Greetings from Women’s and Gender Studies! As many of you know, our program has been around for over forty years, since 1976. Until this year, we had never had an Academic Program Review (or APR), something most academic units go through every seven years. Last spring and summer we wrote a 25-page “Self-Study” for the APR about our program. This fall we hosted an APR team of three external WGS scholars and one UNL faculty member who spent three days interviewing WGS faculty and students as well as College of Arts and Science administrators and other chairs and directors in the college. This might seem like an excruciating bureaucratic exercise – and in many ways it was – but it was also an opportunity to hear from outside experts about the health of our program. Here are some excerpts from their report:

• “The committee found the faculty and students extremely (and we do mean extremely) collegial and devoted to the idea of WGS. Everyone we met wanted the program to succeed and prosper.” “Many people, from undergraduate students to faculty, express a deep commitment to and passion for the program, emphasizing the importance of WGS in their intellectual and professional identities.”

• “The three core faculty [Emily Kazyak, Rose Holz, and Katy Holland] displayed a stunning devotion to WGS and to gender/sexuality studies broadly.”

• “There is a strong sense that WGS performs crucial diversity work for the institution, in terms of teaching and research but also--and most visibly--in terms of community.” That was the good news.

But our APR team also pointed out many disturbing things:

• “All members of the review committee feel strongly that WGS is underfunded. The program is doing very important work on a shoestring budget and does not have sufficient resources to function as a stable unit that allows for regularity in curricular offerings.”

• “The underfunding of the program gives the sense that gender and gender equity is not taken seriously by the institution. Much of the labor of the program is done on a volunteer and unfunded basis, suggesting that the institution is not thinking about the gendered nature of labor (gender as ‘women’s work,’ and thus less important than other forms of ‘real’ labor).” (Continued on page 2.)
WGS Welcomes New Core Faculty!

New core faculty member, Dr. Kathryn Holland received her Ph.D. in Psychology & Women’s Studies from the University of Michigan. She joined the UNL faculty in 2017, with a joint appointment in the Department of Psychology and Women’s & Gender Studies Program.

Her research investigates how people’s health and wellbeing are influenced by their social environments, with a focus on formal support systems, social norms, and interpersonal processes. Dr. Holland will be teaching courses in both Women’s & Gender Studies and Psychology. She is teaching Women, Gender, and Science (WMNS 385) in Spring 2018.

The APR team concluded:

• “We recognize that the College of Arts and Sciences and the entirety of the UNL campus are facing an extreme financial situation… While recognizing that, the review committee still urges the administration to provide more support to WGS. During better financial times there was not enough investment put into WGS, and currently there are no ways to further cut funding to WGS without eliminating the program entirely. But this also presents an opportunity for the college and the university, because even a modest infusion of resources could more than double the capacity of the program. It is difficult to imagine a better return on investment, especially given the importance of supporting diversity work on the UNL campus.”

These are sentiments that we in WGS have had for a long time. It was gratifying that our APR team confirmed our sense of doing crucial educational work at the institution without sufficient resources. We hope that the APR process will move the College and the University to address our chronic underfunding. If you would like to read our Self-Study or the APR Report, please feel free to email me at mjacob3@unl.edu.

WGS Colloquium Series, Spring 2017

Queering Families: The Postmodern Partnerships of Cisgender Women and Transgender Men

Dr. Carla Pfeffer

Jessica Morrow (MA Student, Sociology)

The UNL Women’s and Gender Studies Program hosted Dr. Carla Pfeffer as the first speaker in the Spring 2017 colloquium series, in partnership with the Department of Sociology. Her presentation, “Queering Families: The Postmodern Partnerships of Cisgender Women and Transgender Men,” focused on the ways these couples navigate and maintain their identities, and argued for a broader and more extensive understanding of families.

In her presentation, which contained information from a chapter in her book, Queering Families, Dr. Pfeffer provided a discussion on what is considered “normative” as compared to “non-normative,” as well as a broader conversation on the meaning of families and what constitutes this social institution. While we have a basic understanding of families, for example, as shifts in society occur, so may the understanding of what constitutes a family. Dr. Pfeffer also discussed sexuality and intimacy within relationships between cisgender women and their transgender male partners.

One of the most prominent aspects of Dr. Pfeffer’s discussion was her continual questioning of the “norm” in relation to what is “non-normative.” She highlighted this difference on a variety of topics through specific examples from her research as well as the conclusions and claims that resulted from her research. Some of these topics included who or what is doing this “queering” of families, how the requirements for membership within the man community are based in biological characteristics, trouble group membership itself, and how individuals may come to be a part of a “queered” family.

Ultimately, Dr. Pfeffer encourages people to keep questioning definitions and challenging what makes up families.

Navigating Transmasculine Life at UNL: A Brownbag Conversation Featuring Current and Former Students

Tytus Zink (Sophomore, Psychology & WGS majors, LGBTQ/Sexuality Studies & Sociology minors)

On March 31, 2017, WGS and the LGBTQ+ Resource Center hosted a panel of three current and former UNL students to discuss their experiences as transgender men, both in relation to their experiences on campus and beyond. It was moderated by Dr. Elliot Tebbe, and the panelists were Marcus Woodman, a UNL alum; Jase Stenz, a graduate student; and Thomas Lewis, an undergraduate student.

The panelists reported positive experiences with WGS in regards to their trans identities. Woodman described his post-transition, and after transitioning he began volunteering at the LGBTQ+ Resource Center. Later, he worked as a student staff member and befriended many people through the Center. Stenz described his PhD program as being a growing space and community center. The students he teaches are accepting and open-minded. He hopes that in being open about his identity with his students he creates a more inclusive and welcoming environment for them as well. Lewis connected to the LGBTQ+ student group Spectrum through the rooms he had as a resident of UNL’s gender-inclusive housing. There he met people who were supportive of him as a self-described feminine trans man. However, UNL’s overall supportive environment is not without flaws; Woodman and Lewis mentioned professors who would address them incorrectly despite being informed before the semester began of their correct name and pronouns, leading to further uncomfortable incidents.

Closing the panel, the panelists reminded the audience that they were not the representatives of all trans people. Stenz and Lewis both mentioned that they are still learning themselves, and cannot speak to every issue that affects trans people, particularly not those that affect trans women in particular. Woodman and Stenz also expressed a desire for people to ask them questions on topics besides their trans identities to get a better picture of them as individuals. However, the panelists affirmed that they were more than happy to educate those in the room about their experiences in order to foster continuing acceptance of trans identities on campus.

Gender, Fashion & the Media

Fall 2017 Joint Colloquia Series

Women’s and Gender Studies & the Department of Textiles, Merchandising & Fashion Design

Between Allah And Me (And Everyone Else):

Film Screening and Discussion

Yiyue Fan (MA Student, Merchandising)

The first event in the fall 2017 colloquia devoted to Gender, Fashion & the Media featured the screening of and discussion about the documentary, Between Allah and Me (and Everyone Else), which was directed by Kyoko Yokoma and released in 2015. The film recorded the challenges that four Muslim women in Toronto, Canada, faced when deciding to change their dress code, either by putting on the hijab to cover their hair or taking it off. Changing the dress code for Muslim women is not simply a decision to change one’s personal style, it is highly related to political rules and social customs. The key symbol in the film is the “hijab,” which is not simply a piece of fabric that Muslim women use to cover their head; it carries many different meanings for Muslim women -- as well as for their families and communities.

For many non-Muslim people, the hijab is perceived as synonymous with Islam, and most Muslim women wear it to show their Islamic identity and faith. This small piece of cloth has become heavily charged with political and social connotations. In some non-Muslim majority societies, people have negative stereotypes of Muslims, especially after the 9/11 attack. They see Islamic dress as associated with terrorist activities. As a result, some governments have banned certain Islamic dress codes. At the same time, other governments require women to dress in a certain way and cover their hair. These issues impact both Muslims and non-Muslims. In Between Allah and Me, the filmmaker encourages audiences to look behind the hijab by injecting personal stories into these larger political and social situations.

The film does so by following four Muslim women:
Farida, Shaila, Naima, and Sarah, who are all from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Each woman in the film tells an entirely different story when dealing with the hijab. However, they all share the same concern -- “will people still see me as the same person?” I used to think the hijab was the headscarf that the Muslim religion forces Muslim women to wear. However, none of the women in the film faced pressure from men to wear the hijab. In fact, Sarah’s father (who is secular) strongly disagrees with his daughter’s decision to wear the hijab. After watching the film, I learned that whether or not to wear the hijab is more about a woman’s choice and we should not judge people by particular dress codes or their religion. Farida chooses to wear the hijab because she wants to become an observant Muslim. Shaila, an elected representative, decides to take off the hijab because she is concerned about how it impacts her relationships with her constituents. Naima chooses to take off the hijab because she realizes that wearing or not wearing the hijab will not influence her faith in God. Sarah decides to wear the hijab because she feels confident, protected, and beautiful. The stories in the film are an excellent collection of relatable personal experiences, and this is the most compelling aspect of the film.

**The Rise of Pop Culture Porn Chic: Media, Fashion, and Emerging Paths to Gender Justice on College Campuses**

Amantia Dickman (Senior, Art and Journalism)

In her lecture on the topic of “Porn Chic,” Annette Lynch, professor and director of the University of Northern Iowa’s School of Applied Human Sciences, delved into the intersection of gender, fashion, and media on the college campus.

Traditionally, society has recognized only two genders: male and female. Both have gender normative “scripts.” These scripts include socially acceptable traits and behaviors for each gender. The male normative script is an example of agonic power or physical effectiveness. They’re expected to gain status through physical attractiveness. Gender normative scripts can be seen everywhere and we see many examples in advertisements for sportswear where men are well covered and photographed mid-action. In contrast, women are put on display. They are portrayed to show off skin and the aesthetic of design. In understanding these traditional narratives, Lynch calls for a change in gender dialogue. With recent efforts to move beyond the gender binary, many fashion lines and research studies aim to teach acceptance and tolerance for non-normative scripts. As best expressed by one of her students, a transgender model named Parker, society should aim to encourage all gender identities to explore both gender normative scripts. In doing so, society would cultivate a better understanding of individuals and take steps towards reducing violence and oppression of those who do not fit normative stereotypes.

With this goal in mind, Lynch discussed a variety of projects aimed at teaching students about the subject. One such project focused on teaching high school boys in sports about sexual assault prevention by rejecting the “we/us or not/morally opposed” mentality enforced by high school cliques. Another project focused on teaching fashion as an expression of self-identity.

With these projects and subsequent discussions, Lynch hopes big strides can be made towards changing the script on gender.

**Gender, Appearance & Representation: A Roundtable Discussion**

Courtney King (Senior, English)

Remarkable things happen when open-minded people get together to talk about women’s issues. To be sitting in the crowd at this year’s Fall 2017 Colloquia, “Gender, Fashion & the Media,” was an eye-opening experience, which urged me to look through a new lens at various topics. Basic concepts and day-to-day interactions suddenly had new meaning, and as I walked away from our discussion I reflected on what it means to have strong women in the public eye with whom I can relate and identify. I then attempted to imagine a world where I was without women with whom I was able to identify and mimic in terms of dress. I wondered if an artist is responsible for the results of their art, and I considered the implications which come from a monolithic fashion industry. Each speaker presented an object which sparked discussion with the audience. (Continued on page 5)

**Spring 2018 Colloquium**

Look to your email and social media for information about the Spring 2018 Colloquium Series.

**Spring 2018 Courses of Interest**

**ENG 173 – Film Theory & Criticism: “LGBT Film & Queer Theory”**

FULFILLS ACE 7 REQUIREMENTS

Aim: In this class we study the history of queer cinema, including queer films and audiences in film history from the beginnings of film to the present. See such classic films as Carol, Born to Kill, The Uninvited, Strangers On A Train, Gilda, Homicidal, Victim, The Children’s Hour, The Leather Boys, The Vampire Lovers, Dog Day Afternoon, the films of Andy Warhol, Gods and Monsters, The Celluloid Closet, Lavender Limelight, Middle Sexes: Redefining He and She, and Fabulous: The Story Of Queer Cinema. (Professor Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, Wednesday 1:30PM to 4:40PM)

**RELG/ARAB/WMNS 306 – Women in the Qur’an**

This course introduces a diachronic approach to Qur’an as a literature, and provides an attempt to discover what would be the analytic, hermeneutical as well as the critical study of both the Qur’aanic text and its exegeses reveal when it comes to gender egalitarianism and gender issues in Islam. The instructional method is based on engaging students in discussions and encouraging them to use their analytic as well as their critical abilities in an academic environment, free from ideological commitments. Students will learn about Mary, the Qur’aanic Eve, the Queen of Sheba, Islamic modesty and women’s lost rights in the Qur’an. (Professor Abba Hasan, TR 12:10-1:30pm)

**WMNS 250 - Sex and Gender in the Arab World**

This course introduces sex and gender in the modern Middle Eastern Arab world, through the eyes of Arab intellectuals. The course provides students an introduction to the Arabic world and culture and the most important books written about gender and sexuality in the Arab world. The course provides an opportunity not only to read these intellectuals’ books but to learn about their life stories, struggles and contributions. (Professor Abba Hasan, TR 9:30 to 10:45)
Faculty and Student Achievements


Julia Schleck (English) co-led an NEH Summer Institute at Indiana University, Bloomington from June 19th- July 7th. It was entitled "Beyond East and West: Exchanges and Interactions Across the Early Modern World (1400-1800).” Twenty-five college and university professors attended the institute, which focused in part on the role of gender in cross-cultural encounters in the early modern period. She also published an article entitled "The Marital Problems of the East India Company" in a special issue of the Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies on “Historical Histories of the East India Company,” which she co-edited with Amitra Sen (University of Calcutta). The special issue came out this November.

Gwendolyn Audrey Foster had a one-woman show of her films "The Experimental Films of Gwendolyn Audrey Foster – BiseXual Surrealist Eco-Feminist" - at the Museum of the Future in Berlin, in October of 2017. Foster also had a one woman screening of her films at Maryland Institute College of Art. Two of Foster's films, "Making Women Great Again," and "Huldra's Spell," were selected and featured in the online Directed by Women Film Festival. Foster was selected as the video artist for the multi-media Festival X-12 on Dec 2, 2017. Ten of Foster's films played in a loop during the arts festival, which was created to help troubled and underprivileged youth. Foster’s eco-feminist virtual reality gallery show, "Virtual Gallery: The Gaia Triptych," screened as part of the HeartArt! International Video Art Project from Berlin and Milan. Foster’s film, “Sleeping with the Fishes,” was selected for the International Studio 44 Film Festival, Stockholm Culture Festival, which took place in August of 2017. Maureen Honey (English) celebrated the release of her new book Aphrodite’s Daughters (Rutgers, 2016) with a public reading in April for Poetry Month. In Aphrodite’s Daughters, Honey analyzes the work of three little-known (or unknown) modernist poets of the Harlem Renaissance: Gwendolyn Bennett, Angelina Grimke, and Mae V. Cowdery. After Honey briefly introduced and discussed the poets, colleagues Kwakwulit Dreher, Amelia Montes, and Hope Wabuke performed a selection of each woman's work. The event was sponsored by University Libraries and creative writing program.

Tom Carr (Modern Languages) published "A French Canadian Community Becomes French Country?: The 1912 Funeral at the Center of Cather's O Pioneers!" in The Willa Cather Newsletter and Review.

Change at the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, & Gender (Omaha, NE) (October 2017).

Kristi Carter (English) published Cosmovore, and it is now available as part of the Conversation Pieces Series by Aqueduct Press. In October, she gave a reading at Franerie & Finch, where she will also do a reading of her new book Daughter Shaman Sings Blood Anthem, from Porkbelly Press. Carter was also nominated for Best of the Net 2017 for her poem in Tupelo Quarterly. Lastly, she was a finalist in Paper Nautilus’ Debut Series Contest and the 2017 Robin Becker Chapterbook Series. She has poems in Crab Orchard Review, Artemis Journal, and Yes, Poetry, forthcoming.

For news, events, & info, go to: http://www.unl.edu/wgs

WGS 2017 Scholarship and Award Winners

Karen Dunning Women’s and Gender Studies Scholarly Paper/Creative Activity Awards

Undergraduate Students: Lori Novello and Claire Shear
Graduate Students: Erin Bertram & Ivan Young

Outstanding Student Achievement Award
Isabel Salas

Melba Cope Scholarships
Gregory Dank & Katelin Stubblefield

Melba Cope Community Associate Award
Becky Boesen

No Limits 2018
University of Nebraska-Omaha
Friday, March 9, 2018

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall “Gender and Activism in These Times”
Founding Director of the Women’s Research and Resource Center & Anna Julia Cooper Professor of Women's Studies at Spelman College

"No Limits" is a regional student academic conference dedicated to crossing boundaries between disciplines and exploring a wide range of women’s and gender issues. All student projects related to women and/or gender issues are welcome.


For the full CFP, see https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/womens-and-gender-studies/about-us/news-events/no-limits.php

Congratulations, Graduates!
During the 2016-2017 academic year, WGS celebrated 26 graduating WGS majors, minors, and graduate specialization students as well as LGBTQ/Sexuality Studies minors at our December and May graduation receptions.

Majors: JD McCown, Isabel Salas, Jessica Vazquez, and Abby Wild.


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