

WGSS NEWS

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

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Director's Welcome

Welcome back to all – I hope your summer was both relaxing and productive. WGSS has been a veritable beehive of activity in the past few months and we've got lots of news to share with you.

SPACE: We have officially moved to wonderful new offices on the 2nd floor of Holmes, in rooms that include a conference space (Holmes 270) and space for our visiting scholars and our new post-doc in Digital Humanities and WGSS. Our program coordinator is now located in Room 263. I remain in my old office in 561 Holmes. Please do come and check out the new space.



Director's Message

NEW FACULTY: We are thrilled to welcome three new members of our community – 2 as visiting scholars for the year and 1 new post-doctoral fellow in WGSS and Digital Humanities. You can find more information about these scholars' anticipated projects beginning on page 7 and on our website at http://www.northeastern.edu/womensstudies/programs_research/current_visiting/.

FALL COURSES: In response to increased demand, we are offering *Intro to WGSS* this fall with a larger class size and have a wide array of cross-listed and affiliated courses to choose from. In addition, our own Carla Kaplan (jointly appointed in WGSS and English) will be launching our new core course for the graduate certificate: *Theorizing Gender and Sexuality*, which promises to be a great addition to our curriculum.

PROGRAMMING: WGSS – in conjunction with the Forum for Feminist Thought – will continue to offer exciting programming throughout the year. More information can be found on pages 11-13 of this issue. Keep tuned for speakers, films festivals, curricular training workshops, etc.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS: WGSS affiliated faculty continue to be highly productive. We especially applaud the publication of Sarah Jackson's first book *Black Celebrity, Racial Politics, and the Press: Framing Dissent* (Routledge Transformations in Race and Media). Ongoing projects include our Collaborative Research Cluster on "Feminist Theory 2.0" – a group of grad students and faculty from across the university who engage with current debates in feminist theory from across a wide range of disciplines.

And last but certainly not least: WGSS will house the feminist journal *Signs* as of January 1, 2015! I will serve as Editor-in-Chief and Carla Kaplan will be the Chair of the Board of Associate Editors. Thanks to all who helped put together our winning proposal – and thanks to Dean Uta Poiger for her enormous support. This is a great honor and we are all so excited to be editing the foremost feminist journal...in the world! Read more about *Signs* on page 6 of this issue and keep tuned for more info on our website.

There's much more to report so keep tuned to our continuously updated website and don't hesitate to just drop by to find out more information.

Have a great fall semester –

Prof. Suzanna Walters



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Updates from 2013 - 2014



With the support of the Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, we hired the first joint postdoctoral fellow in WGSS & Digital Humanities in the nation! You can read an interview with her about her work in this issue.

We moved in a gorgeous new office suite on the 2nd floor of Holmes Hall! This includes a conference room, which we hope our faculty and students will use to its fullest extent. The new conference room houses our extensive WGSS library. For more information and to book the room, contact Kiki Samko at k.samko@neu.edu.



Women's History Month Symposium



Our first annual Women's History Month symposium **"From Patriarchy to Pussy Riot: Gender, Sexuality, and Global Citizenship"**, brought together panels of speakers from Northeastern and the greater New England area on the topic of sexual citizenship. You can see more details about the event at this website, <https://sites.google.com/site/wgssneu/>. We had a full house of faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, and interested parties from outside the academy at this symposium and are excited to host the second in the series this March. Be on the

lookout for the announcement of theme for this year's event. And you can find out more about this year's symposium on page 11 in the events section of this newsletter!

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Updates from
2013 - 2014

Enhanced requirements for the minor were put into effect. Our updated course list can be found on our website <http://www.northeastern.edu/womensstudies/undergraduate/>. The Executive Committee reviewed dozens of syllabi and weeded out courses whose content no longer contained sufficient material as well as adding a number of courses from a variety of departments across the university. Our goal is to increase the interdisciplinary of our program and expose our students to a variety of material to give them a view of WGSS

that is both broad and deep. If you have a course that you would like to be included in our curriculum, please contact Suzanna Walters at s.walters@neu.edu with a syllabus. Students with questions about the new requirements should contact k.samko@neu.edu.



We successfully spearheaded an initiative to cross-list courses within the college and even across colleges, thanks to help from the Deans of CSSH and CAMD and the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee.



We collaborated with the **Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning Through Research** to offer a seminar on teaching interdisciplinary topics. If faculty are interested in future seminars, contact Program Director Suzanna Walters at s.walters@neu.edu.

What's New at WGSS



Professor Carla Kaplan has begun teaching our new graduate seminar, *Theorizing Sex and Gender*. This course will be the cornerstone of our graduate certificate program as the one required course for students who enter the program in 2014 or later.

In the next few months, the WGSS website will be experiencing some significant changes as we migrate to a new platform. We are excited about this change, which will give us the opportunity to streamline our content and feature our students and faculty in spotlights on our homepage. If you are a graduate certificate student or a minor in WGSS and are interested in being featured on our website, please get in touch with program coordinator Kiki Samko at k.samko@neu.edu.

Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies

We are changing the way we list courses at the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies. In the future, students will be able to enroll in a course at the GCWS under its given title rather than as a Directed Study. We encourage graduate students to consider taking a course at the GCWS in the future! To see what is being offered this year, visit the Consortium website at <http://web.mit.edu/gcws/courses/index.html>.

New GCWS Events Series

The GCWS is introducing a new series called **Feminism Unbound**. This will be a roundtable series with two event offerings per semester featuring discussants from Northeastern and the other Consortium schools as well as outside invited guests (for example, Professor Jack Halberstam of the University of Southern California). The inaugural roundtable is set for September 17 and will feature program director Suzanna Walters. See the events section on page 11 of this newsletter or visit the GCWS website at <http://web.mit.edu/gcws/news+events/FeminismsUnbound.html> for more details.



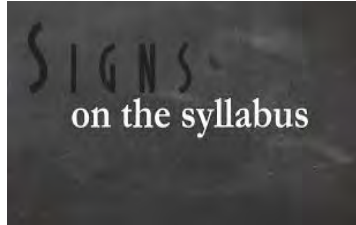
This year, Prof. Suzanna Walters has received funding from the **Humanities Center** to chair a Collaborative

Research Cluster under the theme

"Feminist Theory 2.0: Contemporary Debates in Gender and Sexuality Studies".

The group will convene every few weeks to discuss readings and ideas that emerge, which will hopefully coalesce into the overarching theme for this year's annual Women's History Month symposium. Last year's CRC, *"Sexual Citizenship"*, resulted in the wildly successful symposium **"From Patriarchy to Pussy Riot: Sex, Gender, and Global Citizenship"** (see more at <https://sites.google.com/site/wgssneu/>). The group is open to graduate students and faculty. If you are interested in getting involved in this year's cluster, please contact Prof. Walters at s.walters@neu.edu and let her know as soon as possible.

What's New at WGSS



We are thrilled to announce that ***Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*** will come to Northeastern University as of **January 1, 2015**. Program Director **Suzanna Walters** and Davis Distinguished Professor of American Literature and Professor of WGSS **Carla Kaplan** wrote a successful proposal to bring the

premiere feminist academic journal to Northeastern's campus after ten years at Rutgers University's Women's and Gender Studies.

Signs is recognized as the leading international journal in women's and gender studies. The journal, which is published by the **University of Chicago Press**, publishes scholarship that raises new questions and develops innovative approaches to our understanding of the past and present. Founded in 1975, the journal has been in continuous publication ever since. Its dedication to publishing interdisciplinary work from multiple, often contradictory, voices has distinguished it over the course of its history.

For the past ten years, Mary Hawkesworth of Rutgers has been Editor-in-Chief of the journal. Prior to that, the journal has made its home at Barnard College under Catherine Stimpson's founding editorship, at Stanford University under Barbara Gelpi, at Duke University under Jean F. O'Barr, at University of Minnesota under Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres and Barbara Laslett, at University of Washington under Carolyn Allen and Judith A. Howard, and at UCLA under Sandra Harding and Kathryn Norberg.

At Northeastern, Walters will serve as **Editor-in-Chief** and Kaplan as **Chair of the Board of Associate Editors**. This Board will be comprised of several dozen feminist academics from around the Boston area, who bring widely varied backgrounds to their associate editorships. The University of Chicago Press will continue to staff the journal with two full time editorial personnel, who will be housed at Northeastern in the WGSS program offices. The university will provide graduate assistantships to support the journal and one co-op student will also be hired in conjunction with *Signs* as well.

WGSS congratulates Walters and Kaplan on their new posts and thanks all those who contributed to the success of this proposal, including the WGSS Executive Committee, the GCWS Board of Directors, and especially Dean Uta Poiger and her staff at the College of Social Sciences and Humanities. We look forward to the rich and vibrant opportunities this new venture will bring to Northeastern University.

New Faces at WGSS

Meet the new faculty and staff joining the WGSS team this semester! Be sure to stop by our new offices on the second floor of Holmes to say hello to the them.



WGSS hired the first Postdoctoral fellow in WGSS and Digital Humanities this past summer. We welcome Professor **Moya Bailey** to our faculty! Prof. Bailey is a scholar of critical race, feminist, and disability studies. Her current work focuses on constructs of health and normativity within a US context. She is interested in how race, gender, and sexuality are represented in media and medicine. She co-curates the #transformdh initiative in Digital Humanities. Prof. Bailey is currently teaching our *Introduction to WGSS* course and will also be developing courses for the program during the course of her two-year appointment at Northeastern. She will be working closely with the WGSS program as well as the faculty and students of the NULab for

Texts, Maps, and Networks. An interview with Prof. Bailey appears in this issue on page 14. She will be giving a talk on her work this spring. Be on the lookout for more details in our next newsletter and on our website.

WGSS welcomes a new member to our Executive Committee



Our Executive Committee has added **Libby Adler**, Professor of Law at the School of Law. She teaches Constitutional Law, Sexuality, Gender and the Law, and Family Law and draws heavily from queer and critical theory in her research. She is a co-editor of the casebook *Mary Joe Frug's Women and the Law* (Foundation Press, 2007) as well as numerous scholarly articles and book chapters on sexuality, gender, and family and children, including foster care; and is completing work on a new book, *Gay Priori: A Queer Critical Legal Studies Approach to Law Reform*. She will teach a course on Gender and the Law for undergraduates in the spring of 2016. We are looking forward to this new collaboration between CSSH and the School

of Law and are thrilled to have Libby on our committee.



Meet our new co-op!

We are lucky to have a new fulltime co-op student working at the WGSS program office. **Francisca Fils-Aime** is in her final semester at Northeastern and is completing her internship and final co-op as the Assistant Program Coordinator and WGSS Research Assistant. A double major in Human Services and International Affairs, Francisca comes to the program with experience in the Human Services office as well as the Farm Aid program and the Crotched Mountain Rehabilitation Center. Her skills are already helping the program thrive this fall.

Two visiting scholars have joined our program this year! We welcome:



Banu Subramaniam, a returning visiting scholar who is on leave from her permanent post as Associate Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at UMass Amherst. You may remember Prof. Subramaniam from her previous visiting scholar stint in 2008-2009 or from the engaging talk she gave at Northeastern last fall, “Alien Nation: Race, Gender, and the Practice of Science”. Trained as a plant evolutionary biologist, she seeks to engage the social and cultural studies of science in the practice of science. Spanning the humanities, social sciences, and the

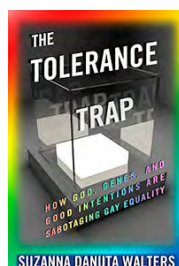
biological sciences, her research is located at the intersections of biology, women’s studies, ethnic studies, and postcolonial studies. Her current work focuses on the genealogies of variation in evolutionary biology, the xenophobia and nativism that accompany frameworks on invasive plant species, and the relationship of science and religious nationalism in India. An interview with Prof. Subramaniam appears in this issue of our newsletter on page 18. Be sure to check it out for some insight into her work! She will also be giving a talk on her work this fall. See the events section on page 11 of this newsletter for more information.



Juli Grigsby, is a recent graduate of the PhD program in Social Cultural Anthropology, African Diaspora Program the at University of Texas at Austin. Prof. Grigsby is currently a Lecturer in the department of Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Harvard University. The past recipient of Davis Putter Fellowships and a Humanities, Arts, Science, Technology & Advanced Collaboratory Scholar (HASTAC), her photographic work has appeared in the *Black California Dreamin’* journal and at the Metro Art Gallery in Pomona, California. Her current research project, *Grim Sleeper: Gender, Violence, and Reproductive Justice in Los Angeles*, explores black women’s experiences of

structural violence through a form of racial neglect that overshadows their lived and material conditions that also reinforces activist black women’s commitment to social transformation and advocacy through reproductive justice. She will be giving a talk on her work this semester. Be sure to check out the events section on page 11 of this newsletter for more information! An interview with Prof. Grigsby appears in this issue of our newsletter on page 20.

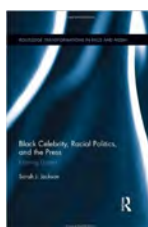
Faculty News



Program Director Suzanna Walters's new book *The Tolerance Trap* was published in May of 2014, to critical acclaim. Prof. Walters had a busy summer talking about the book in print news outlets and at radio stations across the country. To hear or read her interviews and reviews of her book, visit her website www.suzannawalters.com. You can also follow her on Twitter @SuzannaDWalters.



Davis Distinguished Professor of American Literature and Professor of WGSS Carla Kaplan released her book *Miss Anne in Harlem: The White Women of the Black Renaissance* in September of 2013 to wide acclaim. To read more, visit www.carlakaplan.com. Prof. Kaplan also completed a prestigious visiting professorship at Wellesley College last year and returns to Northeastern this fall teaching our new graduate seminar *Theorizing Sex and Gender* in its debut semester. For more news on Prof. Kaplan, follow her on twitter @KaplanCarla.



Sarah Jackson, Assistant Professor of Communications Studies and member of the WGSS Executive committee, published her first book *Black Celebrity, Racial Politics, and the Press*. This is the first book for Prof. Jackson. Congratulations! To learn more about her and her work, follow her on Twitter @sjjphd.

Fellow of the Humanities Center



Serena Parkeh, Associate Professor of Philosophy and member of the WGSS Executive Board, was named a Fellow of the Northeastern Humanities Center for the 2014-2015 year. The theme the Fellows will explore this year is "Space and Place". Read more on the Humanities Center website, <http://nuweb.neu.edu/cssh/humanitiescenter/>.

Faculty News

The Humanities Center awarded funds for Collaborative Research Clusters to several WGSS faculty executive committee members and affiliates :



Professor **Suzanna Walters**

"Feminist Theory 2.0: Contemporary Debates in Gender and Sexuality Studies"

If you are interested in joining this group, contact Suzanna directly at s.walters@neu.edu. The reading and discussion group is open to faculty and graduate students and will also work to plan the theme and speakers of this year's Women's History Month symposium.



Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology and Health Sciences and WGSS faculty affiliate **Sara Wylie** and Assistant Professor of English and core faculty of NULab **Ryan Cordell**

"Critical Making Research Cluster"



Associate Professor of Religion and WGSS Executive Committee member **Liz Bucar** and Associate Professor of Sociology and faculty affiliate of WGSS **Linda Blum**

"Narratives of the Body and the Limits of Science and Medicine"



Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict and WGSS faculty affiliate **Gordana Rabrenovic**

"Life After Violence: Developing Northeastern University Students' Global Citizenship through the Study of Genocide and Post Conflict Reconstruction in Rwanda"

EVENTS

WGSS will offer a number of events this fall. In addition to our own lunchtime lectures and our annual Women's History Month symposium, we are currently working with a number of departments, colleges, and centers to expand our presence on campus and offer programming to our varied constituencies. More events will likely come up throughout the course of the semester, but for the time being, save the date for these exciting opportunities!

September 17th, 5:30-7:30



MIT—GCWS presents **Feminisms Unbound Round Table: “*The Intellectual Lives of Feminisms.*”**

Details: Inaugural roundtable discussion featuring panelists Suzanna Walters, Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman (Brandeis), and Jack Halberstam (University of Southern California) on feminist intellectual production and critique: from feminist critiques of racialized sexualities to feminist reinventions of family, from the politics of visibility to the persistent critiques of identity, inclusion, and normative individualism. Lisa Lowe (Tufts) moderates. See more here: <http://web.mit.edu/gcws/news+events/FeminismsUnbound.html>.

October 1st, 5:00



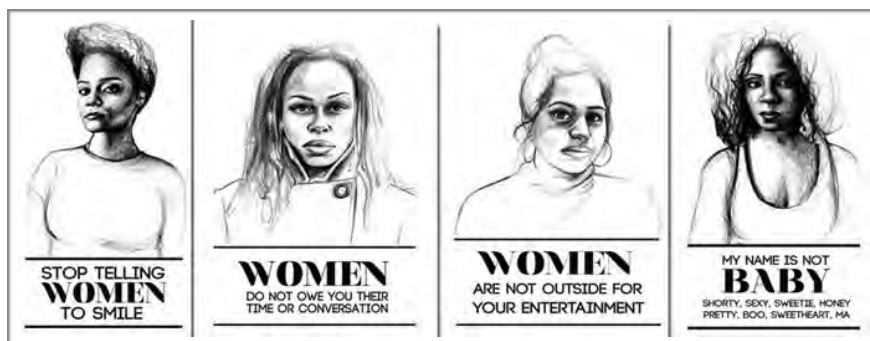
310R Renaissance Park—“**Stuart Hall’s Legacy: Race, Gender, and Cultural Studies**” followed by panel discussion with Professor Suzanna Walters (WGSS and Sociology), Assistant Professor Sarah J. Jackson (Communications Studies), and Associate Professor Nicole Aljoe (English). Refreshments will be served

Details: Viewing of *The Stuart Hall Project* followed by panel discussion with members of the faculties of the departments of English, Sociology, and Communications Studies and the WGSS Program.

October 6th - 9th



Artist in Residence -- Tatyana Fazlalizadeh, “Stop Telling Women to Smile Project” (with the Northeastern Center for the Arts and College of Art, Media, and Design; see more at <http://www.northeastern.edu/camd/cfa/events/tatyana-fazlalizadeh-stop-telling-women-smile/>).



October 6th, 5:00

270 Holmes—**Reception for Artist-in-Residence Tatyana Fazlalizadeh of “Stop Telling Women to Smile Project.”**

October 7th, 2:00–5:00

Centennial Commons—**Northeastern Against Harassment Block Party**



Details: Live wheat pasting and public art demonstration by artist-in-residence Tatyana Fazlalizadeh and more. More information at <http://www.northeastern.edu/camd/cfa/events/block-party-northeastern-stands-harassment/>.

October 7th, 5:30-6:30

Dockser Hall—**“Public Arts, Public Policy: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue on Title IX and the Clery Act”**

Details: Artist-in-residence Tatyana Fazlalizadeh and WGSS Executive Committee member Aziza Ahmed on a panel with others in a conversation on art and the law. More information at <http://www.northeastern.edu/camd/cfa/events/public-art-public-policy/>.

October 30th, 12:00

270 Holmes—"Body Dumps and Dark Matter: Exploring the Life and Death of Black Women in Los Angeles", Visiting Scholar Juli Grigsby

November 19th, 12:00

270 Holmes—"Reproductive Nationalism: Technoscientific Surrogacy and the Quest for a Modern India", Visiting Scholar Banu Subramaniam



Details: This talk explores the proliferation of reproductive surrogacy in India. It explores surrogacy alongside the long enduring debate about nature versus nurture in evolutionary biology as well as western political culture. The debate re-inscribes the logic of the binary biological and political, and natural and social.

December 3, 3:00- 4:00

310R Renaissance Park—Julie Bindel, "Straight Expectations" Talk and Reception



Details: British journalist and writer Julie Bindel visits Northeastern to talk about her new book *Straight Expectations: What Does it Mean to Be Gay Today?*. A Q&A and reception will follow her talk.



Mark your calendars now for this year's annual **Women's History Month Symposium**, which will be held Friday, March 20, 2015 in the Cabral Center.

Details will be announced in the coming months on our website.



Q&A with Professor Moya Bailey

Tell us about your background—what are your formal fields of training? How did you get where you are today?

When I was a child, I wanted to be a doctor. I had a particularly racist and ageist encounter with a physician when I was a teenager and that shaped the way I thought about the profession itself. I wanted to understand the psychology of medicine and become the kind of doctor I wanted to have. I attended Spelman College where I fell in love with Women's Studies and activism, which ultimately drove me to graduate school in lieu of medicine. My dissertation exists at the nexus of these interests and was supported by training in interdisciplinary studies in WGSS, Emory's School of Public Health, Anthropology and other humanities and social science fields. My continued activism in academia and in my community has impacted my research by demanding that questions of efficacy and praxis

be central in my scholarship. To that end, I am very interested in how young queer and trans folks of color are using digital media as a tool to advocate for better health outcomes for themselves and their communities.

When did you first become interested in digital humanities?

I used digital media in my organizing but I hadn't yet realized there was a field called the "digital humanities" (DH) that was accessible to me. It was in attending THATCamp Southeast, a digital humanities unconference at Emory University, that I was introduced to others who were already working in the field. I realized that digital humanities could help me integrate my social justice interests with my academic scholarship.

How has digital humanities aided your work?

One specific example of how DH has helped my work is my use of the data mining tool

Voyant in my dissertation. Voyant allowed me to load the texts of the yearbooks I examined in my dissertation into a digital apparatus that then analyzed all the content, looking for patterns and repetitions through which I made meaning. I was able to learn textual patterns in the yearbooks over time and focus on keywords I would have never noticed had it not been for their prevalence in the text as indicated via Voyant.

How would you describe the relationship between WGSS and digital humanities?

NEU is doing something very special by making the connection between DH and WGSS explicit. I think of both areas as being particularly capable of addressing the issue of impact, how the scholarship we produce creates tangible outcomes that inform our world. I'd say more so than other disciplines, there's a sense that the work can change the way we think about the

world and what we do in it. I love that!

Why are digital humanities important when looking at the intersection of gender, race and sexuality?

I think of the digital humanities as another important tool box that can be brought to bear on the intersecting issues of gender, race, and sexuality. The digital humanities can offer theoretical and tactical interventions that shape our engagement around these important issues. I see the collaborative and product focus nature of DH benefiting greatly from the critical insights of WGSS. So much of our current world involves the digital. The questions of WGSS within this context are crucial as well as the methods and means that digital scholarship opens up for research in WGSS.

Can you talk about your dissertation, *Race, Region, and Gender in Early Emory School of Medicine Yearbooks*?

The existence of care inequities along the axes of race, sex, gender, sexuality, ability and class suggests that the examination of medical training — the mechanism by

which all doctors are taught their craft — may hold the key to shifting this reality. My dissertation examines how patient and student bodies are represented in the yearbooks students create during their training. An idyllic student and patient emerge that reinforce one another at the expense of bodily diversity among patients and students, exacerbating care disparities through images and texts.

In what ways does the portrayal of black women in media impact the way they are treated in the field of medicine—both as patients and clinicians?

Stereotypical images in the media shape the way people perceive others. These misconceptions occur in medicine where the consequences can be serious. For example, health care provider's biases may restrict the range of contraceptives presented to Black women during consultations. Researchers found that even after adjusting for "age, insurance status, parity, income, education, marital status, and religion, Black women were more likely than white women to undergo tubal sterilization." Because of the history of involuntary

sterilization in this country, these findings are particularly significant. Accessing a health care provider does not ensure that Black women will be informed about all the reproductive health options that are available. Antiquated ideas about Black women's sexuality crop up in popular media, creep into medical media and inform clinical interactions, inadvertently reinforcing their impact as these perceptions are understood to be true by virtue of biomedical sciences' professed objectivity.

Can you explain the premise of your latest project, *Digital Alchemy: Changing Health Praxis through Representational Media*?

I explore Black people's use of existing digital media platforms to create new and alternate representations of themselves as a practice of health promotion, self-care, and wellness. These activities include Black trans women using Twitter to build community and masculine of center people of color creating their own digital health zine. By using these examples and more, I build towards the understanding of digital alchemy as health praxis

designed to create better health outcomes for those most marginalized in the Western biomedical industrial complex, the social apparatus that administers mainstream health care.

What is a digital alchemist?

Alchemy is the “science” of turning regular metals into gold. When I talk about digital alchemy, I am thinking of the ways that people of color in particular transform everyday digital media into valuable social justice media magic. We turn scraps into something precious.

Can you talk a little about your work with Octavia Butler and your future plans for further research into her?

Octavia Butler was an award winning brilliant writer whose work caught me and never let go. After reading *Parable of the Sower*, I wanted to know all there was to know about her. I am “positively obsessed” (her words) with the ways in which disability and sexuality saturate her work, aspects that I’ve taken up in my own research and writing. I was one of the first five researchers to examine her papers at the Huntington Library and am planning a 2016 conference to honor

Butler’s memory. I am the digital alchemist for the Octavia E. Butler Legacy Network that is planning the conference and striving to make sure that Butler’s contributions to the world are not forgotten.

How has cyber media changed the ways in which we discuss gender, race, and feminism?

Cyber media has brought the concept of identity politics to the fore in really helpful ways. We can see both the utility and limits of identity as a political tool via cyber media in ways we haven’t before. In June of this year, some white men’s rights activists tried to make #endfathersday a trending hashtag on Twitter. They used avatar pictures of women of color and claimed to be feminists who wanted Father’s Day abolished. This ludicrous attempt to undermine actual feminists was only successful with people who understand feminism as an identity and not as a set of practices or a way of being in the world.

Additionally, so many terabytes of digital ink have been typed about whether Beyoncé is or isn’t a feminist. While sometimes a useful question, this particular discussion has seemed to consume our

energies and interests in ways that distract from other feminist concerns. Cyber media highlights the need for feminist process and feminist actions in addition to identity.

You will be teaching Introduction to WGSS this fall! What will students gain from taking your course?

I really want students to leave the course with a sense that our culture is something that we are constantly creating. I want to show them that sexism, racism, homophobia, etc. haven’t always existed and aren’t inevitable aspects of society. Together, I hope we can imagine some new ways of being, if only at Northeastern and in our classroom.

What other courses do you hope to develop while at NEU?

I want to do a course on digital alchemy in which I invite students to explore digital work created by people of color and queer folks. I’m also really interested in digital radio so I’d love to a feminist or queer theory course where the final projects were segments on the NEU radio station.

Why did you choose NEU for your postdoctoral experience?

I feel like there is so much for me to learn at NEU in addition to what I have to offer. After being in a DH center for two years, I bring specific experiential knowledge that will aid the development of the NU Lab. I am also excited to be joining colleagues who can augment my knowledge about the more technical side of DH. I'm equally eager to join WGSS, where people are doing such incredible work and I am

really honored to be among
them.

Where would you like to see the feminist movement 10 years from now?

I'd love to see activists and academics working collaboratively to come up with solutions to community problems. I would love to see more strategy and less reaction, more imagination and less automation, in our advocacy. I

want to see more intention! I'd love to see feminism really engaged in supporting trans and cis women of color leadership around movements to change the root causes of oppression. I see us using digital tools to help advocate for affordable housing, living wages, better food and water, while simultaneously critiquing capitalism and coming up with alternatives to our current labor infrastructure. Should be easy :)





Q&A with Visiting Scholar Banu Subramaniam

Tell us about your training and research interests.

How did you get where you are today?

I grew up as one of those science nerds! Biology and the natural world have always fascinated me. Science was the way to an objective rational world, removed from the oppressive social structures of gender, race, caste, class, sexuality, religion etc.. To my young, impassioned and naïve mind, a third world woman in science hardly seemed like a oxymoron! Having finished my undergraduate in India in Biology, I came to the U. S. for a doctoral degree in evolutionary biology. But in working in the hallways of science, I discovered that rather than science being removed from the social world, in fact the social structures of society were everywhere, actively shaping scientific culture and its knowledge. I knocked on the door of Women's Studies, and new worlds opened up. I discovered how central a role science has

played in shaping our structures of gender, race, class, sexuality etc. Life has never been the same! Feminist scholarship opened up the possibility of working at the intersections of biology and women's studies.

Your background is in biological sciences. How does it play a role in your work in gender studies and beyond?

My fascinations with the biological sciences have remained central to my work. In exploring the history of science and feminism, I discovered that if the sciences developed as a world without women, women's studies largely developed as a world without science. And yet, looking at this history, science has been so central to our constructions of sex, gender, race, sexuality etc.. To me, understanding these intersections is critical to the project of feminism, and my work challenges women's studies to incorporate the sciences (alongside the social

sciences, the humanities and arts) as a central project of women's studies.

Interdisciplinary feminist work cannot ignore the sciences.

Your work stands at the intersection of feminist studies, critical science studies, and science itself. How do you hold these together? How has that perhaps uneasy relationship between these arenas shaped your intellectual trajectory?

I am primarily interested in how to practice experimental biology while grounded in feminist scholarship. What would that look like? What if women's studies incorporated the science's in its central mission – not just in critiquing scientific knowledge but in producing knowledge about the natural world? Might not feminists have something important to contribute about our ecological world? On climate change? On the biology of sex, gender, sexuality? Having worked at these

intersections for the last two decades, the intellectual questions seem rich - these fields seem so deeply implicated and imbricated in each other. Rather than the intellectual questions, the uneasy relationship has largely manifested itself in the institutional structures of a disciplinary academy. There are no interdisciplinary structures across these fields- no national organizations, annual conferences, journals, departments etc. It is the rare women's studies department that sees the importance of a scientist in its midst! So I've had to craft my own intellectual and institutional trajectory. That has been the biggest challenge.

Your latest project, In India's Modern Temples: Science, Religion, and the Marketing of Indian Biologies, explores two of India's most famous institutions/practices: science and religion. How are these related?

As most interdisciplinary scholars would tell you, that while the academy is disciplinary, the world is not! What allows us to continue

living in the myopic world of disciplines is the erasure of the entanglements of history. Religion, for example, has a deep and intimate history with science. The oppositional framing of science vs. religion that we see in the contemporary U. S. is quite a modern preoccupation. It is also a eurocentric framing. Hindu nationalist thought for example, sees science and religion as deeply interconnected. Hindu nationalists see western science as having its roots in the Vedic sciences and religion. Thus there is an entirely different genealogy to these ideas in India, and I am interested in how these have shaped science in India and also how they have shaped claims of Indian biologies.

How did you conduct the research for this new project? Do you typically work in this way, or is this project a departure for you?

I have always used a range of interdisciplinary methods in my work. For this project, I focus on primary research in the biological sciences and their claims of Indian biology and ecology, and analyze this

work using interdisciplinary methods and methodologies.

What attracted you to the visiting scholar program in WGSS at NEU?

I am so excited by the faculty and the interdisciplinary work at NEU. As I said, such contexts are rare, and I am looking forward to working with the vibrant feminist community here.

What sources do you hope to take advantage of while at NEU?

The fabulous faculty and research scholars here! I am looking forward to the many opportunities of seminars and reading groups and being part of the intellectual community here. Also, I am so excited about working on a city campus. I've always enjoyed the energy and vibrancy of cities.

What do you feel you are bringing to the feminist academic community at NEU?

I think my expertise and interests compliment ones at NEU. I am so looking forward to this year! Thank you for hosting me.



Q&A with Visiting Scholar Juli Grisby

Can you talk a little bit about your dissertation *Grim Sleeper: Gender, Violence, and Reproductive Justice*? What, exactly, is a “grim sleeper”?

The Grim Sleeper murders spanned a twenty-five year period, marking two decades of violence against black women's bodies in South Los Angeles. Slow moving police investigations began in 1984, were colored by depictions of murdered black “prostitutes,” which spurred a community response by family members and women activists, yet the suspect was not arrested until 2010. I compare the silence around a murderer's targeting of black women and then discarding them in alleyways to the silence that currently surrounds governmental approaches to the reproductive lives of black women in California. Building on the popularized name of the South Los Angeles serial killer who

took a 14-year hiatus from his murdering spree in 1989 only to begin again in 2003, I define grim sleep as a violent culture of negligence that produces or causes conditions that increase premature death amongst black populations. I suggest the Grim Sleep that covers their lives is best addressed by a reproductive justice framework that seeks to improve health, access to care, and mortality rates of South Los Angeles communities through the lives of black women and adolescent females. In it I ask how the Grim Sleeper murders reveal latent state responses to premature death rates and reproductive health challenges of black women. I demonstrate and argue that black women are especially subject to the violence of grim sleep and black activist women contest it by 1) mobilizing public health data that represent the outcomes of years of lack of access and geographic barriers to clinics, care, and

information; and 2) mobilizing reproductive justice agendas by developing creative programmatic schemes to negotiate the capitalist philanthropic funding process that challenge organizations.

Why do you think the murders discussed in the dissertation have been silenced and remain unexamined?

The silence that surrounds women murdered by Lonnie Franklin JR is only exceptional or surprising if we don't consider the social logics of race, gender and sexuality as they work in specific locations. It is actually the perfect storm of oppression, patriarchy, and violence. The militarized state violence deployed by the Los Angeles Police Department and FBI on radical community based organizations, such as the Black Panther Party, in the 70's left black poor working class communities depleted. Additionally, like most urban

cities in the 80's Los Angeles experienced a high number of unemployment, poverty and increased drug addictions. These three combined with increased policing of gang members created an image of the city of waste and danger. Within this context lives of women were treated with little concern, as consequence black women assaulted were rendered invisible or blamed for their public presence during late nights. During this time there were at least five separate serial killers targeting black women without contributing enough resources the LAPD often misattributed the murders of women to separate cases. Furthermore, many of the women were labeled "prostitutes" whether or not they engaged in sex work. Shaming, morality, and stereotypes of sexual availability often criminalized and focused blame on the slain women. In later years, the continued lack of resources attributed to the investigations and a failure of cooperation with community activists prolonged Franklin's murderous spree. It is most productive not to think through this as though why wasn't this one man apprehended but more so what are the social conditions that allows for violence against

black women to go unpublicized and under investigated?

How did you conduct the research for Grim Sleeper?
How do you plan on expanding that research?

I developed my research through quilted ethnography - a strategy to weave together disparate data sets coming through primary documents, public health, and ethnographic data to better illuminate the social conditions and traditions of black communities. To do this, I conducted two years of ethnographic fieldwork working and volunteering with nonprofit organizations in Los Angeles, California. This included conducting six oral history interviews with key members of a nonprofit, semi-structured interviews with interns and volunteers. However, given the historical aspect of the murders and my intention to contextualize black women's social movement within the city I undertook a significant amount of archival research. This involved examining newspaper articles during the height of the murders and organizational papers, newsletters, and flyers of the nonprofit. I plan to expand this project by producing interactive

choropleth maps that layer data driven from public health, U.S. Census data, and crime reports in Los Angeles. These maps combine GIS data sets with ethnographic observations and primary documents to visually reveal the compounded racial and gendered geography that black women embody in their political practices.

How do race and sexuality play a role in reproductive health and accessibility?
How does reproductive justice relate to gendered violence?

I love these questions! First people tend to think of Reproductive justice as a replacement term for reproductive health. Yet, in fact black women health advocates and other women of color organizers have sought a broader more complex understating of reproductive lives. Community and social activism of black women centered on health historically has taken into account additional factors such as income, race, housing, and education as contributors to poor reproductive health. The work of black women in the US and African Diaspora diverges from the dominant discourse reproductive rights and health, which singularly focus on legal

gains and the latter on status and family planning. Reproductive Justice as developed and utilized by black women activists turns to social movement building that encompasses quality of life issues. Violence experiences through structural barriers or direct assault are part of a lived experience that impacts reproductive health and choice. Additionally, we are in a key moment when violence against women is part of public debate and scrutiny. However we haven't made the jump to understand the aftermath of violence such as sexual assault, intimate partner violence, workplace violence, or the health consequences of heteropatriarchy and sexism that exists when women are attempting to receive care. Stigma and shaming of sexuality, sex work, and transgender identity also constrict the ways in which reproductive health is approached. Reproductive health care, treatment, information and accesses has a far broader base than women who are seeking abortions and family planning. There is a violence in parceling out reproductive care to those who present a normalized gender and sexuality.

Why is intersectionality an important concept, even as it becomes troubled and contested?

It seems the "trouble" with intersectionality falls for those who feel it is limiting or hinders in-depth analysis when looking address a range of issues. However, frequent use of intersectionality in social science scholarship seeking to address the impact of race, class, and gender has exploded. This explosion occurred by removing its emergence from Black and Women of color feminist histories – making intersectionality benign social theory. Unfortunately those who believe the intersectionality is simple the consideration of class, sexuality and gender issues participate in the liberalizing or depoliticizing of what was and is a radical approach to scholarship and activism. Intersectionality not only addresses the interlocking of oppressions people face but also provides a mechanism for delving into how the shifting discourses of race and sexuality (among others) are tied to power relations that have very real and material consequences for people. It's the social justice aspect addressed conceptually by academics and community organizing that makes

intersectional analysis key to articulating how social and cultural dynamics change across time and space. What is lost are the dynamic ways in which intersectionality requires an engagement with subjugated knowledge. Without this intersectionality losses the theory and praxis component that is vitally important to producing feminist scholarship. I feel intersectionality is only as limiting as your imagination and one's ability to read and translate other experiences of social inequality.

What kind of social policies would you like to see in the future that address race, the state, gender, and structural violence?

This is a tough one. I don't know if we need more policy. In fact we might have too much. I would like to look at the ways existing policy has been challenged and is a challenge to our current reproductive health. If we look at the recent cases of Hobby Lobby or Wendy Davis' Filibuster as public moments questioning changes to policy; these moments shed light that a better understanding of the conditions under which people make their reproductive decisions is desperately needed. The desire for a quick policy fix

doesn't necessarily change the shaming of sexuality and racism. However, Policy, legislation make certain bodies and experiences more legible and in some cases protected by the state, that said, I do think there should be a reconceptualizing of reproductive health care. We need to consider the ways heteropatriarchy affects transbodies seeking reproductive care.

What attracted you to NEU?

I was encouraged by the history of the program, the innovative pushes in curriculum and scholarship by WGSS affiliated faculty. It is incredibly exciting to build feminist intellectual communities across disciplines. I also look forward to learning about the surrounding neighborhoods.

How will your time at NEU help you to achieve your future goals?

This year at WGSS will provide me the space to share my work

with colleges and scholars. The feed back and work-shopping of ideas through is critical to development of feminist scholarship. I additionally plan to use this academic year to develop research and questions to begin the book proposal and manuscript for Grim Sleeper.

What do you feel you are bringing to the NEU feminist academic community?

I believe most scholarship is deeply personal. I bring passion for sustained community engagement through intellectual community building. I look to connect the stories from work in the field to the academy. As an anthropologist is ethnographic work on reproduction and reproductive rights traditionally occurs or focuses on abortion, family planning, and clinic operations. My project presents an alternative and comprehensive look into the ways in which reproductive justice organizing impacts community agendas and larger quality of life issues. Moreover, my work centers not on the

nature of care or living with health disparity, but rather on black activist women's experiences engaging social change through nonprofit organizing.

How does your new project expand upon your dissertation research? Can you give us some hints about where you are going in your new work?

My next project develops from research interests in technology, gendered violence, and women's social movements. It explores activist black women's use of internet and social media to advocate for social change. Vibrant use of internet advocacy by black women often differs from other feminist internet campaigns against street harassment such as, 'slut walks' and 'ihollaback,' which have displayed a limited resonance and success amongst young black women. I am further intrigued by experiences of social trauma within urban black communities as it builds solidarity and connectivity through social media platforms.

WGSS Course Options

Undergraduate Program: Fall 2014

ANTH 2302	Gender and Sexuality: A Cross-Cultural Perspective
CINE 3392	Gender and Film
CINE 3500	Film Theory
CRIM 4010	Gender, Crime, and Justice
HUSV 2800	Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression in Practice and Policy
HUSV 3580	Rape Crisis Training: Techniques in Counseling
RELS 1271	Sex in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
RELS 1280	Encountering Islam: Traditions, Debates and Crosscultural Diversity
SOCL 1260	Gender in a Changing Society
SOCL 4520	Race, Class and Gender Professor
WMNS 1103	Introduction to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Graduate Program: Fall 2014

CAEP 6380	Seminar in Feminist Psychology
WMNS 6100	Theorizing Gender and Sexuality

Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies at MIT: Fall 2014

WGS.645	Gender, Health, and Marginalization
WGS.640	Gender, Race, and the Construction of the American West
WGS.600	Workshop for Dissertation Writers in Women's & Gender Studies

WGSS Course Options

Undergraduate Program: Spring 2015

AFRS 1185	Gender in the African Diaspora
COMM 1131	Sex, Relationships and Communication
COMM 1304	Communication and Inclusion
COMM 2304	Communication and Gender
ENGL 3150	Topics in Early Literature: Gender, Sexuality, and the Renaissance Body
ENGL 3190	Topics in Nineteenth Century American Literature: Nineteenth Century American Women Writers
ENGL 3339	Topics in Literary Criticism: Queer Theory
HONR 1209	The Islamic Veil: Islam, Gender, and the Politics of Dress
HUSV 2900	Gender Violence: Bystander Education Theory and Practice
INTL 2400	Politics of Islam and Gender
INTL 2480	Global Gender Issues
LING 3456	Language and Gender
RELS 1271	Sex in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
SOCL 1255	Sociology of the Family
SOCL 1260	Gender in a Changing Society
SOCL 3402	Feminist Perspectives on Society
WMNS 1101	Sex, Gender, and Pop Culture
WMNS 1103	Introduction to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Graduate Program: Spring 2015

ENGL 7215	Topics in Twentieth-Century Literature: The Modern American Novel
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ENGL 7351 Topics in Literary Study: Visual Postmodernities

WMNS 7976 Directed Study

Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies at MIT: Spring 2015

Feminist Inquiry

Gender, Race, and the Complexities of Science and Technology

Workshop for Dissertation Writers in Women's & Gender Studies



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