partnership with WJCC emerged from the Aprendiendo Juntos research project led by sociology professor Jennifer Bickham-Mendez and education professor Katherine Barko-Alva. As members of this project, we help organize monthly resource meetings for local immigrant families and run a tutoring program for EL high schoolers. Many of the kids we meet in this work express interest in college but lack understanding and confidence in their ability to access higher education. These students face a combination of vulnerabilities that result in such a lack of confidence—not only are they almost all people of color and immigrants adapting to new life in an overwhelmingly white area, they often arrive speaking little to no English and with varying levels of education and literacy. Many of the students also come from low-income families and have to work in their free time. For these reasons, EL students navigate an American education system that treats them with the expectation that they will barely pass standardized tests, will barely graduate, and will not seek higher education."

In March they hosted around 30 students at William and Mary on March 31, during which they had the chance to tour campus, learn about college, and sit in on mock lectures. In efforts to support EL students with limited resources, they contributed supplies and college guidance for their classrooms.

## PROGRAM FUNDED PROJECTS



### Sofia Jameson Strick, '25

Sofia partnered with VOX: Planned Parenthood Generation Action to write and direct her original play *EPILOGI*.

*EPILOGI* is a student-written and produced play adapted from Sophocles' *Antigone*, set during Post-Roe America. This adaptation follows a young woman fighting for the rights of bodies to remain outside of the law. Antigone navigates her sister's death at the hands of a law attacking genders and bodies, and her relationships that attempt to hold her back. This play highlights the tragedy that is gendered law and its ruinous effects on the population of the world.

## ACTIVIST PRIZE

### VOX: Planned Parenthood Generation Action

VOX has extraordinary breadth and depth in their work, particularly with their focus on reproductive justice. Their creative and multi-pronged activism approach includes putting on a play as well as raising money for reproductive justice organizations. Their activism connects health care providers, students, storytellers, and political action.



## NANCY GRAY PRIZE

### Terra Sloane, '25 (Government and GSWS)

This prize is awarded to one graduating senior in recognition of their academic and activist achievement, and her commitment to the ideals of the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program. Terra has served on our Executive Committee and is recognized for her achievements with VOX and Someone You Know.

In Student Assembly, she has served as Secretary of Health & Safety and the Student Body President. In these roles she has advocated for menstrual and reproductive resources for all students and has begun conversations toward the establishment of a Women's Center on W&M campus. We are proud of the many ways Terra has leveraged feminist labor in our campus community. Congratulations Terra!



## PRIZES IN STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP



### Undergraduate Scholarship Prize

**Linnea Leijon: "'What Matters' For The Survival Of Women Under A Patriarchy."**

Leijon analyzes societal creations of gender constructs, with applications in media, specifically a current film. Leijon makes important contributions to feminist philosophy and our understandings of patriarchy and selfhood.



### Graduate Scholarship Prize

**Xinxi Xu "The Public Discourse of Widows and Grief in the Context of the Boer War (1899-1902)."**

Xinxi Xu provided a fascinating analysis of death culture and the media, specifically concentrating on grief and widowhood.



### Carol Woody Internship Award

**Katelyn Yen - Internship with Delegate Katrina Callsen.**

This summer, Katelyn will work with Delegate Katrina Callsen, the representative for Virginia's 54th House District in Charlottesville, Virginia. "As a legislative intern, I will be conducting research, drafting legislation, and assisting with constituent services. Furthermore, I'm excited to be participating in committee meetings, tracking legislation, and compiling briefing materials in support of decision-making. The fight for reproductive justice continues to be incredibly relevant and necessary. A big thank you to the GSWS department and Carol Woody for making my full commitment to this internship possible!"

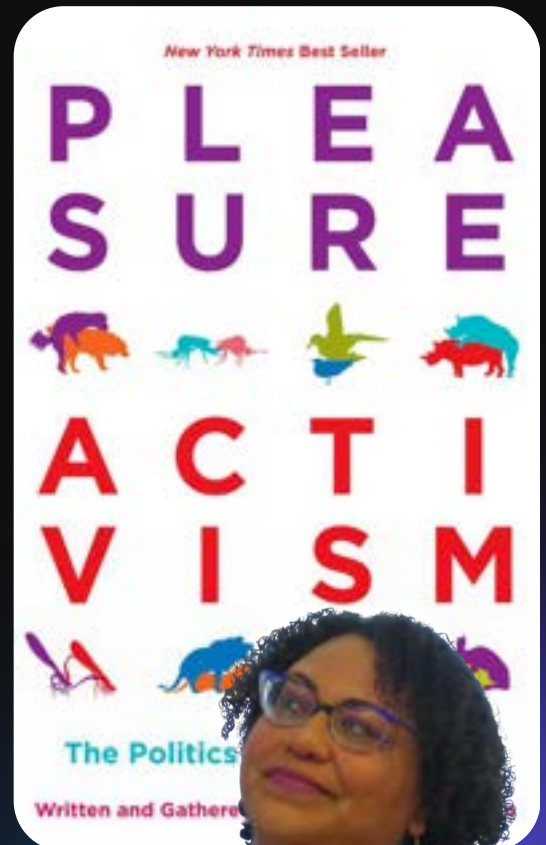
## Congratulations to all awards recipients!

# BRAITHWAITE EVENTS



Dr. Sami Schalk is our Minnie Braithwaite resident for the 2024-2025 school year. She identifies as a fat, Black, queer, disabled femme and a pleasure activist, and she is a Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Schalk gave a presentation to a full audience on her current project titled "Studying Pleasure Spaces for Multiply Marginalized People". She discussed her journey of becoming involved in pleasure activism, how she dealt with criticism in the media, and her process for conducting research for her newest project.

Dr. Sami Schalk's newest project, "Pleasure Spaces for Multiply-Marginalized People", takes inspiration from adrienne maree brown's "Pleasure Activism" and involves powerful qualitative study exploring how spaces centered around joy, embodiment, and collective care can become tools for social justice and liberation. Focusing on the experiences of multiply-marginalized people, those who inhabit two or more intersecting marginalized identities related to race, disability, gender, sexuality, class, and beyond, Dr. Schalk delves into how these communities create, maintain, and are impacted by what she calls "pleasure spaces." The talk concluded with a Q+A section where students and professors asked questions about the difference between pleasure and self care, how to reconcile with personal life, academia, and your identities, and logistical questions about how to create pleasure spaces. Schalk's perspective on pleasure extends into the realm of activism, emphasizing that it should not be confined to the individual. She frames pleasure as a communal responsibility, stating, "If you have access to pleasure, you have an obligation to make sure other people have access to pleasure. It goes beyond the self."





# QUEER DANCE PARTY



(L-R) Prof. Leisa Meyer, Prof. Claire Pamment, Dr. Sammi Schalk, and Prof. Claire McKinney



Our Queer Dance Party (organized by Drag n' Drop and SADA) was a venture in creating our own pleasure space, guided by Dr. Schalk's lecture on pleasure activism. The GSWS community and friends enjoyed drag performances, socializing, getting to know our Braithwaite lecturer, and dancing the night away! Thank you to our organizers and vibrant community for creating this space with us!

# SENIOR SHOUTOUTS



## **Rebecca Belkin (she/her)**

Rebecca is a senior majoring in Psychology and GSWS. "Choosing to major in GSWS alongside psychology has been the best decision of my academic career. It has allowed me to engage with incredibly bright and passionate students and professors on topics that deeply affect all of us. GSWS has given me a critical foundation for both my future academic and career goals. Through this program, I've also met some of the most inspiring and dedicated peers, and these are connections I wouldn't have made otherwise!" After graduation, she will be attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to obtain her Masters in Social Work!

## **Cy Butler (they/he)**

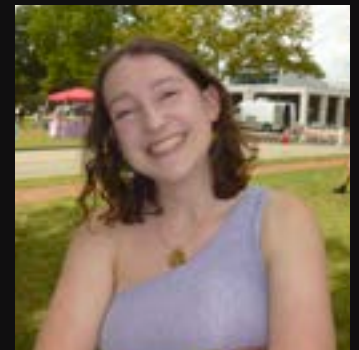
Cy is a senior majoring in Psychology and GSWS. "GSWS has fundamentally shaped how I see the world, its structures, its people, and my relationship to it all. I can't thank the program, students, and faculty enough for how much they've done for me (academically and personally), and I hope to continue to find a sense of belonging as lovely as the one I've experienced in GSWS at W&M." After graduation, Cy will be pursuing a PhD in social psychology in Burnaby, BC! They hope to integrate their GSWS background into their research!

## **Gabriela Estrada (they/she)**

Gabriela is a senior majoring in Sociology and minoring in GSWS. "My experience in the GSWS program only reaffirmed my love for gender studies. Thanks for an amazing four years!" After graduation, Gabriela will be taking a year to work and apply to graduate schools!

## **Chloe Jones (she/her)**

Chloe is a senior majoring in Psychology and GSWS. "Thank you to the GSWS program for introducing me to people I had never met and passions I had never explored. The courses in this program have allowed me to have conversations both past and present, discussing a variety of opinions, perspectives, and identities within the context of our singular world." After graduation, she will be staying at W&M to pursue a Master's through the School of Education in Educational Policy, Leadership, and Planning with a concentration in Higher Education Administration!



## **Thirtha Poruthikode Unnivelan (she/they)**



Thirtha is a senior majoring in International Relations and minoring in GSWS. "As an International Relations major, the GSWS program was essential to deepening my understanding of power hierarchies and challenging systems, while also teaching me to center the experiences of marginalized communities. It gave me the opportunity to take many classes that challenged my worldview, broadened my perspective, and encouraged critical self-reflection. The program has had a meaningful impact on my career aspirations and connected me to opportunities and scholars I wouldn't have encountered otherwise." After graduation, Thirtha will be deciding whether or not they want to remain at W&M to pursue the MSBA program or to work for a year before furthering their education.



# SENIOR SHOUTOUTS

## Terra Sloane (she/her)

Terra is a senior majoring in Government and GSWS. "I have had an amazing time as a GSWS student, I truly believe that the courses I have taken in GSWS have improved my perspectives in all other coursework. I have come to understand that Feminism is a lens with which to look at life, and I will take this lens with me in everything I do after graduating!" After graduation, she will be moving to Richmond, Virginia to pursue Sexual Violence Prevention advocacy and policy-making, and she hopes to work within the Virginia State Government!



## Allison Stovall (she/her)

Allison is a senior majoring in Biology and GSWS. "The GSWS program has had such a positive impact on my college experience. I've been able to learn to think critically about the world around me, as well as learning about so many diverse aspects of humanity. Additionally, I've loved how open and welcoming everyone in the program is, and I've loved being able to share my love of disability studies and feminism with everyone I've met." After graduation, Allison will be pursuing a Masters in Disability Studies at CUNY.



## Sarah Trussell (she/they)

Sarah is a senior majoring in Psychology and GSWS. "GSWS has provided me an incredible academic community and knowledge that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I would not be in the counseling field if it were not for GSWS!" After graduation, Sarah will be attending William & Mary's School of Education to complete an Master's in Education in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.



## Other graduating GSWS seniors include:

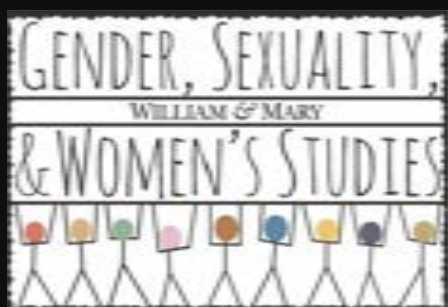
Ruby Aufderheide, Samuel Gasteiger, Ryan Healy, Devran Johnson, Sarita O'Neill, and Julia Varner.

# Congratulations to our seniors!

# Give to GSWS



Your contribution to the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program will help our faculty members provide the best learning experience to our students. You can scan the QR code to contribute online with your credit card, using our secure web server. The contribution form will be pre-selected to direct your gift to the general academic fund for the GSWS, which supports student and faculty needs directly.



## Keep up with GSWS!

Instagram: [@gsws.wm](https://www.instagram.com/gsws.wm)

Linktree: [linktr.ee/gswswm](https://linktr.ee/gswswm)

Facebook: [facebook.com/williamandmarygsws](https://facebook.com/williamandmarygsws)

GSWS Calendar: [events.wm.edu/upcoming/gsws](https://events.wm.edu/upcoming/gsws)

This newsletter was created by Rebecca Belkin, Chloe Jones, and Ava Wladar under the supervision of Professor Claire Pamment

*Students from organizations:*

*WM*

*Dissenters,*

*Drag n'*

*Drop, and*

*LIPS*

