

# WGSS Newsletter

## DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Welcome back from what I hope was a productive and enjoyable summer! The spring semester was an exciting one here at WGSS as we welcomed *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* to campus. The journal has kept me on my toes all summer as we have begun work on new ideas for the publication and launched such endeavors as “**Short Takes: Provocations on Public Feminism**,” a new open-access, online-first feature in which prominent feminist writers examine books that have shaped popular conversations around feminist issues. We have also been hard at work preparing for Northeastern’s first special issue, “Pleasure and Danger,” which received a record number of submissions to our call for papers (see more about *Signs* on page 2).

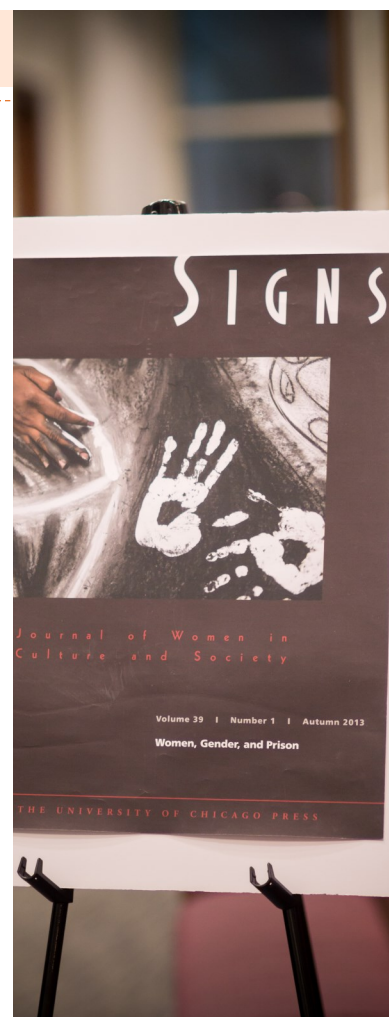
Spring also saw a record number of undergraduates enrolling in the WGSS minor (see page 6) and a tremendous turnout for our annual symposium, which was also on the theme of “Pleasure and Danger” (see page 3). The symposium featured an undergraduate student activist panel— among many other prominent panelists in the field— a first for the program.

This coming semester promises to be no less exciting as we debut a new graduate course in **Queer Theory**, which I will teach. Our Intro course continues to be popular and will be taught, once again, by Professor Moya Bailey, our post-doctoral fellow. We are also looking forward to next spring, when we will debut two new courses: **Digital Feminisms** (also taught by Prof. Bailey) and **Gender, Sexuality, and the Law**, which will be taught by Professor of Law Libby Adler.

Finally, we are excited to welcome three new members to our executive committee: **Amy Farrell** (Associate Professor of Criminology & Criminal Justice), **Kara Swanson** (Professor of Law), and **Brooke Foucault Welles** (Assistant Professor of Communications Studies). We are so pleased to have these new colleagues join us in crafting the programming and curriculum for WGSS.

We hope you will check out the events that we will have going on this semester (see page 6) or that you’ll consider enrolling in some of our courses for fall or spring. In any case, we are looking forward to seeing you on campus this semester!

- Professor Suzanna Walters  
Program Director, WGSS & Professor, Sociology



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## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- WGSS 2015-2016 Collaborative Research Cluster
- *Signs* Graduate Assistants
- Record Year for WGSS

## SIGNS AT NEU

*Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* kicked off its first semester at Northeastern University with a reception hosted by The College of Social Sciences and Humanities. Speakers included **Uta G.**

**Poiger**, Dean of the College of Social Sciences & Humanities; **Stephen W. Director**, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; **Mary Hawkesworth**, Editor of *Signs* from 2005-2014; **Suzanna Walters**, *Signs* Editor-in-Chief and WGSS program director; and **Carla Kaplan**, Chair of the *Signs* Board of Associate Editors and Davis Distinguished Professor of American Literature at Northeastern. The reception highlighted the incredible work done to date by the University of Chicago Press and all of the journal's past editors and contributors and also outlined new directions for the future of *Signs*. Five new committees made up of members of *Signs* Board of Associate Editors were also launched: Key Concepts, Book Reviews, Online Presence, Special Issues, and Public Intellectuals Project.



Photo by Jarvis Chen

### Special issue

This spring, *Signs* received a record number of submissions for its upcoming special issue “**Pleasure and Danger: sexual freedom and feminism in the twenty-first century**,” the first special issue under Northeastern’s editorship. The *Signs* team thanks all those who submitted articles and helped spread the word about our call for papers.



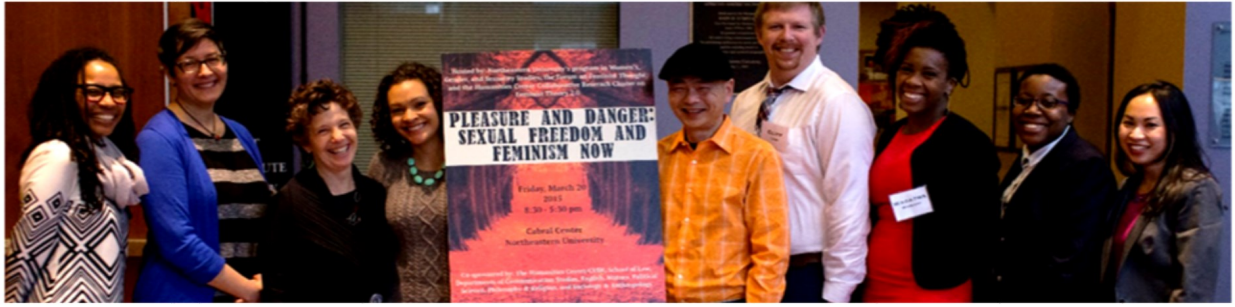
In the same issue, *Signs* will debut a new feature, **Key Concepts**. This will include one contested,

ambiguous, or oft-misunderstood term common in feminist discourse (academic or otherwise) defined, contextualized, and reinterpreted by a feminist scholar.

### Outreach

*Signs* has also revamped its social media pages! This fresh start, which coincided with Women’s History Month in March, has led to a surge of over 300 new Twitter followers as well as an increased Facebook following. Through its social media pages, *Signs* has celebrated national and international observance days, shared many of its articles, and encouraged conversations around sex and danger, cultural feminism, and more. One of the articles in the winter 2015 issue of *Signs* even inspired its own hashtag, #regrettingmotherhood, and sparked quite a debate, especially in Germany. Follow *Signs* on Twitter @SignsJournal.





Presenters, from left: Juli Grigsby, Margot Weiss, Suzanna Walters, Sarah Jackson, Chong-suk Han, Cliff Leek, Wagatwe Wanjuki, Moya Bailey, Kimberly Hoang. Not pictured: Reina Gossett, Aishah Shahidah Simmons, Janet Halley. Photo by Maria Amasanti

## PLEASURE AND DANGER: SEXUAL FREEDOM AND FEMINISM NOW

On March 20, 2015, WGSS hosted its annual Women's History Month symposium. This year's theme was *Pleasure and Danger: sexual freedom and feminism now*, and over 100 people attended throughout the day. We were honored to have **Juli Grigsby, Kimberly Hoang, Margot Weiss, Reina Gossett, Chong-Suk Han, Moya Bailey, Wagatwe Wanjuki, Cliff Leek, Aishah Shahidah Simmons, and Janet Halley** present their work. **Sonia Banaszczyk, Kate Frisher, Daniela Gonzalez, and Sydney Mokel** also spoke as an undergraduate student activist panel, moderated by **Professor Sarah J. Jackson**. With **Professor Suzanna Walters** providing opening remarks and moderating the final roundtable panel of all the day's panelists, the symposium covered a diverse range of issues, from conceptualizing consent to the political economy of sex and gender. We are grateful to all who participated in and assisted with the symposium and hope to see everyone and more next year! Special thanks are due to the **CSSH Humanities Center** for sponsoring the Collaborative Research Cluster whose work led to the symposium, as well as to our sponsors: **The Humanities Center/CSSH; School of Law; Departments of Communication Studies, English, History, Political Science, Philosophy & Religion, and Sociology & Anthropology.**



Photos by Maria Amasanti



### ANNOUNCING WGSS 2015-2016 COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH CLUSTER

We are pleased and grateful to announce that the **Humanities Center** has funded the WGSS program's proposal for a collaborative research cluster for the upcoming academic year. The research cluster will focus on the theme of **"Gender and Carceral Complexes"** and will examine the phenomenon of mass incarceration and the political, economic, and legal structures that surround and support it. In addition, the group will engage with narrative fiction and popular culture that speaks to and with questions of incarceration, particularly as punitive and carceral apparatuses operate on gendered and sexed bodies. Given the out-of-control rates of mass incarceration in the US – and the ways this structures and impinges upon everyday life – it is vital to critically examine all aspects of this phenomenon. How sexuality and gender play out in "the carceral state" has become of increasing concern to activists and scholars working to create alternatives to mass incarceration. The cluster will be made up of faculty, staff, and graduate students from across various departments. If you are interested in getting involved in the group, please contact Kiki Samko ([k.samko@neu.edu](mailto:k.samko@neu.edu)).

## INTRODUCING SIGNS 2015 GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

The *Signs* graduate assistants work closely with journal staff on daily journal operations and special projects.

### Lauren Kuryloski

is a seventh-year doctoral candidate in the English department. Her primary areas of research are twentieth century American and Caribbean prose, visual culture, and feminist theory. Her dissertation, *Deviant Acts: Women, the Body, and Performances of Madness*, analyzes the relationship between madness and women's embodied deviance in contemporary literary and visual texts. Lauren also holds the WGSS certificate.



**Jackie Gronau** is a second year PhD student in the History department. Her research focuses on gender and sexuality in the French Empire, and gender, culture, and politics in 20th century France and Germany. Currently, she is examining the role of Lesbian feminists in the Mouvement de libération des femmes during the height of second wave feminism in France. She received her MA in History from SUNY Albany and her BA in History from Saint Michael's College.

### Firuzeh Shokooh Valle

is a PhD candidate in Sociology. Her dissertation research focuses on the intersection between gender, technology, and development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Firuzeh has an MA in Journalism, and a certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies from Northeastern University. She received her BA in Latin American Studies from the University of Puerto Rico. She is also an award-winning journalist who has reported for numerous media outlets in her native Puerto Rico and abroad.



## 2015-2016 VISITING SCHOLARS

Visiting Scholars are members of the Northeastern WGSS community for one year. These scholars range from All But Dissertation Ph.D. students to established scholars in their field.



**Melisa Trujillo** is a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the University of Cambridge, funded by a scholarship from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council. She received her Master's in Multi-Disciplinary Gender Studies and Bachelor's in Social and Political Science from the same university. Her doctoral project

explores the body hair removal practices of feminist-identifying women, practices which are nearly universal in contemporary late-capitalist Anglophone societies and are commonly perceived as both "normal" and "natural" at the same time as they require from women a continual outlay of time, money, and (often painful) labor. Through examining these practices, Melisa aims to contribute to feminist debates concerning normative feminine embodiments, agency and choice, and feminism today.

**Kathryn E. Frazier** is a part-time lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Northeastern University. She received her PhD in Developmental Psychology from Clark University in Worcester, MA, and her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Gender and Women's Studies from Scripps College in Claremont, CA. Her current work focuses on the ways in which contemporary feminism(s) (including what has been called "postfeminism") simultaneously construct women's bodies and sexualities as both a source of vulnerability and of power. She is particularly interested in the ways in which individual women draw upon these ideas in making sense of their own experiences of empowerment and victimhood.



**Miriam Tola** is completing her PhD in Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University. Her dissertation presents a feminist engagement with political philosophies of the common. Her scholarly writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *Theory & Event*, *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, and *Teoria*. She graduated in Communication Sciences and Film Studies from La Sapienza University in Rome and worked as a journalist, film programmer, and documentary producer in Italy and the United States.

Look for our Spring newsletter to meet our fourth Visiting Scholar, who will join us in January.

Please welcome our newest WGSS executive committee members!

**Amy Farrell**, Professor, Criminal Justice

**Kara Swanson**, Professor, School of Law

**Brooke Foucault Welles**, Assistant Professor, Communications Studies & NULab

Visit our website for links to their bios.

## NEW COURSES FOR SPRING 2016

The WGSS program is excited to introduce several cutting-edge interdisciplinary courses that will be added to the catalog for Spring 2016.

### WMNS 3500: SEXUALITY, GENDER, AND THE LAW

This course represents a rare and exciting cross-college collaboration between WGSS and the School of Law! It examines the legal regulation of gender and sexuality and investigates concrete legal cases to learn about the history of constitutional interpretation and the current status of rights for women and sexual minorities. The course also focuses on theoretical issues emerging in the writings of diverse feminist and queer legal scholars. Students address debates over the value of conventional equality approaches in legal doctrine; equality versus difference perspectives; ways in which legal language constructs gender and sexuality; the incorporation of sexuality and gender in ideologies of law; and the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race in legal doctrine and legal theory.



**Libby Adler**, Professor at the School of Law and WGSS Executive Committee member, has written extensively on sexuality, gender, family and children, including foster care, and draws heavily from queer and critical theory. She is a co-editor of the casebook *Mary Joe Frug's Women and the Law* (4th ed.). She also has written about contemporary legal issues arising out of Nazism. She received the Northeastern University Excellence in Teaching Award in 2007-2008.

### WMNS 2505: DIGITAL FEMINISMS

From hashtags to Tumblr, feminists are using digital tools and platforms to aid in the pursuit of social justice. *Digital Feminisms* explores the unique ways that feminist activism and theory are impacted by the increasing digital nature of our world. Students develop a timeline that traces feminist's engagement with the internet, new media, and technological innovations from the late '70s to the present. Students examine the strengths and challenges that the digital creates for feminist engagement.



**Moya Bailey**, Dean's Postdoctoral Fellow in WGSS and Digital Humanities, 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.

WGSS and History will also offer a cross-listed course in Spring 2016. Details are forthcoming, pending College approval. Check [www.northeastern.edu/cssh/wgss](http://www.northeastern.edu/cssh/wgss) for details.

## FALL COURSES

### WGSS & Cross-Listed Courses

**WMNS 1103** *Intro to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies*  
Professor Moya Bailey

**WMNS/SOCL 1260** *Gender in a Changing Society*  
Professor Ethel Mickey

**WMNS/RELS 1271** *Sex in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*  
Professor Elizabeth Bucar

**WMNS/ANTH 2302** *Gender and Sexuality: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*  
Professor Nina Sylvanus

**WMNS/COMM 2304** *Communication and Gender*  
Professors Amy Barber and Anna Freya Thimsen (4 sections)

**WMNS/HUSV 2800** *Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression in Practice and Policy*  
Professor Margot Abels

### Affiliated Electives

*These courses all fulfill an elective requirement for the WGSS minor.*

**CINE 3392** *Gender and Film*  
Professor Miriam Tola

**COMM 1131** *Sex, Relationships, and Communication*  
Professor Joseph Schwartz

**COMM 3304** *Communication and Inclusion*  
Professor Sarah Jackson

**CRIM 4010** *Gender, Crime, and Justice*  
Professor Ekaterina Botchkovar

**ENGL 2460** *Multiethnic Literatures of the US*  
Professor Bonnie TuSmith

**HUSV 5100** *Sexual Violence: Counseling, Programs, and Policy*  
Professor Stephanie M. Decandia  
*This course was formerly HUSV 3580.*

**LING 3456** *Language and Gender*  
Professor Heather A. Littlefield

## Record Year for WGSS

This past year saw the number of students enrolled in the WGSS minor more than double to over 60 undergraduates. We are thrilled to have each of these students in our program and are excited to offer more programming to support these students, who come from many different departments and Colleges. Congratulations to the program for this record-breaking growth in just one year and thanks to our affiliated faculty and executive committee for supporting this growth and our students.

Twelve of these students graduated in May and we congratulate them on their tremendous accomplishment. We look forward to presenting more programming and activities for our growing numbers in the 2015-2016 year.

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## EVENTS



Photo by Jarvis Chen

The WGSS program offers a full calendar of events each semester, often in conjunction with other departments. To keep up to date with our calendar, be sure to check our website frequently: <http://www.northeastern.edu/cssh/wgss/event/>.

### Women Who Inspire: Women in Public Office

September 21, 5:30 pm, Curry Student Center Ballroom

3-4 female-identified elected representatives from the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus and the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators from across racial/ethnicity, generational, and party lines will participate in this panel and Q&A on the challenges, risks, and rewards of being a woman elected leader today. Check our website for details. This event is the keynote panel for Peace and Social Justice Week.

### Artist Talk: Favianna Rodriguez, "Art, Social Justice, and the Radical Imaginary"

September 23, 6:00 pm, Studio Theater

Artist-in-Residence Favianna Rodriguez will give a lecture featuring her own artwork, as well as a discussion on the intersection of art and politics. Much of Favianna's work is integrated within themes of women and women's empowerment and sexuality. Her work will be on display at Gallery 360 through December 31, and she will be in residence at the NU Center for the Arts from September 21-25. Check our website for more details.

### Peace & Social Justice Week Workshop "After Gay Marriage: What Now?"

September 30, 6:00 pm, Snell 33

The Supreme Court made marriage equality the law of the land, but what challenges still lie ahead? Professors **Suzanna Walters** (WGSS & Sociology), **Libby Adler** (School of Law), and **Moya Bailey** (WGSS & DH) will lead this workshop.

### Stuart Hall's Legacy: Race, Gender, and Cultural Studies

October 6, 5:00 pm, 90 Snell Library

A film screening of *The Stuart Hall Project* followed by a panel discussion with Professors **Suzanna Walters** (Sociology & WGSS), **Sarah Jackson** (Communications Studies), and **Nicole Aljoe** (English). Refreshments will be served.

### Contemporary feminism(s) and the centrality of the "bad feminist," Kathryn Frazier, WGSS Visiting Scholar

November 2, 1:00 pm, 270 Holmes Hall

Kathryn Frazier will deliver a lunchtime lecture. Bring a brown bag lunch and join the discussion. Light refreshments will be served.

### Roya Hakakian: Jewish Life in Pre- and Post- Revolutionary Iran

November 19, 4:40 pm, Renaissance Park 9th Floor Conference Room

Roya Hakakian, Iranian-American poet and journalist, will visit campus to give a talk on Jewish Life in Pre- and Post- Revolutionary Iran, co-sponsored by International Affairs, Jewish Studies, and WGSS. A book signing will follow. Continue checking our website for details.

### Exploring feminine and feminist identities and embodiments, Melisa Trujillo, WGSS Visiting Scholar

December 8, 1:00 pm, 270 Holmes Hall

Melisa Trujillo, WGSS Visiting Scholar, will give a lunchtime lecture on body-hair removal practices of feminist-identifying women in the UK. Bring a brown bag lunch and join the discussion. Light refreshments will be served.