

# THE WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES PROGRAM'S Spring 2021 Newsletter

## Table of Contents

### PAGE 2

- SYMPOSIUM RECAP

### PAGE 3

- VISITING SCHOLAR AD

### PAGE 4

- SPRING FEMINIST READING GROUP

### PAGE 5

- SIGNS: JOURNAL OF WOMEN IN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

### PAGE 6

- WGSS ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## A Message from the Program Director

*Welcome to the Spring semester and what I hope will be our last one teaching and learning in the never-never land necessitated by the global pandemic. We've all had to adjust to gnawing social isolation, everyday fears for our health and that of our loved ones, and more global fears provoked by the continued rise of right-wing white nationalism. These are hard times, but some light is at the end of the tunnel: a new administration (with our first woman of color VEEP!) takes over our fractured government and the vaccine roll out begins.*



*Our annual **WGSS Women's History Month Symposium** – postponed from this past spring – took place (virtually of course) on October 30, just days before one of the most consequential elections in American history. We were nervous, to be honest. Nervous about doing such a typically interactive event online. Nervous about getting folks to be engaged so close to the election. Nervous about tech fails and trolling. Well, suffice it to say that all the nerves were for nought: the Symposium was a rousing success! From the keynote by Zerlina Maxwell to the two panels, participants were able to witness feminist activism and analysis at its best: current, smart, intersectional, compassionate, energetic, and energizing. In fact, I would venture that this was one of our best Symposia, and the online format did allow us to engage an even wider audience than usual. We were even able to record the proceedings, and [you can watch the videos on our website](#).*

*Watch out for other (virtual) events in the Spring, most especially from our Visiting Scholars who will be workshopping their projects and to the **Women Take the Reel Festival**, which will be presented online and in partnership with the GCWS. Our Spring classes seem to be filled (always good news!) and we look forward to our summer line-up with **Intro to WGSS** and **Sex, Gender, and the Law** – an unusual offering for the summer, so take advantage of this!*

***Signs** continues to do fabulous work (check out our symposium where "Feminists Theorize COVID-19" offers up important analyses of our current pandemic) – and we will be looking for next year's Signs Grad Assistants, so if you are interested in working with Signs next year please get in touch with me.*

*As always, in sisterhood and solidarity –  
Prof. Suzanna Walters*



# Symposium Recap

## **#Feminism: Gender and the 2020 Election** **October 30, 2020**

Our annual women's history month symposium – the signature event for WGSS every year – had to be postponed to this fall as the pandemic took hold. We were thrilled that all the original participants were able to transition to a virtual format and the symposium was a resounding success. Special thanks for the success of the Symposium are due to our partner at the Humanities Center **Gaby Fiorenza** and Summer 2/Fall WGSS and Signs co-op **Sofia Ciprian**, who worked with Program Coordinator **Kiki Samko** to make the day run so smoothly. Featuring a keynote address by **Zerlina Maxwell** – pundit extraordinaire, TV host, and newly minted author of *The End of White Politics* – the symposium brought together scholars, activists, and policy makers to discuss critical questions around gender, social media, and electoral politics. Given that the symposium took place just days before arguably the most consequential election in US history, the interest was high and the stakes heightened. While we were concerned about our ability to “create community” with a virtual event, in truth this was one of our most successful events – every speaker seemed to feel the tension of the moment and offered feminist insight and feminist hope for these troubled times. Indeed, the weight of this historical moment seemed to bring together the “academic” analyses with the more pragmatically political in a conversation that was simultaneously informative and inspiring. Even without the food and intimate conviviality offered at our usual venue (the beautiful Cabral Center), this symposium set a new bar for WGSS programming. We were also pleased to be able to record the keynote and panels so those unable to attend live could watch later. Please visit our website (<https://cssh.northeastern.edu/wgss/feminism-gender-the-2020-election/>) to re-visit the inspiring words of our wonderful panelists (or catch them for the first time if you missed the symposium day of).

## ***Symposium Panelists***

**Zerlina Maxwell, Peacock Network TV host & author**

**Katherine Grainger, Civitas Public Affairs Group**

**Carmen Rios, Feminist Media-Maker**

**Tamar Carroll, Rochester Institute of Technology**

**Catherine Knight Steele, University of Maryland, College Park**

**Amanda Renteria, Code for America**

**Duchess Harris, Macalester College**





# Visiting Scholars Program

***Call for  
Applications  
Academic Year  
2021-2022***

## Northeastern University Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

Each year the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) program at Northeastern University hosts a group of 1-3 competitively selected scholars for a period of one academic year. The program is open to scholars of all disciplines and ranks who have obtained their terminal degree and who would enjoy working in an interdisciplinary environment that encourages critical feminist exploration addressing intersections of gender and sexuality with race, class, nation, religion, and a wide range of social justice issues. The [WGSS program at Northeastern University](#) has a vibrant feminist community, an active undergraduate minor, and an established graduate certificate program. We collaborate closely with the [Graduate Consortium in Gender, Culture, Women, and Sexuality](#) (GCWS), a group of nine area institutions of higher education, housed at MIT. Northeastern and the WGSS program are the editorial home of [Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society](#).

Visiting Scholars provide their own financial support during the residency, though the program may support modest research expenses. Scholars will have access to the Northeastern University library and to shared workspace (so long as public health protocol permits) as well as email privileges and are invited to participate in all program events and to collaborate with colleagues through research clusters, reading groups, a feminist writing collective, and affiliated seminars. We connect each scholar with a faculty liaison to help integrate them into the feminist community on campus and in Boston. There may also be the possibility of teaching a course in the Spring semester in one of the following areas: Introduction to WGSS; Gender, Social Justice, and Transnational Activism; Digital Feminisms; Sex, Gender, and Pop Culture; and Gender and Sexuality in World History. Applicants who are interested in teaching should indicate this in their cover letter and should include a teaching statement and sample syllabus along with the materials listed below.

Scholars are expected to give a public presentation to the Northeastern campus community and the public on their ongoing works-in-progress during their residency, or to engage the community in a work-in-progress through a workshop or other medium. Scholars are expected to be in residence from September 2021 to May 2022 but are welcome to remain in residence throughout the summer of 2022. Of course, we will monitor the public health protocols surrounding COVID-19 and may make adjustments to expectations of residency based on public health guidelines, including canceling the program if public health protocol deems it unsafe to return to campus. Decisions regarding if and how the Visiting Scholar program will be run will be made with plenty of advance notice.

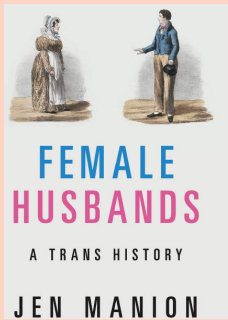
Applications should include a current curriculum vitae, a 1-2 page letter describing the research activities the scholar will conduct during the residency, and 2 letters of reference. We may, as the process develops, request writing samples as well. The deadline for applications is April 15, 2021. Late or incomplete applications cannot be considered. Applications will be reviewed by a committee of WGSS faculty, including program director Professor Suzanna Walters. Send all materials by email attachment to:

**Ms. Kiki Samko, Program Coordinator**  
**Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program**  
**[k.samko@northeastern.edu](mailto:k.samko@northeastern.edu)**

This Spring, the WGSS Executive Committee will convene a feminist reading group. Seeking new ways to form community in our new virtual world, and supported by a grant from the Humanities Center Collaborative Research Cluster project, the group will meet once a month over Zoom to discuss a book in the feminist zeitgeist (see below for selections). Books will be provided by the program, thanks to the generosity of the Humanities Center. Interested feminist faculty and graduate students should contact Kiki Samko ([k.samko@northeastern.edu](mailto:k.samko@northeastern.edu)) to request meeting dates and to be added to the mailing list. The group is open to all faculty and graduate students across the university who are interested in participating in feminist dialogue around these books.

# Spring Feminist Reading Group

## Books we will be reading...

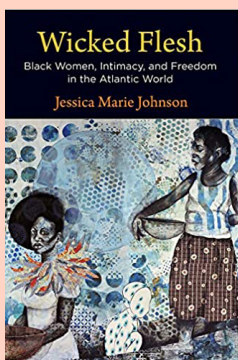
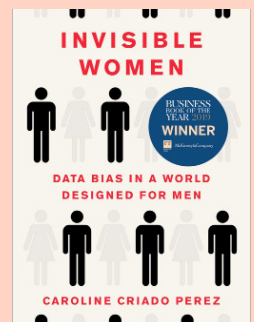


### *Female Husbands: A Trans History* By Jen Manion

Long before people identified as transgender or lesbian, there were female husbands and the women who loved them. Female husbands - people assigned female who transed gender, lived as men, and married women - were true queer pioneers. Moving deftly from the colonial era to just before the First World War, Jen Manion uncovers the riveting and very personal stories of ordinary people who lived as men despite tremendous risk, danger, violence, and threat of punishment.

### *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* By Caroline Criado-Perez

Data is fundamental to the modern world. From economic development, to healthcare, to education and public policy, we rely on numbers to allocate resources and make crucial decisions. But because so much data fails to take into account gender, because it treats men as the default and women as atypical, bias and discrimination are baked into our systems. And women pay tremendous costs for this bias, in time, money, and often with their lives.



### *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* By Jessica Marie Johnson

Slavery's rise in the Americas was institutional, carnal, and reproductive. The intimacy of bondage whet the appetites of slaveowners, traders, and colonial officials with fantasies of domination that trickled into every social relationship--husband and wife, sovereign and subject, master and laborer. Intimacy--corporeal, carnal, quotidian--tied slaves to slaveowners, women of African descent and their children to European and African men. In *Wicked Flesh*, Jessica Marie Johnson explores the nature of these complicated intimate and kinship ties and how they were used by black women to construct freedom in the Atlantic world.

# S I G N S

## About *Signs*

Recognized as the leading international journal in women's and gender studies, *Signs* is at the forefront of new directions in feminist scholarship. Challenging the boundaries of knowledge concerning women's and men's lives in diverse regions of the globe, *Signs* publishes scholarship that raises new questions and develops innovative approaches to our understanding of the past and present. What makes feminist scholarship published in *Signs* distinctive is not necessarily the subject of investigation or particular methods of inquiry but the effort to cultivate alternative research practices that further feminist, queer, and anti-racist goals of social transformation. *Signs* is published by the University of Chicago. Make sure to check out the *Signs* website, [www.signsjournal.org](http://www.signsjournal.org), for access to new releases.

## Feminists Theorize COVID-19

In the midst of this terrible time, *Signs* wanted to reach out to a group of scholars to think through – with a feminist lens – the parameters of the pandemic and the social ills and inequities it has both revealed and amplified. It is a clear testament to where feminism is now that all these essays range widely, locating this pandemic in a robustly intersectional feminist framework, where the various sites of oppression and inequality literally spill over into each other, and where borders (intellectual, political, embodied) are revealed as porous and contested. When a masculinity that is literally toxic infects the world stage, our need for feminist leadership (Jacinda Ardern, Black Lives Matter, and the list goes on) is ever more pressing. This symposium is a welcome addition to the growing dialogue about the relationship between the pandemic and persistent vectors of inequality. Visit the *Signs* website to check it out: <http://signsjournal.org/covid/>.

## *Signs* Seeks Graduate Assistants for 2021-2022

This spring, Editor-in-Chief of *Signs* Suzanna Walters and Chair of the Board of Associate Editors Carla Kaplan will seek 3 graduate assistants for research assistantships with the journal for the coming academic year. Graduate Students in CSSH with SGA funding who are interested in serving as research assistants with either Walters or Kaplan or as assistants at the journal should contact Suzanna Walters at [s.walters@northeastern.edu](mailto:s.walters@northeastern.edu) with a CV to express interest.

## Call for Papers

*Signs* is excited to announce a call for papers for our next special issue, “**Complexities of Care and Caring**.” Over the past four decades of feminist scholarship and practice, notions of care and caring, as noun and verb, have had great traction across disciplinary divides, spurring debate while challenging binaries of equality and difference, public and private, the cold hand of the market and the warmth of home, the rational and irrational, and paid and unpaid labor. This special issue invites reassessments across disciplines, broadly questioning and complicating feminist histories, debates, and politics of care and caring. The deadline for submissions is **December 15, 2021**. The issue will be guest edited by **Linda Blum** (Northeastern University); **Martha Albertson** (Emory University); and **Amber Jamilla Musser** (George Washington University).

All *Signs* call for papers can be found at [signsjournal.org/cfps](http://signsjournal.org/cfps).



# WGSS Announcements



## Be sure to check out our Summer 1 Courses...

### WMNS 1103 Intro to WGSS

Professor Margot Abels

MW 8:30-11:30 am EST

### WMNS/POLS/PHIL 3500

#### Sexuality, Gender, and the Law

Professor Libby Adler

MTWR, 1:30-3:10 pm EST

And check out our  
new  
Northeastern WGSS  
Instagram page

@northeasternwgss

## New Faces in WGSS

Kaitlin Kerr

*WGSS Program Assistant & Signs Editorial Intern Co-op*



Kaitlin is a third-year studying English, with a minor in Writing and a concentration in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Last fall, she began work as an encoding specialist at the Women Writers Project, supporting their research on pre-Victorian women writers.

Pre-pandemic, Kaitlin studied abroad in Ireland, where this photo was taken.