

# WGS CONNECT

The Newsletter of the Women's & Gender Studies Program



In this time of year, as in all seasons, WGS wishes you good health, and an abundance of peace and joy.  
(Digital illustration by Percy Haas)

## WELCOME BACK!

As the light returns to our days – metaphorically and literally – I wish for everyone connected to WGS to hold space for all the beautiful things that are trying to happen. I'm inspired to these words by a stunningly full camellia tree outside my home office window, demanding I notice it. I have been sitting in this same chair, by this same window for nearly a year now – as have most of you in your own home-work spaces. And though it's been a long and dark and painful and intense year, this resilient camellia just carries on, beautiful and alive as ever, reminding me of what's possible. This brings to mind a quote by the wise Toni Morrison who wrote:

***"I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence."***

Let's, together, refuse to capitulate to the darkness. Let's, together, celebrate what is possible through and with this vibrant community, while recognizing that our work can only ever be a piece of broader justice, freedom, and wholeness. What we do within the "classroom" is of critical importance. Yet, in the absence of resources and opportunities for everyone to lead a full, safe, and healthy life – with fair paying jobs, affordable housing, comprehensive health care, whole foods, vibrant communities – what we can do is limited. This is why our community supporters and partners are so critical; this is why we labor together. In WGS we promote and encourage activism, campus-community collaborations, leveraging WGS knowledge and perspectives to support movement toward freedom. Our students, current and graduated, as well as faculty and community partners, whom you can read more about in these pages, are testaments to this. We celebrate them and the better world for which they are striving.

Bettina Love writes, "to want freedom is to welcome struggle." This tension is at the core of our programming this term, from our Teaching to Engage and Activate (T.E.A. with WGS) book club exploring abolition education (p. 8) to our virtual *Yes! I'm a Feminist* campaign (p. 5) and our Women's History month theme, "Excuse me, I'm speaking." We invite you to join us, to struggle with us, to imagine and create freedom-full feminist futures.

***Forward together!***

Kris

### NOTE:

THIS DIGITAL NEWSLETTER USES LIVE LINKS.  
CLICK ON ANY UNDERLINED TEXT TO VISIT  
WEBPAGES, RESOURCES, AND MORE.



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## PROGRAM IMPACTS: THE "BUTTERFLY EFFECT"

Drawing from chaos theory (Edward Lorenz), we imagine the "butterfly effect" as the entirely unpredictable shifts occurring in the future that are sparked from changes (even small ones) in conditions that precede it. What we do in WGS has reverberating and powerful effects long after and well beyond the immediate context. We have so much evidence for this...

### TAYLOR VEAL, WGS '20 (SHE/HER)

"WGS influenced me in several ways during my time at CofC in both my classes and events held through the program but especially when I saw Mariah Parker speak on campus about her experience being sworn in as an Athens-Clarke County Commissioner, and then saw her hip-hop performance at Royal American.

Being able to talk to Mariah inspired me to take action in my own community and to run and be voted in to the Health Advisory Committee for the Charleston County School District to have a voice in the new health and sex education curriculum in Charleston. Though many of the classes I took in WGS prepared me for this role, I especially felt this goal was tangible after meeting Mariah and realizing all she accomplished by the age of 26."



### CLAIRE ZLOTNICKI, WGS '20 (SHE/HER)

"Since August, I have been working full-time as a health coach for Noom, the weight loss app. They use psychology and science to empower people to set goals and make healthy habits, and I like their mission even though I never considered myself working for a weight loss company (my capstone presentation was on body positivity and diet culture, ironically).

In my interview for this position, I made it explicitly clear that I would approach my work with clients with an intersectional feminist perspective, focusing less on weight loss and more on body respect and self efficacy, recognizing the complex feelings that people of all genders have about our bodies and weight loss. They seemed to like that and they hired me anyway, so here I am."

## WGS STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES FUND

Feeling inspired reading about the accomplishment of our recent alumnae? Have an idea or project that needs support and resources? Perhaps you want to study abroad, or apply for a summer internship or independent study... All of these are reasons to apply for funding through the WGS Student Opportunities Fund!

Launched in Spring 2019, the WGS Student Opportunities Fund has helped send students conferences across the country; fund study abroad trips to places like London, Uganda, and Rwanda; and complete internships at local organizations like *Skirt*. magazine. So what are you waiting for?

*Applications are received on a rolling basis. Funding available through this initiative is restricted to WGS majors and minors who have completed a minimum of 12 hours in WGS (if you don't fit this criterion, don't be dismayed! Contact director Kris De Welde). The application - [located here](#) - asks for details about your project or plan, your timeline, your budget and funding request, and if relevant, a letter of support from a faculty mentor.*

**APPLY NOW!**



## STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

Each semester, the WGS program highlights current students and their accomplishments on the [WGS instagram page](#) and program blog, [WGS Connect](#). Read a short excerpt of our highlighted students' interviews below, and be sure to catch the full spotlight interviews on our program blog!



### MAKAYLA COOK (SHE/HER)

Makayla Cook is a Ketner Emerging Leader from Myrtle Beach, SC who is passionate about reproductive rights. In her interview, Makayla explains: "...a big part of [reproductive rights] is comprehensive sexual education. For me it's about having an informed choice about what happens to our bodies and how to care for and love them. [Being a Ketner Scholar] has taught me that there are endless connections to make, work to be done, and ways to make positive change. No matter where I am or what I do, I can get involved."



### SARAH CLAIRE MULLIS (SHE/HER)

Sarah Claire Mullis is a WGS major and Anthropology and Psychology minor from Greenville, SC. She is the current recipient of the Alison Piepmeier Endowed Scholarship. When discussing her introduction to WGS, she explains that: "I first wanted to go into a social science field and just tailor my electives around my interests in sustainability and WGS. It didn't take me long to realize that I was only truly passionate about my WGS courses. They were the only ones that made me crave knowledge, seek action, and re-evaluate my individual perspective."



### JODY BELL (SHE/HER)

Jody Bell is a Ketner Emerging Leader from Greenwich, CT. When discussing her campus and community activism, she mentioned: "It was shift[ing] from a more follower centered activism to a leadership position that really ignited my passion and made me understand what I was truly capable of. It lit a fire in me that has seeped into my perception of myself, and motivated me to just keep producing new, innovative, and sometimes unorthodox ways of engaging in activism."

READ THE FULL SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEWS ON OUR PROGRAM BLOG:

[BLOGS.COFC.EDU/WGSCNECT/CATEGORY/STUDENT-SPOTLIGHTS](https://blogs.cofc.edu/wgscnect/category/student-spotlights)



## KAMAU POPE (HE/HIM, THEY/THEM) WGS ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

### HOW DID YOU COME TO BE INTERESTED IN WGS AS AN UNDERGRAD, AND WHAT MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES WITH WGS DURING YOUR TIME AT THE COLLEGE CAN YOU SHARE WITH US?

During my freshman year, I explored different majors, from music to communications to sociology. Still, I knew that the core of my interests lay in activism, and dismantling systems of oppression. It was not until my second year, where I sat in a class that aligned with my interest in social justice. This class, "Contemporary Social Issues," was a sociology class cross-listed with WGS that I took. This course highlighted different social justice issues and how they impacted people. It deviated from a traditional lecture format and gave us a chance to discuss our readings as a class in a circle. I enjoyed how dialogue could foster change and connection in a classroom. That next semester I immediately took "Introduction to WGS" with Alison Piepmeier. Following that class, I declared WGST as a major, and I knew that I could study the intersections of my own identities as a Black transmasculine person when paired with African American Studies.

A memorable moment for me was my internship, where I co-instructed [TA'ed] a course with Dr. Kristi Brian. That experience allowed me to see what it was like to foster dialogue among students like my prior WGS classes had. Since it was a class on Race, Gender, and Sexuality, it offered a chance to address and unlearn systems of oppression. It was this class that showed me how a classroom setting is an opportunity to facilitate change. I witnessed how classrooms and campuses are microcosms of society, and college students and instructors can be catalysts for change on campus that can support work in the community. I enjoyed that internship so much that I decided to co-instruct the course again the following semester.

### WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING SINCE GRADUATION? WHAT ARE YOUR ASPIRATIONS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE?

Since graduation, I worked for a year with Southerners on New Ground (SONG) as the South Carolina Organizing Fellow. This position aimed to foster community dialogue centered around justice in Charleston, Columbia, and Greenville, South Carolina, to build a strong membership base. After that yearlong fellowship, I continued to work and organize in non-profit with the Post-Landfill Action Network (PLAN) as Tour Coordinator. During my time with PLAN, I led two annual tours to different colleges and universities to highlight the harms of the linear consumption economy and developed students' leadership. During my time at PLAN, I also co-authored their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mandate to support the organizational structure.

After working with PLAN, I have been a MA candidate in History researching LGBTQ activism across four decades, from 1960-1990. Some emerging themes of this research are that LGBTQ activists have stayed and organized in the South due to scarcity, fear, love, and the possibilities of radical change in this region. Additionally, through this research, I have been able to intertwine my interest in Black Joy as a revolutionary act of resistance. My work on Black Joy was accepted to the American Studies Association's 2020 conference for the "(Re)Imagining Trans Futures" panel. With an expected graduation of May 2021, I aim to continue to receive my terminal degree and become a tenured faculty member at a college institution. Regardless of where my career path takes me, I aim to continue doing work that shifts dominant master narratives, challenges white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism, and works to create a just and sustainable society for all marginalized people.

### HOW DID YOUR STUDIES IN WGS PREPARE YOU FOR YOUR WORK?

In many conversations I had with Alison Piepmeier, she highlighted how academics could be activist-scholars and conduct research that supports, promotes, and amplifies the lived experiences of people who have been historically marginalized. The degree gave me ample opportunities to unlearn systems of oppression and write in a way that is accessible to people inside and outside of academia. I often coin my writing to my pro-



**"IT WAS [DR. BRIAN'S CLASS] THAT SHOWED ME HOW A CLASSROOM SETTING IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO FACILITATE CHANGE."**

KAMAU POPE ('16)

fessors and peers during undergrad who helped me craft work that my "aunties and uncles" can talk about on a front porch over a sweet tea.

In my Introduction to WGS class, I jotted down the idea to research and unpack Black masculinity and how transmasculine people inform and deviate from the gender binary. That small note on a piece of paper transformed into my interest in queer theory and critical race theory as a scholar. My research documents LGBTQ history in the US South and examines how queer and trans people resist and exist in this region. My work requires decolonizing the archives and interviewing elder queer people to learn about their experiences. I attribute the program's interdisciplinary approach to how I conduct my research. I hope to continue the program's legacy by creating research as an activist-scholar that amplifies solutions, communities, and justice.

# YES! I'M A FEMINIST CELEBRATING VIRTUALLY

"Yes! I'm a Feminist." is celebrating eight years as an annual event organized by the **WGS Community Advisory Board (CAB)** in support of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at The College of Charleston. While this year has kept us at a distance, we have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to find a creative way to celebrate our "wins" with our most loyal and generous supporters and to invite our global community to the party.

This year, our annual fundraising event will be completely virtual. With COVID-19 as a deciding factor, we have instead poured our energy into creating a video that encapsulates the culmination of our hard-fought past, acknowledges our present-day reality, and looks onward to a brighter, more feminist future. We are, if nothing more, celebrating the mere fact that we've survived one of the most arduous years in our lifetime, while preparing for the vital work ahead.

## THROUGH THURSDAY, JANUARY 28 (COFC DAY!) WE ARE CAMPAIGNING FOR FEMINIST FUTURES AND A MORE JUST WORLD FOR ALL.

**Our goal this year is to raise \$25,000 to fund our Student Opportunities Fund**, directly supporting specific programs that enhance the experience of our students, including access to revered speakers and mentors, unique opportunities for professional development and mentorship and educational offerings that support our community at-large. With your donation, Yes! I'm a Feminist and the Women's and Gender Studies program will continue to help students with tuition, programming, study abroad, and expanded research and internship opportunities. Your support has had an enormous impact on what we have been able to accomplish, together. **Your generous contributions have directly funded this movement that:**

- Provides scholarships, including the Piepmeier Endowed Scholarship, to gift students the opportunity to attend academic conferences, present their research, and be exposed to leading edge scholars
- Expands student and faculty research and civic leadership in the areas of: *Intersectional Activism, LGBTQ+ Identities, Politics, Women in STEM Fields, and Anti-Racism Education*
- Supports student activism and civic leadership in Charleston and at CofC
- Creates opportunities for students to study abroad and access globally fluent perspectives

On behalf of the College of Charleston's Women's and Gender Studies Community Advisory Board, students, and faculty, we THANK YOU for supporting this exceptional, ever-growing program over these eight years and for your steadfast commitment to our movement for many years to come. **Our students are the future. And the future is now.**

*Yes!*  
**I'm a Feminist.**

Benefitting the Alison Piepmeier Scholarship and the  
College of Charleston Women's and Gender Studies Program

DONATE TODAY!  
GIVE YOUR **YES**.  
[GIVE.COFC.EDU/WGS](https://give.cofc.edu/wgs)



WATCH NOW ON



YES! I'M A  
FEMINIST  
VIDEO



## TWO MEMBERS JOIN THE WGS COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

The WGS program is thrilled to welcome two new members to the program **Community Advisory Board (CAB)**, Djuanna Brockington and Toya Hampton. The WGS CAB is made up of ambassadors of feminism and the Women's and Gender Studies Program in the community. The CAB's mission is to "***endeavor to bridge campus and community, support students and faculty in gaining access to resources, and promote feminism and gender justice at large.***"

### **DJUANNA BROCKINGTON (SHE/HER)**

**INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PEOPLE AGAINST RAPE**

Djuanna Brockington is a Lowcountry native with more than twenty years of service in social services and nonprofit organizations. She holds a B.A. in Government and International Studies from the University of South Carolina, and an M.A. in Counseling from Webster University. She has effectively served in the areas of: child welfare services, adult protective services, substance abuse, addictions technology transfer, non-profit financial stability, and most recently as Interim Executive Director for People Against Rape. Djuanna understands the need for providing access to programs and opportunities that help people to feel safe within their communities, have access to health services and affordable housing, assurance that their children will receive a good education, and to earn a fair and adequate wage to create better futures for themselves, their families, and our communities. As a Black woman in the South, she also understands and supports the call for racial justice and equity in all things. Djuanna has a keen interest in equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workforce, as diverse teams are more creative, which makes for enhanced problem solving. When not working, she's writing fiction, reading, running (or feeling guilty for not running), or pampering her inner foodie at some great restaurant.



### **TOYA HAMPTON (SHE/HER)**

**ATTORNEY, TOYA HAMPTON, LLC**

Toya Hampton received her bachelor of arts in Communications from the University of Washington and her Juris Doctor from the University of Miami School of Law. She is the sole proprietor of Toya Hampton Attorney at Law with offices located in West Ashley. Toya practices in the areas of real estate law and municipal law. Most significantly, Toya is a proud feminist and the mother of two fabulous daughters.



## **CURRENT COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS:**

**AMANDA BUNTING-COMEN (SHE/HER)**

**MARGARET PILARSKI (SHE/HER)**

**BARBIE SCHREINER (SHE/HER)**

**CALLIE SHELL (SHE/HER - CHAIR)**

**LEAH SUÁREZ (SHE/ELLA)**

**ALI TITUS (SHE/HER)**

## TWO NEW MEMBERS JOIN THE WGS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The WGS program is delighted to welcome two new members to the program **Executive Committee**, Aaisha Haykal and mutindi mumbua kiluva-ndundal. The WGS Executive Committee consists of faculty from across the College whose scholarship and/or teaching align with the mission of the program. ***The Executive Committee participates in program decision making, mentoring students, and represents the program on campus and in the community.***



### AAISHA HAYKAL (SHE/HER)

MANAGER OF ARCHIVAL SERVICES, AVERY RESEARCH CENTER FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

Aaisha N. Haykal is the manager of archival services at the College of Charleston's Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. In this position, she is responsible for collection development, public programming, instruction, reference, and administrative duties. She has been professionally involved in several associations, including serving in leadership roles within the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH); she previously served on the board of the Black Metropolis Research Consortium (BMRC) in Chicago, IL, and the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board (ISHRAB). Haykal is the former university archivist at Chicago State University (Chicago, IL). Her research interests include African American history, digital preservation, censorship, and community archiving.



### MUTINDI MUMBUA KILUVA-NDUNDAL (SHE/HER)

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, HEALTH & HUMAN PERFORMANCE

My name is mutindi mumbua kiluva-ndundal. I am an associate professor in the School of Education Health and Human Performance where I have been teaching undergraduate and graduate education courses for over 20 years. I was born, raised and partly educated in a small village in Kenya. My background is in mathematics and chemistry. I hold a Ph.D. in Educational Policy studies from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver Canada.

I have had the privilege to develop and enhance valuable knowledge and skills as curriculum designer, program evaluator, online course developer and cross-cultural communication specialist to name a few. I have taught and done research in the United States, Canada, Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, United States and in California (feels like another country)!! My personal and professional life journey is informed by critical theory, agency and justice for all. I am privileged to have received a meaningful education that has allowed me to make choices that many women like my mother couldn't make.

My world view (teaching, research), private and public lives are informed by intersectionality theory. Some of my significant achievements include development of the first online courses for ESOL teachers at the college in 2005! I have won prestigious awards from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), International Development Center (IDRC), Fulbright and Carnegie African Diaspora (thrice).

### CURRENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

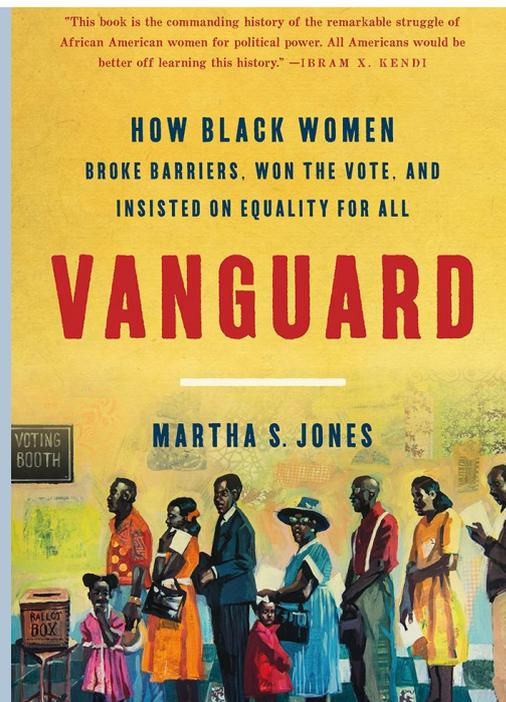
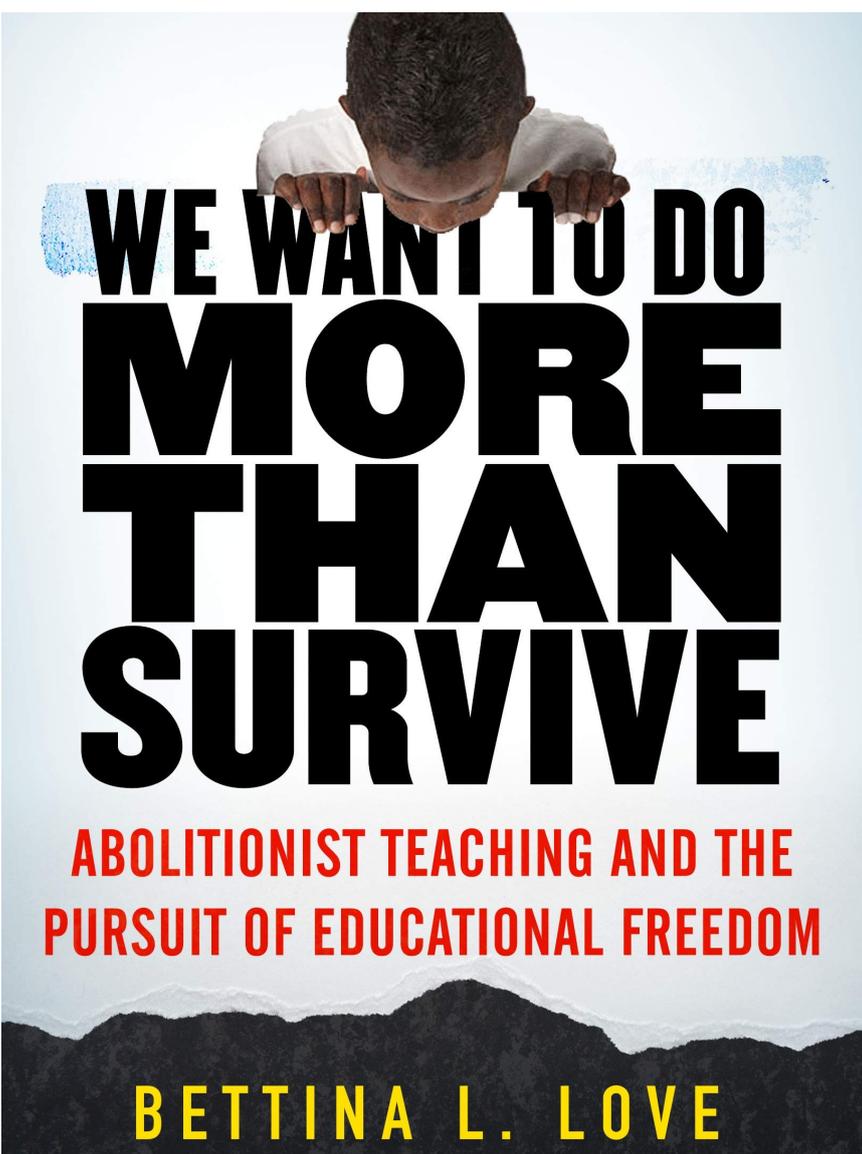
VIVIAN APPLER (SHE/HER, THEATRE & DANCE), CARA DELAY (SHE/HER, HISTORY), MELISSA HUGHES (SHE/HER, BIOLOGY), CHRISTY KOLLATH-CATTANO (SHE/HER, PUBLIC HEALTH, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF WGS), JULIA MCREYNOLDS-PEREZ (SHE/HER, SOCIOLOGY)

## WGS EVENTS

### **IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: VIRTUAL BOOK TALK AND Q&A WITH VANGUARD AUTHOR MARTHA S. JONES**

Did you attend the latest WGS virtual book talk and Q&A featuring author and Professor Martha S. Jones (Johns Hopkins University), author of *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All*? Moderated by our very own scholar of women's history Dr. Sandy Slater (History, WGS), this special event centered Professor Jones's research methodology and her chosen strategies for presenting the incredible lives of the women featured in *Vanguard*. Attendees got a special inside look at the work of legal and cultural historians like Professor Jones, who work tirelessly to mine history for overlooked, censored, or erased histories.

Special thanks to the Avery Research Center, the Libraries, Humanities & Social Sciences, and the African American Studies, History, and Political Science departments, without whom this event would not have been possible. WGS still has a few copies of *Vanguard* left to gift. Email [Kris De Welde](mailto:Kris.DeWelde@duke.edu) if interested!

**WE WANT TO DO  
MORE  
THAN  
SURVIVE**

**ABOLITIONIST TEACHING AND THE  
PURSUIT OF EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM**

**BETTINA L. LOVE**

### **MARCH 11, 2021: SPECIAL EVENT WITH AUTHOR BETTINA LOVE**

Following the T.E.A. with WGS winter book club on *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*, we invite ALL members of our on-campus and off-campus communities to join us on March 11 for a special virtual lecture with author Bettina Love!



**MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND  
STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILS !**

## WGS EVENTS

*Check social media and weekly faculty/student bulletins for more details on these upcoming events!*

### JANUARY 14-28 **YES! I'M A FEMINIST FUNDRAISER**

Join WGS virtually via [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), the [program blog](#), and our website to celebrate the 8th annual Yes! I'm a Feminist. *Learn more on page 5.*

### JANUARY – FEBRUARY **T.E.A. WITH WGS BOOK CLUB: *WE WANT TO DO MORE THAN SURVIVE***

### FEBRUARY **WGS RESEARCH & CREATIVE ACTIVITIES COLLOQUIUM**

A virtual event featuring 3-4 newer WGS faculty affiliates in a roundtable format. Presenters include Aaisha Haykal (Avery Center), Shannon Eaves (History), Kristen McLean (International Studies), and Maren Trochmann (Political Science).

### MARCH **WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH**

Theme: “Excuse me. I’m Speaking.” (as stated by Madame Vice President Kamala Harris)

### MARCH 8-12 **GENDER EQUITY WEEK**

*Hosted by the Gender and Sexuality Equity Center*

### MARCH 11 **BETTINA LOVE VIRTUAL LECTURE**

*See opposite page!*

### APRIL **FEMINISM IN MOTION**

*The WGS annual celebration of student scholars is back in 2021 for a virtual but no less exciting event. Stay tuned for more details!*

### **T.E.A. WITH WGS: DARK GREEN FEMINISM: TEACHING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE, TOXIC MASCULINITY, AND ANTI-BLACKNESS**

*Led by Jen Wright and Todd LeVasseur*

### MAY **ACTIVIST PEDAGOGY INTENSIVE WORKSHOP**

## FEATURED WGS SPECIAL TOPICS COURSES SPRING 2021

### WGST 322: HISTORY OF REPRODUCTION

CARA DELAY (HISTORY)

In this course, students examine pregnancy, childbirth, reproduction, and motherhood in comparative history. The focus is on Europe and the Americas since 1500, with particular attention paid to the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in the British colonies. Specific topics covered include experiences of pregnancy; midwifery and nursing; contraception, abortion, and infanticide; the medicalization of childbirth; and the relationship between motherhood and the modern state. Students will explore not only women's experiences of reproduction but also the larger political, social, and cultural meanings of pregnancy, birth, and motherhood.

### WGST 323: JEWS AND GENDER

ASHLEY WALTERS (JEWISH STUDIES)

This class explores the history, religion, and culture of Jews, from Biblical times to the present, through the lens of gender. It covers a wide range of subjects, including: the historical evolution of Judaism and its gendered dimensions; Yiddish, Ladino, and Hebrew literature; debates over emancipation and citizenship; the history of antisemitism, racial thought, and the Holocaust; Zionism and formation of the state of Israel; and contemporary Jewish life. This course introduces students to the field of gender history by demonstrating how gender is socially constructed, historically and geographically contingent, and operates in tandem with other critical categories, most notably class, race, religion, and sexuality.

### WGST 323: EXAMINING HOLLYWOOD FILM

CAROLINE GUTHRIE (COMMUNICATION, WGS)

This is an advanced writing course designed to provide students with a thorough understanding of film as an art form, "Hollywood" as a cultural institution and commercial enterprise, and the ideological frameworks within and around cinema. Students will examine a variety of theoretical frameworks of film criticism, and be exposed to films from Hollywood's "Golden Age" to the late 20th century. To focus our discussion of cinema and representation, this course will use representations of gender and race as its primary lenses for understanding the impact, potential, and stakes of Hollywood representation.

### WGST 324: FEMINIST IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

LISA ROSS (PSYCHOLOGY)

*See the next page for a detailed write-up of this Special Topics course!*

## FEMINIST IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT WGS CLASS SPOTLIGHT, DR. LISA ROSS

### GIVE US AN OVERVIEW OF THIS NEW SPECIAL TOPICS COURSE!

This Spring, I am teaching the Special Topics course *Feminist Identity Development* for the first time. I am curious about all the experiences I've had with people who state "I'm not a feminist, but..." and then go on to list ideas and values and beliefs that are, in fact, quite feminist.

These experiences of mine have made me quite curious. **Why is that so many people agree with key feminist principles but do not want to publicly state they are feminists? Why is there a lingering stigma associated with this term for so many people? Are people rejecting the label because they think they don't qualify somehow ("I'm a man so I can't be one")? Are they influenced by the exclusionary history of the term and perhaps they prefer "womanist" instead? Or do they reject labels, overall, when describing themselves and others?**

I have been fascinated by these questions for a long time. For almost two decades, students who take my Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies course and my *Psychology of Gender* courses have written an assignment at the beginning of the semester in which they introduce themselves, set some academic goals, and outline their study strategies for the course. One particular question asks about their reactions to the terms feminism and feminist, whether they describe themselves as one, and why or why not. And in a separate paper they interview people in their lives and ask questions about a variety of topics, including feminism, and summarize these interviews.

In this course, we explore the development of feminist identity from an intersectional perspective. We examine how feminist identity is similar to but different from other aspects of character and personality development. We examine family, peer, and media influences on attitudes toward feminism and on the willingness to labeling oneself a feminist as well as factors that serve as barriers to a public feminist identity. In addition, we investigate the language and stereotypes surrounding feminism, and the correlates and consequences of feminist identity.

### HOW AND WHEN DID YOU DEVELOP THIS COURSE?

I took advantage of a professional development opportunity during the Spring 2018 semester that really inspired me to turn my curiosity and fascination with this beliefs-identity disconnect into a special topics course. I participated in the WGS-led Faculty Liberal Arts and Sciences Colloquium (FLASC) reading group, and the theme that semester was feminist pedagogy. The readings were thought-provoking and the interaction with faculty from various departments was phenomenal. Our discussions and our support of one another sparked my enthusiasm to create this course. In addition, the way we created our "syllabus" for the seminar influenced my plans to seek more student input for shaping the process and the outcomes of this special topics class.

### HOW HAVE YOUR PLANS FOR TEACHING THIS COURSE CHANGED DURING THE COURSE OF THE PANDEMIC? ARE THERE CONCEPTS OR UNITS THAT YOU THINK MIGHT BE INTENSIFIED OR HEIGHTENED FOR STUDENTS GIVEN OUR CURRENT MOMENT?

I don't see strong connections between this course and the pandemic. However, I do see connections to the increasing political divide in our country, which I believe has deepened tremendously in 2020 due to the pandemic (e.g., the politicization of mask wearing). Although the assumptions some people make about the label "feminist" have always been negative, it seems as if the negativity has become magnified. It is as if calling yourself a feminist now seems more radical or more brave somehow.



*Lisa Thomson Ross is a social psychologist and professor of psychology and women's and gender studies. She has been at the College of Charleston since 1997. Her main research focus has been on unpredictability, both in our experiences (e.g., family chaos) and in our beliefs. Other teaching and research interests include humility, mental health, and human sexuality. Lisa's midlife crisis hobbies include karate, storytelling, and standup comedy. She is passionate about inclusion and justice, broadly defined, including involvement with the Charleston Area Justice Ministry and the College of Charleston Religious Life Council. A native of Detroit, she is a professional people watcher.*

"[IN FEMINIST IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT,] WE EXAMINE FAMILY, PEER, AND MEDIA INFLUENCES ON ATTITUDES TOWARD FEMINISM AND ON THE WILLINGNESS TO LABELING ONESELF A FEMINIST AS WELL AS FACTORS THAT SERVE AS BARRIERS TO A PUBLIC FEMINIST IDENTITY."

## WHAT ARE WE READING/WATCHING/LISTENING TO? RECOMMENDED READING IN WGS & BEYOND

### Must Watch: Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman Reads Original Poem, "The Hill We Climb," at Biden/Harris Inauguration

Watch youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman make history as the youngest known inaugural poet. Gorman performed her powerful original poem, "The Hill We Climb," during the inauguration ceremony, an historic day for our country as we swore in the first woman and first Black and South Asian person to hold the office of Vice President, Kamala Harris.

[WATCH NOW ON YOUTUBE](#)

recommended by Myra Seaman (English)... and the rest of us!

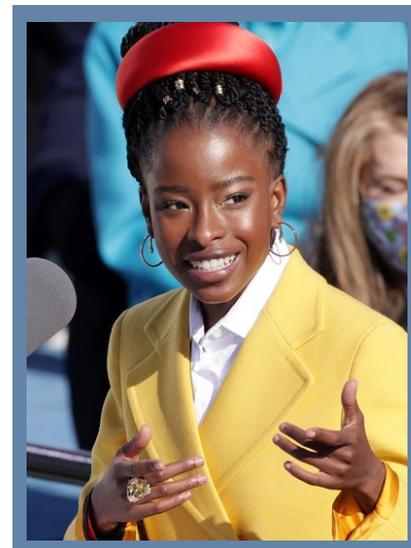


image: Getty Images / Alex Wong

### *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* edited by adrienne maree brown

"How do we make social justice the most pleasurable human experience? How can we awaken within ourselves desires that make it impossible to settle for anything less than a fulfilling life? Editor adrienne maree brown finds the answer in something she calls "Pleasure Activism," a politics of healing and happiness that explodes the dour myth that changing the world is just another form of work. Drawing on the black feminist tradition, including Audre Lourde's invitation to use the erotic as power and Toni Cade Bambara's exhortation that we make the revolution irresistible, the contributors to this volume take up the challenge to rethink the ground rules of activism."

recommended by Kris De Welde



### *Colonize This!: Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism* - Daisy Hernández & Bushra Rehman

"In this new edition, ...a new generation of outspoken women of color offer a much-needed fresh dimension to the shape of feminism of the future. In *Colonize This!*, Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman have collected a diverse, lively group of emerging writers who speak to the strength of community and the influence of color, to borders and divisions, and to the critical issues that need to be addressed to finally reach an era of racial freedom. With prescient and intimate writing, *Colonize This!* will reach the hearts and minds of readers who care about the experience of being a woman of color, and about establishing a culture that fosters freedom and agency for women of all races."

recommended by Percy Haas (WGS admin assistant)



## WHAT ARE WE READING/WATCHING/LISTENING TO? RECOMMENDED READING IN WGS AND BEYOND

### ***Borgen* (Netflix)**

*Borgen* is a Danish drama series about the first woman as Prime Minister of Denmark. Borgen is Danish for “castle,” which is the Danish nickname for Copenhagen’s cluster of government buildings. The protagonist struggles with work-life balance issues, being Prime Minister and a married mom of two. She is the leader of various factions/political parties and works on getting disagreeing politicians to compromise. Many thanks to Hollis France, who recommended this show to me!

recommended by **Lisa Ross**

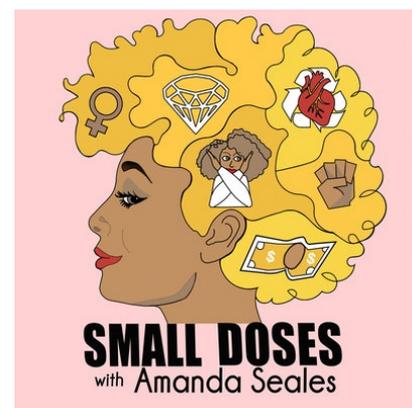


### ***Small Doses with Amanda Seales* (Podcast)**

"For podcasts I really *really* recommend Amanda Seales podcast Small Doses, since many episodes are explicitly dealing with intersectional feminism/racial justice activism, and it's also just really fun and validating to listen to."

Available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and wherever you listen to podcasts!

recommended by **Caroline Guthrie**



## SUPPORT OUR LOCAL INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES!

See a book on our list you think you might enjoy? Why not support an independent bookseller in the greater Charleston area? Offering your active support by choosing to shop at local, independently-owned businesses means that dollars, jobs, and taxes remain in your community, and in many cases you're also supporting Black-owned and women-owned businesses (such as Turning Page Bookshop in Goose Creek, or Itinerant Literate in Park Circle). Below is a list of indie bookstores near CofC that would love to have you visit - either virtually or in person:

- **Blue Bicycle Books** - 420 King Street (Downtown Charleston)
- **Buxton Books** - 160 King Street (Downtown Charleston)
- **Itinerant Literate** - 4824 Chateau Ave North (North Charleston)
- **Turning Page Bookshop** - 216 St James Ave Ste F (Goose Creek)



## DR. KRISTEN MCLEAN

### WGS FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

#### TELL US ABOUT YOUR CURRENT PROJECTS.

**“Fatherhood, Masculinity, and Family Wellbeing in Post-conflict Sierra Leone.”** This project explores two main research questions. The first concerns how masculinities and experiences of fatherhood are shifting against a background of global social, political and economic transformations in urban Sierra Leone. The second assesses the role that men play in supporting maternal and child health in this context, where rates of maternal morbidity and mortality are some of the highest in the world. Specifically, I seek to demonstrate the varied nature of male care as it pertains to female reproduction to draw attention to the culturally valid forms of care that often go overlooked in global health programs, which tend to focus almost exclusively on biomedical interventions.

**“Community-based Experiences of Covid-19 in Sierra Leone.”** It is with an appreciation for the need to understand and engage with local communities that this study seeks to understand what has been referred to as “the view from below” in the midst of a global humanitarian response. The primary purpose is to understand the ways individuals and local communities are experiencing and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in Sierra Leone. This includes a focus on the gendered nature of concerns, risk exposures, and caregiving behaviors related to the pandemic. Another component of the study explores how people’s experiences during the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic compare to and have impacted how they are responding to the current crisis. Several College of Charleston International Studies majors are assisting in this research project.

#### HOW DO YOU INCORPORATE WGS IN SCHOLARSHIP AND TEACHING?

In my scholarship I focus quite a bit on gender and the dynamic nature of femininities and masculinities in contemporary society. One of my projects concerns the relationship between masculinity and caregiving as it pertains to family health and wellbeing in Sierra Leone. In sub-Saharan Africa, where my work is based, men have been depicted as experiencing a “crisis of masculinity” — similar to the “toxic masculinity” discourse here in the U.S. — and criticized for being irresponsible, patriarchal, or violent. My work challenges this deficit characterization of masculinity in Africa by calling attention to men’s positive caregiving roles and the varied nature of male care more broadly. Themes from women’s and gender studies also seep quite often into the classroom when I am teaching, particularly in my course **“Cross Regional Studies: Health and Society in Global Perspective.”** This course provides an overview of contemporary global health issues from an interdisciplinary and critical perspective, and students learn about the social, political, and economic drivers of global health disparities in different countries and regions of the world. In one unit we focus on gender disparities in health by questioning why the rate of maternal mortality is so high in the United States compared to other high-income countries, or how gender inequalities exacerbate maternal health problems in the Global South. Students engage with theories like structural violence or concepts such as the social determinants of health to understand how factors such as race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect to drive differences in health outcomes.

#### WHAT IS YOUR DREAM COURSE AND WHAT WOULD IT COVER?

I would love to teach a course titled **“Gender, Race, and Global Disease Outbreaks.”** My interest in teaching such a course stems from the integration of my two research foci: the gendered nature of caregiving and community-based experiences of infectious disease epidemics. In my work on Ebola in Sierra Leone one thing I found was that humanitarian organizations tended to promote a feminized rhetoric of care, which became problematic when they incorrectly associated higher infection risk to women. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that racial minorities are disproportionately becoming infected and dying, for reasons that are preventable. The course I am envisioning would allow students to trace the social and cultural factors that drive disparities in mortality and morbidity amidst global health emergencies. The course will aim to answer questions such as: how do our social frameworks and structures, such as gender, sexuality, or race/ethnicity, affect people’s risk of poor health and experiences of illness?



*Kristen E. McLean earned her Ph.D. in Anthropology from Yale University and her Master of Public Health (MPH) from Emory University’s Rollins School of Public Health. She currently serves as an Assistant Professor of International Studies at the College of Charleston. Professor McLean specializes in medical anthropology and global health and her ongoing research is concerned with issues related to youth, gender, violence, and health in post-conflict and humanitarian settings. Other interests included the role of local communities in responding to infectious disease outbreaks (particularly Ebola). She works primarily in the West African countries of Sierra Leone and Liberia. At the College of Charleston she is Affiliated Faculty of African Studies, Medical Humanities, and Women’s and Gender Studies.*

“[IN ONE OF MY COURSES,] STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC DRIVERS OF GLOBAL HEALTH DISPARITIES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND REGIONS OF THE WORLD... FOCUS[ING] SPECIFICALLY ON GENDER DISPARITIES IN HEALTH ... BY QUESTIONING ... HOW GENDER INEQUALITIES EXACERBATE MATERNAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH.”

## ANNOUNCEMENT & ACCOMPLISHMENTS WGS STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS: FALL 2020 HONORS

**President's List:** Elaina Komerofsky, Katherine Morand, Sarah Claire Mullis, Jeronimo Ortega, Grey Parsons, Michelle White, Romberg York

**Dean's List:** Zöe Murrie, Kristina Wasserman

### PUBLICATIONS & PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Kristen McLean**, "Men's experiences of pregnancy and childbirth in Sierra Leone: Reexamining definitions of 'male partner involvement.'" *Social Science & Medicine* 265 (2020): 113479. "Post-Crisis Masculinities' in Sierra Leone: Revisiting Masculinity Theory." *Gender, Place & Culture* (2020): 1-20.
- ---, "'Post-Crisis Masculinities' in Sierra Leone: Revisiting Masculinity Theory." *Gender, Place & Culture* (2020): 1-20.
- **Myra Seaman** (English) is completing 10 years with the quarterly academic journal, *postmedieval*, for which she was a founding co-editor. It is worth noting that the journal was and continues to be edited entirely by women -- a total of 6 editors, looking back and looking forward, along with 2 book review essay co-editors.
- **Siri Suh** and **Julia McReynolds-Pérez**, "Subversive Epidemiology in Abortion Care: Reproductive Governance from the Global to the Local in Argentina and Senegal." *Signs* (2020, Forthcoming)
- **Maren Trochmann** had an Op Ed published in the *Post and Courier* titled "We must understand challenges to address affordable housing problem" that is [available to read here](#). She also worked with a group to launch the [South Carolina Chapter of the Scholars Strategy Network](#).
- **Ashley Walters**, "Oriental Leaven": Anna and Rose Strunsky in the Unpublished Writings of Jack London and Sinclair Lewis," *American Jewish History*, Volume 104, Number 2/3, 2020.
- **Madeleine Ware**, **Cara Delay**, and **Beth Sundstrom**, "Abortion and Black Women's Reproductive Health Networks in South Carolina, 1940-1970." *Gender & History* 32, 3 (October 2020): 637-56.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The **COVID-19 narrative project** is still seeking volunteers (faculty, staff, students, and lowcountry residents). Please see [this link for more information](#). Both projects are being conducted by the **Women's Health Research Team**.
- Please join the **Medical Humanities and Public Health programs in a Book Club**; we will be discussing Stu Durando's *Under the Gun*, about gun violence as a public health issue. [Register here](#).

### RETIREMENTS

- **Louise Doire** (Religious Studies), has been teaching in WGS since 2002, primarily Women & Religion. She shared: "Bringing the feminist critique of religion to so many students and teaching WGST 200 for the past three years have been among the most rewarding experiences of my career."
- **Richard Nunan** (Philosophy) came to the College in 1984. Besides the very popular *Queer Looks* class, Richard also taught *Topics in Law & Morality: LGBT Rights* class, and often also taught WGST 200. Notably, Richard taught the very first WGST capstone seminar!

We all will miss both of these generous and brilliant colleagues and wish them well in the next chapters of their life journeys.

## NEW AFFILIATES

In 2020-21, WGS has welcomed so far:

- **Alexis Carrico** (Management)
- **Aaisha Haykal** (Avery Center)
- **Elisa Jones** (History)
- **mutindi ndunda** (Teacher Edu)
- **Jenn Wilhelm** (Psychology)

## PANDEMIC PET ADOPTIONS

Cara Delay welcomed Harry the Siamese cat into her family.



Julia McReynolds Pérez and Michael O'Brien added to their family Zöe the hound puppy mix.



Melissa Hughes and her family expanded to include Pipilo, a rescue kitten resembling Eastern Towhees (hence the genus name) and Tiny Budgee (sung to the tune of Tiny Bubbles), a rescue budgie.



Christy Kollath-Cattano added a second pig to their family, Rosie.



## NOTE:

THIS DIGITAL NEWSLETTER USES *LIVE LINKS*.  
CLICK ON ANY UNDERLINED TEXT TO VISIT  
WEBPAGES, RESOURCES, AND MORE.



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This issue of *WGS Connect* was designed & edited by **Percy Haas**.

Special thanks to Djuanna Brockington, Kris De Welde, mutindi mumbua kiluva-ndunda1, Caroline Guthrie, Toya Hampton, Aaisha Haykal, Kristen McLean, Kamau Pope, Lisa Ross, Myra Seaman, and Leah Suárez for their contributions.