Here we are: 100 years after women gained the right to vote and decades after second wave feminism exploded on the scene, and still sexist double standards are applied to candidates, still nowhere near equal representation in local and national government, and still no woman president. Feminism is seemingly everywhere – from the Women’s Marches to the righteous rage of #MeToo and #TimesUp – and yet gender inequity and hate continue to pervade civic life.

This upcoming election is arguably the most consequential in recent memory. Following on the heels of the election of Trump and his reign of racism, xenophobia, and misogyny, the stakes couldn’t be much higher. Basic civil rights are on the ballot as, indeed, is the future of democratic governance and the rule of law. But there are signs of hope amidst the wreckage: the 2018 midterm elections ushered in the most diverse group of congresspeople in US history, and strides were made in local races across the country. On-the-ground activism is energized, and women are leading the resistance: registering voters, running candidates, fighting voter suppression, knocking on doors, and tweeting up a firestorm of protest. Social media itself has been both a site of subversion (e.g. digital feminist hashtags) and a tool of authority (e.g. Trump’s tweets).

Expert panelists and participants in this interdisciplinary symposium will consider how gender and feminist activism should inform our thinking about the upcoming elections. We will look at how feminists might engage social movements, digital spaces, and broader communities in trying to effect social change. Panels will invite conversations about new forms of media in the hands of feminist activists, historical perspectives on gender and electoral politics (in celebration of the anniversary of suffrage), mainstream media coverage of elections through the lens of gender, and leveraging the unprecedented visibility of women (particularly women of color) in both electoral and grassroots politics. Throughout the day, we will promote an active dialogue among scholars, activists, journalists, and community organizers in a broad discussion of both the limitations and potentials of electoral politics for enacting substantive feminist transformations.
Schedule & Panel Descriptions

Check-in & Breakfast
9:00-10:00 am

Welcome
10:00-10:15 am
_Suzanna Walters, Director of Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, Northeastern University; Editor-in-Chief, Signs: Journal of Culture & Society_

_Uta Poiger, Dean of the College of Social Sciences & Humanities, Northeastern University_

Keynote Address
10:15-11:15 am
_Zerlina Maxwell, MSNBC, Sirius XM Radio_

Zerlina Maxwell is an American political analyst, commentator, speaker, and writer for a variety of national media outlets. She is currently the Director of Progressive Programming at SiriusXM—where she hosts a weekly radio show, “Signal Boost”—and a Political Analyst for MSNBC. She was formerly the Director of Progressive Media for Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign. She worked in the campaign’s press shop pitching coverage to progressive media outlets and curating daily messaging for online influencers. She also acted as a campaign spokesperson for the Presidential Debates. She also worked as a field organizer for the 2008 Obama Presidential campaign. Her writing is focused on national politics, candidates, and specific policy and culture issues including race, feminism, domestic violence, sexual assault, victim blaming, and gender inequality.

Zerlina has consulted with the United States department of State to promote the use of social media by students in the West Bank and is a frequent speaker at colleges, universities, and organizations about rape culture and feminism. She was profiled in _The New York Times_ as a top political twitter voice to follow during the 2012 election season. She was also selected by _TIME_ as having one of the best Twitter feeds in 2014. Ms. Maxwell has appeared frequently on CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC as a democratic commentator and has written for publications such as _The Washington Post, JET Magazine, The American Prospect, Black Enterprise, CNN.com, The Huffington Post, Salon.com, and Ebony.com._

In 2015, Zerlina was one of five journalists invited to travel on Air Force One with President Obama on his trip to Selma for the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. Also, in 2016, Zerlina joined pop superstar Lady Gaga on stage at the 88th annual Academy Awards as part of a special performance of her nominated smash, Til’ It Happens to You from the film _The Hunting Ground_. In January 2018, Zerlina was named as a member of the Biden Foundation’s Advisory Council for Ending Violence Against Women. She has a law degree from Rutgers Law School – Newark and a B.A. in International Relations from Tufts University.

11:15-11:45 am
Q&A with Zerlina Maxwell
_Moderator: Suzanna Walters, Northeastern University_

Lunch + Action
11:45 am – 1:00 pm
Lunch will be served buffet style. We will have one or more actions available for guests to participate in. Possibilities include: voter registration with NU GOTV organizations, a round-table discussion on women running for office or how to get involved in grassroots campaigning with student organizations or mentors, letter-writing campaigns, etc.
#MakingFeminisms: Organizing Resistance Online and In Real Life

1:00-2:45

Moderator: Moya Bailey, Northeastern University

The internet has forever changed the way that feminists organize both online and IRL. In the wake of the misleading poll numbers of the 2016 presidential election, how can we balance the possibilities of digital media with the realities of organizing for feminist electoral politics? Our panelists are experts in the rise of digital media making and fomenting feminist resistance. In this panel, we dive deeply into the way #MakingFeminisms can expand networks, educate communities on important issues, and shape our democracy both on and offline. We consider the promise and limitations of digital and IRL feminist organizing for the 2020 election and beyond.

Katherine Grainger, Civitas Public Affairs Group

Catherine Knight Steele, University of Maryland, College Park

Carmen Rios, Feminist Media-Maker

Break
2:45- 3:00 pm

#StillWePersist: Organizing Resistance in the Streets and On the Hill

3:00-4:45

Moderator: Libby Adler, Northeastern University

What is unique about this historical political juncture, and what—crucially—must we bear in mind in order to rise to its challenges as feminists? For our final panel, we bring together three ideally suited speakers to guide us through this current moment with the benefit of deep historical understanding. The resistance has been led, indeed created, by women, especially women of color, who have organized and run for office at every level. How can we build on these achievements to ensure an inclusive and sustained feminist force, whether we win or lose elections in 2020? What have we learned about mobilization and resistance? What might we have neglected or forgotten? What should we appreciate about the relationship between local and national politics, between issue organizing and electoral action? What have been the best practices, and what have been the blind spots, of undertakings such as #metoo, #timesup, and the women’s marches? How can we support feminist candidates and marshal the feminist vote?

Tamar Carroll, Rochester Institute of Technology

Duchess Harris, Macalester College

Amanda Renteria, Emerge America