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A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Gul Ozyegin

“The Arts and Sciences Faculty unanimously voted to approve our name change to Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies (GSWS). It has been so lovely to hear shouts of congratulations from so many of you.”



New Academic Department Coordinator Jenny Holly, Matt Richardson, and Director Gul Ozyegin stop to pose for a snapshot during the reception after the Braithwaite lecture.

It is official: on Tuesday, February 5th, the Arts and Sciences Faculty unanimously voted to approve our name change to Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies (GSWS). It has been so lovely to hear shouts of congratulations from so many of you. Although I am absolutely delighted to welcome and embrace our new name, I have to confess it is not always easy to utter “Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies” in a single breath! So I find myself in search of an abbreviation a bit longer and more explanatory than GSWS. GenSex? But what about the Women’s Studies part? Share with me if you can come up with a happy medium.

In addition to welcoming our new name, we also recently welcomed Jenny Holly, who joined the program as the new Academic Department Coordinator. Jenny comes to us from Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) where she received her BA in History and completed a minor in Women’s Studies, and worked there as a senior office associate. Jenny was an award-winning presenter at the 2007 EKU HerStory conference and a member of the EKU Feminists for Change student group. A highly creative administrator who likes to push the boundaries of what is acceptable, Jenny has already brought vibrancy and innovation to the office. It also gives me pleasure to see how well she is connected and engaged with our students. Please stop by Morton 322 to say hello to her. On weekends you can find her at the Jamestown Glasshouse in the Colonial National Historical Park as she is a volunteer interpreter — “without donning the colonial garb,” as she says.

This spring we had many well-attended events: Matt Richardson of Texas University delivered the Braithwaite lecture on “the Queer Limits of Black Memory”; Helma Lutz, Chair of Women and Gender Studies at Goethe University in Frankfurt, gave us a glimpse from her new book project, “The Care Curtain of Europe: A Critique of the Global Care Chain Concept”; and the William & Mary faculty Vassiliki Panoussi, Zeynep Korkman and Can Açıkoş presented conceptually rich brownbag papers. The focus of the Spring 2013 Community Forum was transgender issues. The deeply engaging forum featured presentations by Kari Abrams (Transgender Program Director, Fan Free Clinic in Richmond); Shannon McKay (Advocate and Community Organizer for Transgender Children and Their Families in Richmond); Gussie Smallwood (W&M ‘13, Fan Free Clinic intern); Ari Pak (W&M ‘13, Southerners on New Ground); and Shan Davis (W&M ‘13, Intern, Southerners on New Ground). It was a great

example of the collaboration between our program and our community partners and allies, but the real credit goes to our students like Ari, Gussie, and Shan who work on bringing the two closer. If you happened to miss participating in these events, we have some pictures for you in this issue.

We like to think that the Mary & William newsletter is offering alumni of all cohorts, current students, and faculty a common forum to experience the energy and excitement of today’s GSWS. The essays and pictures gathered in this issue endeavor to give you a taste of what is happening in our classrooms and lecture halls, and student engagement and activism on and outside the campus. I thank all of the faculty (Leisa Meyer, Lily Panoussi), student (Faith Barton, Ari Pak, Eva Swanson), and alumna (Mira Nair) contributors to this volume for writing powerfully about topics that will resonate with all of us. Although we stay up-to-date with the activities of alumni and share their news in this forum, we also love to see alumni visiting us. Please plan to attend our 2013 homecoming reception and help us to celebrate the official inauguration of our new name. If you are interested in contributing to Mary & William Newsletter as alumna journalists, please contact our editor Faith Barton or me.

With excitement I am looking forward to celebrating our graduates and their achievements at the Women’s Studies graduation ceremony on Saturday, May 11th. For now, many congratulations. You are more than prepared to put your Women’s Studies degrees in action in transformative ways to make positive changes in your post-graduate world. No doubt you will continue to inspire and surprise us.

With best wishes,

Gul Ozyegin

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POST-COLLEGE LIFE LESSONS FROM A RECENT WOMEN'S STUDIES GRADUATE

by Mira Elena Peralta Nair '12

After graduating from college, I've discovered the unpleasant truthfulness of the expression "youth is wasted on the young." Amidst the fun and the freedom, many of my peers are spending their 20s also dealing with a lot of stress and angst around establishing themselves in the 'real world'. The transition out of college can be very difficult and complicated.

I hope to impart a little wisdom for those of you preparing for this transition, and share with you some of the major lessons I have learned since graduating from William & Mary as a WMST major.

LESSON ONE: You will never stop realizing the value of your WMST education.

I strongly believe that declaring a major in Women's Studies is the most worthwhile investment any one could make towards their self-growth and education.

First of all, taking advantage of the breadth and depth of courses cross-listed with Women's Studies will behoove you academically as well as professionally. The interdisciplinary nature of the WMST program gives you the opportunity to take courses at all levels in many different disciplines. Taking 400-level seminars in American Studies, English, History, Sociology, Government, Latin American Studies, and Film Studies gave me a distinct advantage over those whose seminar-level education was limited to one or two disciplines. This curricular flexibility forced me to master a wide range of discipline-specific critical thinking skills, while simultaneously gaining a broader understanding of gender and sexuality.

Because of these interdisciplinary experiences, I left college confident that I could take on unfamiliar situations, new skills, and foreign subject matter that would be required of me at any workplace. I recommend to all WMST majors that during interviews you emphasize the ways in which your interdisciplinary education makes you a valuable asset to the organization and to your team. Most employers will appreciate knowing that you have a diversity of academic skills and experiences.

Even more importantly, a WMST education will be your friend for life. The socialization and cultural permeation of gender roles has shaped us since birth and followed us throughout our lives. As a result, almost all social interactions and behaviors one will encounter can be understood through a lens of gender. As you continue to grow as an individual and better understand your own identity, you will continue to realize how cultural assertions about gender have influenced your own life. While others

risk complacency, you as a student of WMST will be one of a minority who recognizes that gender and racial stereotypes are pure social construction. Being trained in feminism gives you the rare opportunity to recognize your own biases and hold yourself accountable when judging the world around you. WMST instills in you the confidence to question everything and not take "it's that way just because it's always been that way" as a valid answer. This is a very important ability in a world of people who may tell you that you are incapable of doing something on the basis of your age, gender, or race. To quote the rising feminist super star Sheryl Sandberg, "I wish I could just go tell all the young women I work with, all these fabulous women, 'Believe in yourself and negotiate for yourself. Own your own success.' I wish I could tell that to my daughter. But it's not that simple."

LESSON TWO: The best answer to "A WMST major? What are you going to do with that?" is always "Anything and everything I could possibly want to do." And it's true.

LESSON THREE: You have both the ability and the freedom to make money with a WMST degree (if that's something you want to do).

Most WMST majors will at some point encounter the stereotype that devoting your life to feminism and having a career that makes you expendable income are mutually exclusive. This is completely false. The most significant lesson I took away from working and volunteering for many non-profit organizations is that the one thing they all have in common is the need for more money and opportunities to expand their resources and cultivate relationships with donors. These organizations need feminists like you to be on both sides of their fundraising phone calls. Having expendable money means you can apply it to sitting on the boards of non-profits, starting your own foundation or non-profit, or helping out your alma mater's WMST department by funding scholarships, chairs, and lecture series that enrich WMST students' education.

LESSON FOUR: Nothing prepares you for being a professional like the experience of being a professional.

WMST may give you the best possible tools for approaching the universe. But nothing can prepare you completely for the transition to full time post-college professional work. However, navigating the world of organizational politics and interpersonal relationships in a professional context can be a dra-

matically different experience than being a college student. It's good to recognize early on what you like and what you don't like in an organizational culture so you know what to look for when job-hunting at different organizations. These considerations can include the size of the organization, flexibility of work hours, the relationship between different departments, and available mentorship opportunities.

LESSON FIVE: Life is an embarrassment of riches — and it's okay to be uncertain about your plans.

Many college seniors feel pressure to know exactly what they want to do and get their dream job or start their ideal graduate program right out of college. But being unclear about what you want does not mean you are a flakey or directionless person. Often those who are drawn to interdisciplinary majors are also the type of people who are interested and skilled in many different areas, and are well-equipped for many different types of jobs.

My own journey has been a very complicated one riddled with indecision. At one point early on in my studies, I was very interested in continuing my WMST education by pursuing a gender studies masters, but then realized I was not destined to go into academia. I then committed myself to the idea of attending law school. Amidst studying for the December 2012 LSAT, I realized that I wasn't completely confident about the decision to go to law school, and decided to put it off to explore different opportunities. I took on several internships and fellowships at feminist non-profits, where I had many rewarding experiences, as well as a couple of disappointments, all of which taught me a lot about my strengths and weaknesses as an individual and professional.

I have developed a lot of self-knowledge and understanding in the last year. I have learned that my strengths lie in my leadership and cross-cultural skills. I now realize that I would be well-suited to a leadership position at an international company that values diversity and corporate social responsibility. By embracing my uncertainty out of college, and taking the time to explore different areas and opportunities, I was ultimately able to realize my specific professional goals. Now I will be studying a third language over the summer and starting a Masters in Management at Cambridge University in the fall. Law school isn't out of the picture yet, but neither is anything else. The future is still riddled with uncertainty, but it is also bright, open, and full of endless possibilities.

Photo: The author, on the left, met with Nancy Pelosi on Capitol Hill.

ON MATT RICHARDSON AND UNCOVERING QUEER SUBJECTIVITY

by Leisa Meyer, Chair of History Department, Associate Professor of History and American Studies, and Former Director of Women's Studies

For some time now feminists have struggled with the challenges that transgender subjectivity brings to sexuality and gender binaries. There have been several compilations that have touched on the subject, such as *Transgender History*, the *Transgender Studies Reader*, and *Transgender Rights*, as well as special issues of a range of social science and interdisciplinary journals. Queer historian, writer, and filmmaker Susan Stryker has been on the forefront of such efforts, deftly linking participants in exchanges over common questions and issues as the editor for her transgender anthology and transgender special issues for the interdisciplinary journals – *The GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* and *Women's Studies Quarterly*. In her introduction to the *Transgender Studies Reader*, Stryker draws our attention to the lack of contributions from people of color and the urgent need for a “transgender studies” that more adequately and carefully engages the “complex interplay between race, ethnicity, and transgender phenomenon.”

Matt Richardson's forthcoming book, *The Queer Limit of Memory: Black Lesbian Literature and Irresolution* is a critical volume in a burgeoning set of material that is beginning to emerge from scholars of color on this topic grounded in a queer of color critique. Matt's work not only responds to Stryker's call but also offers a series of interdisciplinary interventions that engage the varied intersections and mutual constitutiveness of transgender and critical race theory.

As the 17th keynote speaker for the GSWS Braithwaite Lecture, Professor Richardson spoke on “The Queer Limit of Black Memory” to a standing room only crowd at McGlothlin Street Hall. Professor Richardson characterizes himself as a feminist activist and writer and his work focuses on challenging conventional knowledge frameworks and presumptions, especially in the service of making visible that which has been erased or elided. His Braithwaite talk, “The Queer Limit of Black Memory,” focused our attention to the erasure of the queer from African American and Black realities and the violence — literal and metaphoric — that produce and are produced by such erasures.

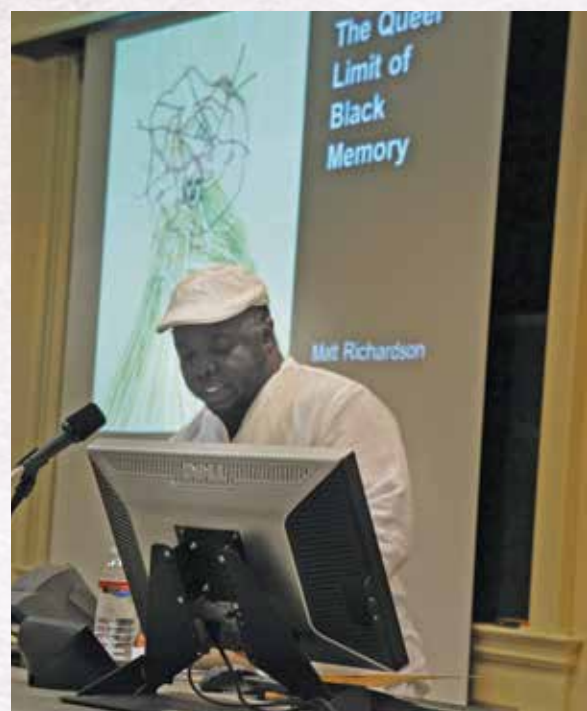
My first acquaintance with Matt Richardson came through his work when I was researching a project on black popular print culture and found his article, “No More Secrets, No More Lies: African American History and Compulsory Heterosexuality,” *Journal of Women's History* (2003). I was looking for theoretical approaches that might help me uncover black queer subjectivities and Matt's essay provided a compelling framework for doing just that, arguing that the presence of the queer in black history is evidenced by its “constant disavowal.” In other words, that the need for Black communities and activists to “represent” Black people as “decent and moral...agents” in the face of white racist stereotypes has required the “erasure of the broad array of Black sexuality and gendered being in favor of a static heterosexual narrative.” (pp. 63-4).

Uncovering the “queer” subjects and objects that have been deleted from the historical and literary record is Matt's goal and passion. As the literature editor for the journal *Feminist Studies* Professor Richardson recently co-edited a special issue on *Transgender and Race* (2011) that explored how race and gender identity are co-formative functions of experience and identity, producing and informing each other. The approach of the authors and editors for this special issue was to acknowledge that transgender histories are also shaped by colonial regimes of racialization and begin from a position that transgender bodies are raced bodies functioning within a sociohistorical context and actively creating their own cultural and epistemological frameworks.

Matt Richardson's poems in this volume queried frameworks that do not “fit” in their “place,” by making visible the elision of African American transmen from lesbian communities and African American neighborhoods. His anguish, as he looks to locate himself and be recognized within an African neighborhood is plain when, speaking about the potential threat of white assault and other violence toward Black people he asks:

“Where should I turn when they come?
Will I be your righteous brother/sister/comrade/friend
Will you hold out your hand to help me up, to fight them off?
Or will you stand there with your arms folded,
demanding to know, waiting to hear,
reserving your help until you obtain
the answer to the question. What are you?”

It is in Professor Richardson's scholarship and his life that we see the possibility for breaking the boundaries for inclusion marked by the multivoiced question, “what are you?” from his poem “Brother/Sister/Comrade/Friend” (*Feminist Studies*, Summer, 2011).



Above: Matt Richardson presents his research on “The Queer Limit of Black Memory” at the 17th annual WMST Braithwaite Lecture. Below: Matt Richardson met with students during lunch to begin a dialogue before the Braithwaite lecture later that night.

IDENTITY, POWER, AND TRIGGERS: CREATING INTENTIONAL, SAFER SPACES*

by Ari Pak '13

This spring, I had the opportunity to be one of the nineteen students in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (GSWS) program's first-ever Feminist Activism class. This class filled the need in the GSWS program for a space which facilitates the dialectic between feminist theory and praxis. This entailed the conceptualization, planning, and implementation of semester-long activist projects. This course was open to all majors and did not have any prerequisites. This meant that the students in class were all excellent resources of knowledge and experience to work from, as most students were of different majors, activist interest, and activist experiences.

The initial stages of project conceptualization included a large amount of group dialogue within the class. Given the varied backgrounds and experiences of our group, there were multiple approaches to communication and language use occurring simultaneously. While it is common to have people of various disciplines, experiences, and opinions within any given course, this was the first time I had been in a course with continuous class discussion around charged topics such as those dealt with by feminist activist work. The non-normative structure of this course required innovative ways of creating a group dynamic that was productive in its activist goals and inclusive of all folks in the room. After discussing the need to intentionally build a safer space in class, Sarah Overton and I contacted our professor asking for space in class to discuss how we could all collectively contribute to the formation of our class dynamic. After getting the go-ahead, we simply introduced what we wanted to talk about as a class to our peers with a few guiding questions, and the discussion was generated by the investment of everyone in the creation of a safer space in class.

The overall goal of holding a class discussion was to make the space safer and affirming for all people in the room. Firstly, we wanted to avoid passively reproducing harmful systems of power linked to privilege and identity within our class. This goal required reflection on our personal identities to illuminate the differential privileges we all have as individuals. Through acknowledging our privileges in spaces, we can be more aware of our personal identities and how they contribute to structures of power and oppression in every interaction. We separated into small discussion groups to discuss our experiences around our identities, both privileged and marginalized. This framework centered all of our identities, privileges, and marginalizations as integral to our activist work together. It is important to be conscious of one's own identity privileges when dealing with others, especially in activist spaces where folks come together around common cause from varied experiences.

*We also discussed appropriate language use when talking about potentially triggering subjects. Some language can involuntarily spur traumatic memories, sensations, flash-backs, mental/emotional disturbance, or otherwise involuntary reactions in folks who have experienced trauma. These words can be understood as "trigger words" because they trigger this automatic, unpleasant response in a person unexpectedly. As a warning, following I reference the use of one particular triggering word that was common. As a class dealing with contemporary feminist issues, there was often discussion or mention of sexual violence. The language around these discussions varied, sometimes using words more associated with vivid, specific, or violent acts. Hearing this unexpectedly in class can be traumatic for folks who identify as survivors of sexual violence.

We talked as a class about the importance of using appropriate, non-triggering language whenever possible, and, to use trigger warnings before using any possibly triggering words. Trigger warnings are simply a heads up, using the least triggering language possible, to check in with folks in the group and ensure that everyone is okay with discussing that topic. The use of trigger warnings extends the understanding of consent beyond normative understandings of physical interaction to include consensual paradigms in the ways that people are mentally and emotionally engaged with.

With the framework of identity and privileges in place, this workshop creates a paradigm for respectful communication within our project groups and in the class as a whole. We used our personal identities as central to this goal, keeping our whole selves present in attempting to communicate in respectful ways. Part of this discussion focused on being mindful, not only of other's identities, but also of the amount of speaking space one is taking. With the mindfulness of identity, privilege, and speaking space, we collectively carved out a new dynamic for our class interactions.

While this impromptu class-workshop only took forty-five minutes, it truly did positively shift the dynamics in the class for the rest of the semester. I highly recommend discussions around speaking space, identity, privilege, and triggering language for all courses at the College, especially within the GSWS program. Creating a classroom dynamic that feels safer for all people present could serve to enhance the critical engagement and discussions around course materials. Most importantly, creating safer spaces in classrooms provides people with some respite from the quotidian harms of language and systems of power.

**Content/trigger warning: there is some mention of potentially triggering language in this article*

PRIDE FEST

Left: This year's LGBTIQ Pride Fest, part of I Am W&M Week, featured booths from different student organizations as well as performers. Middle: Members of VOX, Voices for Planned Parenthood, show off their new shirts. Right: President Reveley came out to Pride Fest to express his support.



Voices of Alumni

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Stephanie Spong '06

STEPHANIE SPONG '06 Women's Studies and English Double Major.

Since graduating from William and Mary in December, 2006, I have been traveling, teaching, and learning. I spent the academic year of 2007-8 in rural Japan teaching kindergartners through adults about English and culture from the United States. I was affiliated with the JET program, run by the Japanese government. I have been in Albuquerque since August, 2008, and I've really enjoyed being back in school. My focus was late 19th-century and early 20th-century poetry and the Victorians, but as I finished up my Masters I moved into transatlantic modernism. I'm now working on my Ph.D. at UNM with that as my focus; my dissertation aims to explore the presence of unsentimental and often dangerous love in early twentieth-century poetry and draws from authors like Mina Loy and William Carlos Williams. I also teach writing classes for the English department, which fund the cost of my degree. The thoughtfulness and critical thinking I learned as part of the Women's Studies department at William and Mary definitely prepared me for both my adventures abroad and graduate school. It taught me the incredible value for dialogue and conversation, and in Spring 2009 I was able to help coordinate a new conversation between the English and the Women's Studies departments at UNM, as well as many others, which led to a two-day colloquium on women, civil rights, and sexual justice.



Cate Domino '10

CATE DOMINO '10 Women's Studies and Government Double Major.

For the past year and a half, I have been the Executive Assistant and Legislative Liaison at Arts Midwest, a Minneapolis-based regional arts organization that serves audiences, arts organizations, and artists throughout the nine states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. I work closely with our internal leadership team, Board of Directors, and nine state arts agency directors. It has been an amazing education in working with federal and state agencies, and I am grateful to have had this opportunity.



Emily McMillen '11

In the fall, I will begin graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy and Practice, where I will be pursuing a Master of Science in Social Policy. I plan to return to my Women's Studies roots by focusing my work on women's health policy and advocacy. The School of Social Policy and Practice was definitely a hidden gem in my graduate school search, and I encourage fellow Women's Studies students and alums who are interested in social policy, social work, and nonprofit management to look into their programs.

EMILY MCMILLEN '11 Women's Studies and Elementary Education Double Major.

I just finished up my first year of teaching 3rd grade at Peabody Elementary in Memphis, TN with Teach For America, and I'll continue to teach 3rd grade in the 2012-2013 school year. This has been a year full of more challenges than I could ever imagine. Peabody is a Title I elementary school located in the heart of Memphis; my kiddos were all low-income, 75% male, and all African-American. My kids came in years behind grade level, with LOTS of personality — to make quite an adventure for everyone in that classroom. But we endured, made some phenomenal growth, and I'm even more prepared for the challenges ahead.



Jaye Marolla '03

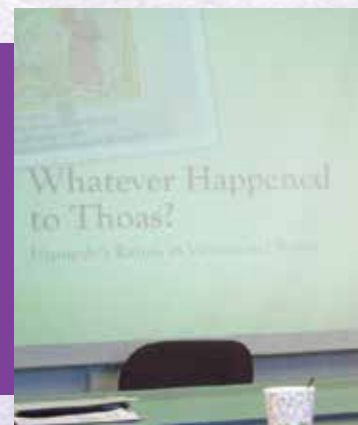
JAYE MAROLLA '03 Women's Studies and Sociology Double Major.

As a seasoned cyclist, former bike safety educator, and bike tour guide, a long haul journey is something I have always dreamed of endeavoring on. Growing up in Virginia with two parents who loved to cycle meant much of my adolescence was spent in the saddle, tailing my Mom or Dad down the back country roads of our rural neighborhood. Post-college led me to Portland, Oregon where my interest in cycling quickly turned to a passion, nurtured by the thriving pro-bike culture of the Northwest. After three years teaching bike safety education to children, I left for Ghana, West Africa to volunteer with the Village Bicycle Project and became exposed to cycling projects throughout the world. On April 15th of this year, CycleInstead project founder Abi Wingate and I will embark on a 15,000 km cycling journey across 19 countries. Our tour will begin in Chiang Mai, Thailand, bicycling over two continents for six months until we reach our final destination of Edinburgh, Scotland. We will embark on this journey to raise awareness of suicide prevention and mental health issues. Our goal is to raise £20,000 for our partner charity, the Scottish Association for Mental Health.

**BROWN
BAGGIN' IT**



**Mellon Faculty Fellow
in Asian and Middle
Eastern Studies Salih
Can Aciksoz discusses
"In Vitro Nationalism:
War, Disabled
masculinity, and Politics
of Reproduction in
Turkey."**



REFLECTIONS ON COALITIONAL COMMUNITY ACTIVISM: PROJECT S.A.V.E.D.

by Faith Barton '13

My experiences with Project S.A.V.E.D. (Students Against Violent and Emotionally Abusive Dating) brought me into contact with Williamsburg community activists and organizations dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls and survivors of domestic abuse. The Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program (formerly Women's Studies), and specifically Director and Professor Gul Ozyegin, introduced me to the hard-working women of Soroptimists of Williamsburg and the team at Avalon, along with the chance to become involved with coalitional politics on the local community level.

I was able to work with community organizers and student activists in the unique location of student liaison between these groups and the William & Mary community, along with fellow student and head of Avalon's Youth Council Dexter Strong, to foster connections between the William & Mary student body and local organizations. This involved contacting members of the campaign; interviewing Mary Minor, President of Soroptimists, for the previous edition of our very own *Mary & William* newsletter; assisting and enabling cross-coalitional dialogue for the purpose of things like making the new Women's Studies course *Intimate Violence*; and creating awareness about the project on campus, including helping set up Women's Studies' last Community Forum on Teen Dating Violence during October 2012. This, all in addition to helping enact Project S.A.V.E.D. itself! Specifically, I assisted with the development and implementation of the campaign's final manifestation: the Teen Summit 4 Healthy Relationships in February of this year. This forum featured a speaker brought by Avalon, Dexter Strong as the main moderator, and W&M student volunteers facilitating conversation amongst and between local teenagers and their parents.

Truly, this was an amazing experience. Not only was I able to engage in coalitional politics within my community — those who have done similar activist work will understand the frustrations this produces, but also the joy — I was also witness to the transformative power of change that communication and education can bring. The subject of teen dating violence is a difficult one to broach with teenagers and adults alike, but it is also extremely relevant, considering the high rates of domestic abuse and intimate violence reported — abuse that often begins during the teenage years, if it has not been already experienced. Watching these kids (I call them, though I am really not that much older) connect to each other and talk about their experiences and the hardships that they witness in their everyday lives was inspiring, and hearing their parents open up as well brought home to me how valuable these spaces are, and the actions that bring them into being. Many of them expressed the desire to see the Teen Summit repeated in years to come, and I echo the sentiment; during the wrap-up and evaluation of the forum all I could think was how important these dialogues about safety are, and how I wish I had been exposed to them at a much younger age than college. The information and strategies I learned through the implementation of this program would have benefitted not just me, but many of my loved ones, had we but known them earlier.

Continuing awareness-raising campaigns such as Project S.A.V.E.D., and taking advantages of opportunities to become involved in activism on any level, were two of the most vital lessons I took away from



Faith Barton, Dexter Strong, Professor Victoria Castillo, and W&M volunteer facilitators at the Teen Summit 4 Healthy Relationships.

my experiences this past year. Ensuring the safety and health of yourself and the ones closest to you is always a worthwhile endeavor, and makes that much stronger of an impact on the world around you when you utilize existing support networks, and perhaps help forge new ones. Being able to put the things I've learned during my undergraduate career as a Women's Studies major cemented in my mind what I'd already learned in the classroom: it is a cliché, but you can, in fact, change the world, if only you try.



Professor of Classical Studies Lily Panoussi presents on "Whatever Happened to Thoas? Hypsipyle's Rituals in Valerius and Statius."



Professor Zeynep Korkman of GSWS and Sociology speaks on "Gendered Fortunes: Women's Occult Labor in Millennial Turkey."

CHRONICLES OF A FEMINIST WET BLANKET

by Eva Swanson '13

It's a surreal experience to walk into a Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies class and realize there are other people like you: women (and sometimes men) who fill a very specific space in their friend groups and families. The role I'm talking about, of course, is that of the joy-sucking, buzz-killing, point-belaboring, eye roll-inducing feminist wet blanket.

Imagine feeling like the only one who ever feels the need to call a friend out on her use of the word "slut" as a weapon against another girl's choices in sexual expression. Consider having the impression that you alone can't sit tight-lipped when your dad makes a comment about the way a female politician dresses, conveniently forgetting to also acknowledge male politicians' attire. Envision the experience of believing yourself entirely alone in feminist thought while you're on the back porch of a fraternity party, wearing a man's jacket to keep warm, and arguing with him about the existence of the wage gap. Now, visualize a space in which women and men are rewarded for recognizing sexism and the discriminatory institutions that keep it running, social, political, medical, and otherwise. Consider a place where fellow students nod their heads along in approval at your feminist ranting, instead of shaking their heads in disagreement. Imagine an on-going mantra of "going off of what she said," "in conjunction with her point," and "she already said what I was going to say." Welcome to the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies department, an oasis of understanding in an anti-feminist wet blanket (and by extension anti-feminist and anti-women) world.

The feminist wet blanket is a very distinct category of woman (and again, sometimes but rarely men). Unlike dryer, less-blankety folk, a feminist wet blanket doesn't care about making everything okay because she knows everything is not okay. She's not afraid to call shit out because, no, she's not

your "baby" or "honey" or "darling" and to call her, a stranger, such a term of belittlement dressed up as endearment is patronizing and offensive. She will risk the social discomfort of the sexism-enforcing offender for the betterment of her feminist cause. And she won't do it with a smile and a wink like a good girl; she'll look you in the face like she's kicking you in the metaphorical balls.

Let's break this identity down. A wet blanket would quite possibly be one of the most unpleasant sensory experiences available: cold, heavy, pointless, possibly smelly. To call a feminist, someone committed to the cause of combating and ending sexism, a wet blanket tells us a lot about how you feel about that person and her social justice movement. You don't find her points to be valid, truthful, or important, you don't value her perspective, and you probably find her cold, heavy, pointless, and possibly even smelly (depending on if the feminist is fulfilling traditional feminist stereotypes of forgoing deodorant).

I have done my duty as the token feminist wet blanket for years in my personal social circles. And it's exhausting because it feels like you're holding up the entire movement on your own two shoulders while the people you know and love keep crushing your soul with the same sexist bullshit. I'm the feminist wet blanket when I don't want to go to a fraternity party in which men dress as professors and women don their shortest plaid skirts to play the role of student. I'm the feminist wet blanket when I angrily call out a street harasser instead of looking down and walking on. I'm the feminist wet blanket when I ask to turn the channel when a Real Housewife discusses her riveting opinion about a women's job to manage the home. In short, as the famous quote by Rebecca West goes, I'm the feminist wet blanket when "I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat."

Sexism is ingrained so deeply in our culture that, even though they may be tools in their own victimization and oppression, I understand when women don't want to identify as feminist, and therefore consider me a feminist wet blanket. We get a constant

bombardment of messages about what personalities are valued (especially in women), such as "let it be" and "go with the flow." Aggression, anger, and social rallying don't belong in proper dinner table, small talk, or water cooler conversations, which all happen to be places sexist bullshit needs calling out. In these situations in which an individual says or does something discriminatory, prejudiced, and/or sexist about women, we feminist wet blankets have a few options.

Option One: smile, sit pretty, and seethe invisibly. Hide that you're a feminist wet blanket! No one in polite company needs to know your political agenda, so hold it in. Of course, when you're silent when someone talks about "slaying" (a.k.a. fucking) a girl or about female presidents bringing us just one big, red button push away from complete world destruction, you will discover the worst taste forming in your mouth. Ah, the flavor of complicity. Sometimes, however, I'll hold my tongue rather than face the social stigma of disrupting everyone's sexism-supporting experience. Sometimes, it's easier to sit with a table of people completely fine with being instruments of social oppression for women than to sit alone. Other times, something's got to be said and, after a quick imaginary raise of hands as to who is committed to women's liberation, you stand alone and it has to be you.

However, just know you'll be the feminist dick for the night. Your point will make everyone look at her or his plate and fall silent. Or worse: argue their shitty, sexist point. Why does everyone have to know you're a feminist in every situation, Eva; was that really a necessary interjection into a harmless conversation about the absence of female Navy Seals in the Bid Laden raids on account of the frailty and weakness of women's bodies? Why did you have to make that point about the high school "men's pageant" making a mockery out of womanhood and transgenderism? Do you actually feel sexism in your life from all sides all day every day? Geez, what a cold, heavy, pointless, smelly feminist wet blanket your liberal college professors have turned you into.

Of course, when your friends and family begin to catch on to your incurable case of feminism, they will abandon you when you're speaking out against sexism in public, but might privately commune in your secret, safe, woman-centered mind frame. Your best friend who would rather cover her ears and shake her head at the mention of social justice will one day get a ticket and the officer will ask her, "Pretty thing like you can't find the money for a



Eva Swanson '13

ticket?" But you'll be there to praise her in her identification of an example of sexism and wrap your once cold, heavy feminist arms about her in your now warm, understanding, feminist embrace. Tomorrow she'll go back to explaining that she's not a feminist because she likes when a guy pays for dinner.

I find that, much like my identities of privilege and disprivilege, my social justice identities also come together in intersectionality. I am a feminist and a queer ally, so that, in the same way friends come to me with their experiences with sexism, they also come to me wanting praise for not being a homophobic piece of shit. They want me to smile and pat their backs when they exclaim that they've always wanted to march in a gay pride parade! And later, they'll ask if this dress makes them look dykey.

In your feminist wet blanket-ness, however, you might find that it's all worth it. You realize you don't stop being a feminist when you regrettably kept silent about something discriminatory a professor in another department said. You're not alone, holding the movement up by your own two feminine and therefore weaker shoulders. There are millions of men and women committed to the cause of ending sexism, whether they choose to self-identify as a feminist (or feminist wet blanket) or not. And you found them at William & Mary, sitting around you in a Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies oasis in the center of a steaming-hot desert of discrimination against women. You might begin to understand that growing up and living every day in a patriarchal society makes most sexism invisible to the untrained eye, bringing reason to why people consider you in this light, whether or not it's frustrating as hell most days.

When it comes down to it, I'm a feminist that our sexist culture reconfigured and deemed a "feminist wet blanket." But I'm a feminist wet blanket for the same reasons I'm a feminist. Because six of my best girl friends had been sexually molested, assaulted, or raped by the time they were 21. Because I don't want to get all of this education to quit my job and raise my kids at home. Because America's obstetrics system is seriously fucked and completely ignores what is best for women. Because any sort of women's liberation is still so new for the history of the world and we cannot forget how far we've come and also how far we need to go still. Because women deserve to be in military combat, presidential offices, boxing rings, or kitchens making dinner if they so choose. And falling silent in public about these things to friends, families, acquaintances, or even strangers is complicity in sexism. I live my identity as a feminist every day because I live my identity as a woman every day. I will call you out and tell you how I think. I will bring power and voice to disprivileged groups. I'll get mad or I'll stay calm, depending on the situation. But I will not sit silently because, as feminist writer and theorist Audre Lorde once said, "Your silence will not protect you." You can keep your sexist culture; I'll be over here working to end women's oppression, one feminist wet blanket comment at a time.

Course Spotlight on WMST 331

FEMINIST THEORY AND CONTEMPORARY THEATER

taught by Professor Laurie Wolf, Associate Professor, Department of Theatre, Speech, and Dance, interviewed by Professor Vassiliki Panoussi, Distinguished Associate Professor of Classical Studies

Professor Wolf teaches history, playwriting and dramatic theory and criticism in the Department of Theatre, Speech and Dance. She sponsors Premiere Theatre and Playwright's Playground, two forums for producing new writing, and has directed *The Authorities*, an original play accepted for the NYC Fringe Festival. She has directed *Marat/Sade* for William & Mary Theatre and *Candida* for VSF/Wedgwood Renaissance productions.

In *Cloud Nine*, a two-act play by British playwright Caryl Churchill, everything is topsy-turvy. Set in British colonial Africa in Victorian times, the play's male characters are played by women, the black characters are played by white, and so on. Clive, the colonial administrator, is the only one that seems right in his place. But not for long. Things change radically in Act 2: the date is 100 years later but characters have aged only 25 years. What is more, they are all now played by actors whose gender matches that of the characters. Not so Clive, who is now played by a five year-old girl. In this play, time, space, and gender are all categories that are constantly questioned and changed. Students in Professor Laurie Wolf's Feminist Theory and Contemporary Theater ask: how and why does this happen?

Assumptions about gender roles and power relations in contemporary society come under intense scrutiny in this play and in the other readings with which the students in this course engage. If Clive represents queen, country, and family, how does he do that when he is reduced to a little girl? Has our society succeeded in taking away all the power from patriarchy? Has it not? What shape would society have if indeed this was the case? This play asks students to imagine and think about all these possibilities.

In this class, students indeed learn about feminist theory. When Professor Wolf was giving me examples of the readings, I realized that the class really provides a true immersion in contemporary feminist thought and criticism. Yet this is by no means all the course does. Students read plays that they would not be normally familiar with; they perform whole plays or part of a play; they sometimes write and perform their own plays. This year, they're putting together a performance of *La Cage aux Folles*, or as it is better known, *Birdcage*.

Professor Wolf loves it when students shape the class through their own interests and come up with their own assignments: one time, they baked cookies shaped like male and female genitalia, offered them to students outside the class, and surveyed them: why did you choose one over the other? Another time, the students became very interested in studying the ways in which minority women were represented in the US census. Throughout, the students are invited to rethink not only their own ideas about gender, sexuality, and women but also to gain a new awareness about what informs our entertainment. As I was talking with Professor Wolf, I kept thinking that, with such exciting course materials, her students must always be on cloud nine!



Laurie Wolfe (l) and (r) Lily Panoussi chat over breakfast at the Blue Talon.

AWARDS & PRIZES

STUDENT AWARDS

2013 CAROL WOODY INTERNSHIP AWARDS

Funded by a generous donation from William & Mary alumn Carol Woody, the Carol Woody Real World Internship awards are available for students seeking real world experience to compliment their studies. The awards are available for students interested in doing an internship over spring break or in the summer. Awards usually range from \$200-\$400, depending on available funds. Below are this year's recipients.

NICOLE CHANDUVI '15 (Undeclared) will be interning with Raul Emilio Quezada Munante, the Chief Judge of the Second Criminal Chamber of Free Prisoners in the Superior Court of Lima, Peru.

ALEXANDER LOTT '14 (Law Major) is working with Lisa Bertini, of Bertini, O'Donnell and Hammer, a law firm in Norfolk. He will be assisting with a transgender discrimination case.

JORDAN TAFFETT '16 (Undeclared) will be an intern with the Family Planning Council in Philadelphia.

SUZY ZIAH '15 (Government Major) will work under Carlos Osorio, director of the Southern Cone Documentation Project at the National Security Archive in Washington D.C. She will be assisting with research and data entry on human rights abuses in South America, particularly during the Cold War.

SARAH OVERTON '14 (Sociology and Women's Studies Double Major) is interning at the Women's Resource Center to End Domestic Violence in Atlanta.

2013 STUDENT ACTIVISM AWARD

ELIZABETH SCOTT '13 (Women's Studies Major and Sociology Minor) has dedicated herself to the prevention of sexual assault and the promotion of sexual assault awareness both on campus and off. As a member of H.O.P.E. (Health Outreach Peer Educators) and president of their Sexual Aggression/Healthy Relationship Branch, she led efforts to make the organization more inclusive. Among other initiatives, Elizabeth introduced gender-neutral facilitation and LGBTQIA scenarios to the group in order to increase their range of effectiveness. She also led an effort to facilitate a continuing education workshop for the United States Navy, meeting with focus groups on a weekly basis for six months. Elizabeth has served on the W&M Student Assembly as the Undersecretary of Sexual Health, and has also worked off campus with Project S.A.V.E.D., a summit on teen dating violence in the Williamsburg/James City County community. Finally, Elizabeth also writes a blog called "Things I Like Include ____," which addresses feminist personal and political issues on and off campus.

2013 DEAN'S PRIZE FOR SCHOLARSHIP ON WOMEN AWARD

GRADUATE WINNER:

The winner of our Dean's Prize for Graduate Research is **LINDSAY KEITER**, a PhD student in the History Department, working with Professor Karin Wulf. Her entry is a chapter in her dissertation titled "'I fear some interference will become necessary to rescue her': Harriet Chew Carroll and Extralegal Response to Marital Breakdown in the Early Republic." Lindsay looks at the story of Harriet Chew Carroll, working with the Chew Family Papers at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania to examine the ways in which families addressed marital difficulties when divorce was an impossibility for one reason or another. In Carroll's case, her husband's alcoholism and emotional abusiveness finally forced her to accept familial assistance in negotiating an informal separation from him. As Lindsay argues, the silence surrounding domestic conflict in early America renders the archive around Carroll's case a remarkable and revealing one.

UNDERGRADUATE WINNER:

FAITH BARTON is the winner of the Dean's Prize for Undergraduate Research. Her paper, written for Professor Gul Ozyegin's "Comparative Studies in Gender and Work" course, is titled "Sex Work as Embodied and Emotional Labor: Female Sex Workers, Performativity, and Transgressing Gendered Sexual Binaries and Boundaries." Faith looks at sex work as performative, meaning that the speech acts and bodily comportment of exotic dancers, prostitutes and other sex workers are carefully negotiated, enabling them to carry out the physical and emotional tasks associated with their labor. Such an approach, she argues, is necessary if feminist researchers are to treat sex workers "as complete social beings who have agency and negotiate structural inequalities and hierarchies in the context of a workplace that contains the risks of physical danger and psychological costs."

Voices of Current Students

WHY I AM A WOMEN'S STUDIES MAJOR OR MINOR

NICOLE MCCAULEY '13, English and Women's Studies Double Major.

Becoming a Women's Studies major was attractive to me because the goal of the degree is to make me a better informed and better engaged citizen; shouldn't every degree do this? My degree has shown me that my race is a positive marker, not a shameful one. My degree has shown me that my sex is a strong one, not a weak one. It is a degree that continuously affirms my belief that everybody has a voice and every voice needs to be heard. At its core, Women's Studies is about reshaping and redefining a society that currently fosters ignorance, hate, and misguidedness. Women's Studies bridges gaps between people and forces people to look at life in new contexts; everybody has a standpoint and it is remarkable to learn how people are positioned in the world and how I am positioned around them. In Women's Studies, we don't just talk about women; we talk about socioeconomic class, religion, sexual orientation; we talk about people. We talk about our differences and our similarities but most importantly, we listen to and learn from each other. The knowledge I have gained from my Women's Studies classes at W&M has prepared me well for life after graduation. Because of Women's Studies, each day I know better how to both check myself and express myself. Women's Studies at W&M has taught me self-love, how to give and get respect, and has shown me the limitlessness of my own power.

COMMUNITY FORUM

GSWS's Community Forum on Transgender Issues featured student and community presenters from Richmond's Fan Free Clinic, Southerners on New Ground, and Community Organizers for Transgender Children and Their Families. The forum brought in a big crowd of students and faculty alike!



LECTURE FROM HELMA LUTZ

GSWS was proud to present a lecture by Sociology Professor and Chair of Women's and Gender Studies at Goethe University, Frankfurt, Helma Lutz. She presented her research in a talk titled "Carework and Immigration in Europe."



WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM
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MARY & WILLIAM NEWSLETTER

Editor

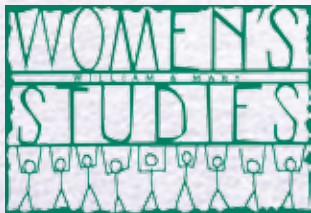
Faith Barton '13

Director of Women's Studies

Gul Ozyegin

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GIVE TO WOMEN'S STUDIES (GENDER, SEXUALITY AND WOMEN'S STUDIES)

Your contribution to the Women's Studies Program will help our faculty members provide the best learning experience to our students. You can contribute online with your credit card, using our secure web server at:

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