

The Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program Newsletter

Fall 2024

Director's Welcome

Dear colleagues,

Welcome back to NU for the 2024-25 academic year! In case you have no idea who this is addressing you, I'm **Libby Adler**, acting program director during the 2024-2025 academic year while **Suzanna Walters** is on sabbatical. My home is the law school, but this year—with your support—I am stepping into the WGSS breach.

Last time we were together, the only thing we thought we knew about the upcoming presidential election was that the winner would be a dude. (I will spare you further descriptors.) Now, (pause to toss salt over my right shoulder to thwart any curses) we stand at the precipice of something that has to be regarded as momentous. With a heady mixture of excitement and anxiety, I thank you for contributing to the feminist community within which we will work, worry, endure, and/or celebrate over the coming months.

Meanwhile, here at the plant, a small committee of us are planning our annual Women's History Month symposium, scheduled for **Friday, March 21, 2025**. This event is our program's headliner every year. Our topic this time is **Pictures, Words, and Lies: Representing Gender and Race in the New Media**. We are in the process of securing speakers—as always, a diverse combination of academics, activists, and journalists. It is shaping up to be a fabulous line-up.

As we all approach our starting blocks, I want to extend our welcome to a few new folks. Visiting Assistant Professor **Lauren Savit** will be teaching Sex, Gender, and Pop Culture; Intro to WGSS; Digital Feminisms; and Queer Theory. Visiting Scholar **Selen Erdoğan** works at the intersection of modernism studies and gender and sexuality and joins us most recently from a post-doc at Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. **Theodore Babbitt** will be with us as the *Signs* Editorial Assistant and WGSS co-op student. Theo is a fourth year studying journalism. And finally, **Jules Silveira** is a 4th year PhD student in Political Science with expertise in international relations and trans politics. They have joined the *Signs* crew and are working closely with Suzanna. You can read more about these new additions on page 2. Delighted to have you all aboard for whatever may come.

One last and important note. I want to thank **Kiki Samko**, our fearless and limitless (even magic, it seems to me sometimes) program manager. I cannot imagine trying to step into this role without her steady and reassuring hand on the wheel. I know everyone knows this but thanks to the universe for Kiki.

Ok, I look forward to serving all your acting chair needs! Best wishes for a successful and inspiring season.

Yours,
Libby



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New Faces in WGSS

Theodore Babbitt

Theodore (Theo) Babbitt is a fourth-year journalism and international affairs combined major with a minor in political science. He is interested in developing the intersection between the above topics through academic writing, global reporting, visual storytelling and data journalism. In addition to being an editor for Northeastern University's Global Journal, Theo is a member of NUCALLS and the American Red Cross Club. During his free time, he enjoys taking photos, learning languages, and playing with his cat.



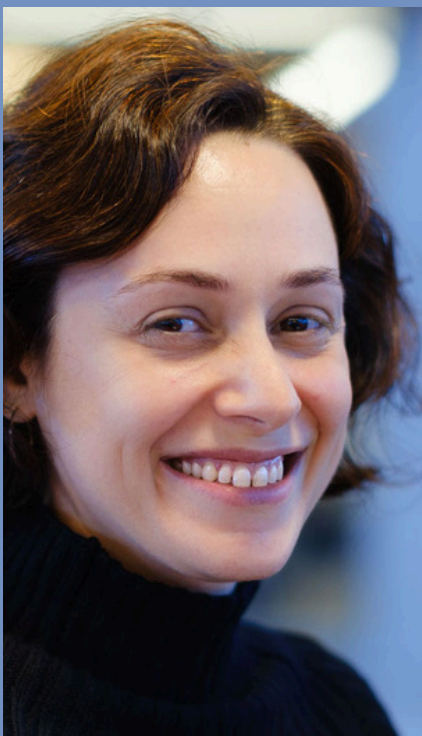
Jules Silveira

Jules is a second-year PhD student in the Department of Political Science at Northeastern University. They received an M.A. in political science from Northeastern, and a B.A. in political science and Portuguese from UMass Amherst. Jules has a strong background and interest in critical international relations and the politics of anti-transgender scapegoating. In their free time, Jules enjoys yoga, 19th-century Russian literature, and hanging out with their dog, Charlie!

New Faces in WGSS

Lauren Savit

Lauren Savit is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program. She has expertise in feminist media studies, queer theory, and feminist pedagogy. Her research examines the co-constitutive relationship between media (including the production, circulation, and reception of texts) and dynamic social identity categories such as gender, race, and sexuality. Her current book project explores how race, gender, and power animated the narrative logics of landmark media spectacles from the 1990s that continue to reverberate in the American political and cultural consciousness, including the Supreme Court confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas, the assault of figure skater Nancy Kerrigan, the spectacle of the OJ Simpson murder trial, and Bill Clinton's impeachment.



Selen Erdoğan

Selen Erdoğan's work stands at the intersection of modernism studies and gender and sexuality. Between 2022 and 2024, she was a postdoctoral researcher at Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, examining narratives of sex work and incarceration as portrayed by women writers from various countries in the Middle East. She completed her Ph.D. in Turkish Language and Literature at Bogazici University in 2021 with a dissertation titled *Writing from the Closet: Bilge Karasu's Queer Modernism*, which explores how Bilge Karasu's fiction contributes to queer theory by transgressing the heterosexual matrix and Karasu's dialogue with significant works of modernism. She has taught at Harvard, Bogazici, Sabanci, and Kadir Has universities since 2015.

Feminist Foundations, Feminist Futures Symposium

On March 15, we hosted our annual Women's History Month Symposium, "**Feminist Foundations, Feminist Futures: Celebrating Signs at 50.**" The event was a landmark, celebrating not only the tenth anniversary of this event on the Boston campus, but also the fiftieth anniversary of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, the preeminent academic journal in feminist studies which has been under the editorship of **Suzanna Danuta Walters** (Professor of Sociology & WGSS, Program Director of WGSS) since 2015.



Signs was founded in 1975 as part of an emergent tradition of feminist scholarship and has been publishing continuously ever since. To honor half a century of publication, our fiftieth anniversary celebration addressed persistent conundrums and theoretical through lines that have shaped the field, engaging the power of feminist theory, through the course of contested histories and imagined futures. Together, we imagined where we might go, based on where we have come from and what we are doing, seeing, and writing about in the current moment.

We welcomed to the Cabral Center a slate of luminary panelists who had each previously published in the journal or in its online, open access arm—the Feminist Public Intellectuals Project (FPIP). Over the course of the day, roundtables addressed the past, present, and future of feminist thought and reflected on how public feminism and feminist writing have shaped and continue to inform the field. Audience members included students and faculty from Northeastern and beyond, community members, and past editors of the journal (who were also featured in a video retrospective in conversation with Professor **Carla Kaplan**, chair of the *Signs* Board of Associate Editors). Over the course of the day, more than 200 people participated in the event. Thank you to everyone who came to mark this momentous anniversary! And special thanks to the *Signs* team of **Miranda Outman, Andrew Mazzaschi, Elisa Fuhrken, Merrily LeBlanc, Kyle Wholey, and Grace Mahon**, without whom the event would not have been possible. We look forward to continuing our tradition of this symposium this coming **Friday, March 21**, when we will return to Cabral for "**Pictures, Words, and Lies: Representing Gender & Race in the News Media.**"

Tip of the Feminist Cap

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN WGSS

Congratulations to Professor K.J. Rawson (English & WGSS) who was awarded a \$500,000 Mellon Grant to launch the Digital Transgender Archive (DTA) on the Oakland campus. The DTA is a hub for trans-related historical materials, aiming to increase the accessibility of transgender history. Professor Rawson was also recently named Director of the Northeastern Humanities Center.



Congratulations to Professor Gloria Sutton (Art + Design & WGSS), who will spend part of her sabbatical this year as a Scholar in Residence at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. The Getty Scholars Program supports innovative research about art and its histories by providing a locus for international scholars to collaborate across disciplines and professional practices. The theme of this year's residency is "Extinction," and Professor Sutton will be working on a project titled *Pattern Recognition: How Computational Obsolescence Structures Cultural Memory*.

Signs Updates



50th Anniversary issue coming this fall!

This special issue “aims to generate new questions and critical discussion around ‘Big Feminism,’ around the role and power of feminist theory, today and into the future.”

Authors include Sonia E. Alvarez, Davina Cooper, Kelsey Davies, Lorna Bracewell, Anna Daily, Michael T. Dango, Lazz Kinnamon, Rebecca Smith, Lisa Wade, Liza Taylor, and Catharine A. MacKinnon.

Online celebration!

In addition to the 50th anniversary issue, *Signs* is having an online celebration that will spotlight interviews with 6 former and current editors of *Signs*. A short video will combine their comments into key themes mentioned among them, and the full interviews with each editor will also be available.

The celebration will also feature a video from the “Feminist Foundations, Feminist Futures” Symposium, as well as a digital timeline that will highlight *Signs*’ history, the editorial visions of its editors, the special issues *Signs* has published, and the most-cited articles *Signs* has published.

Call for papers!

Feminism, Antifeminism, and the Mobilization of Regret

Feminism is forward-looking and world-building. Feminists everywhere can call to mind the manifestos, mobilizations, solidarities, creative inspirations, legal propositions, and revolutionary paradigms that inspire us to action and move us toward more just futures. At the same time, we may also be haunted by obstacles encountered, losses experienced, and regrets felt along the way. With over fifty years of feminist history behind the journal—and, we hope, another fifty years of feminist troublemaking ahead—*Signs* seeks essays that delineate both how feminists may experience, theorize, and productively apply the concept of regret and how it may, alternatively, thwart the development of feminist futures.

Deadline for submissions:
May 1, 2025.

To read the full call for papers, click [here](#).

Edition will be guest edited by Laura Green and Chris Bobel.

Upcoming Events!

Wrongs & *RIGHTS* Opening Reception



Thursday, September 12 at the
Brandeis University Women's
Studies Research Center



5:00 – 7:00 pm

Wrongs & RIGHTS brings together five decades of work supporting the intergenerational battle for reproductive rights, while speaking in a wider sense to the erosion of rights in America after the June 2022 overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. It is co-curated by Laura Dvorkin and Maynard Monrow and was first presented at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2022.

Please join the Consortium for Graduate Studies in Gender, Culture, Women, and Sexuality (GCWS) at the opening reception to meet the curators, enjoy refreshments, and mingle with reproductive justice activists, artists, colleagues, and friends!



Countering discrimination: Gendered merit construction strategies



Monday, September 16 on Zoom



5:30 – 6:30 pm

Discrimination against women remains widespread in many male-dominated professions. At the same time, meritocratic ideals focused on skill and performance are embraced in these workplaces.

This event is part of the weekly fall seminar series *Women's Leadership in Context: Gender, Power, and Identity Dynamics*, which is hosted by Harvard University's Women and Public Policy Program. It will give participants an opportunity to engage with cutting-edge research on women's leadership advancement, including exploration of the importance of the intersecting identities.

Upcoming Events!

Imperiled but not Invisible: Art from the Rose Art Museum



Wednesday, October 9 on Zoom



6:30 – 8:00 pm

In this final, virtual session of the interdisciplinary Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar, Gannit Ankori and Faith Smith will moderate a conversation about artworks on view in the Rose Art Museum. Topics addressed relate to gender-based violence, beginning with the transatlantic slave trade and continuing to this day.



Panel Discussion “Steina: Playback”



Friday, October 21 at the MIT List Visual Arts Center



5:30 – 6:30 pm

Professor Gloria Sutton will be giving a talk on Steina, “the pioneering media artist whose work traverses video, music, and technology through a commitment to spontaneity and play.” She will be joined by Natalie Bell, List Center Curator, and Chris Hill, Media Curator.

Spring Symposium “Pictures, Words, and Lies: Representing Gender and Race in the News Media”



Friday, March 21, 2025 at the Cabral Center



10:00 am – 5:00 pm


This year’s annual Northeastern WGSS Women’s History Month Symposium focuses on the news media in its broadest sense and how it reports on gender, race, and marginalized identities. Here, we intend to examine the multi-faceted term “media” as representation, creation, industry, ideology, and collective practice.



Spring 2025 Courses

WMNS 1103: Intro to WGSS

Professor Sasha Sabherwal

 MWR, 10:30–11:45 am

NUpath:
Difference/Diversity,
Societies/Institutions


Offers an interdisciplinary course introducing key themes in gender and sexuality studies. Offers students an opportunity to learn core concepts that inform our understanding of how gender and sexuality are socially constructed and are experienced in everyday life. Drawing on women's studies, queer studies, masculinity studies, and allied areas, the course analyzes gender, sexuality, and other dimensions of identity; explores critical issues of gender, sex, and power; and studies gendered/sexed identities in both national and transnational contexts. Topics include the gendered conceptions of love, sexuality, and violence; biological arguments about gender and sexuality; the social construction of sexuality and gender; intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality; masculinities and femininities; theories of sexual difference; gender and the state; and gender and popular culture.



WMNS 1101/SOCL 1102: Sex, Gender, and Pop Culture

Professor Lauren Savit

NUpath: Difference/Diversity,
Interpreting Culture


MWR 1:35–2:40 pm 

Examines how femininities, masculinities, and different forms of sexual identity are produced and represented within popular culture. Using theories and concepts from both feminist/sexuality studies and popular culture studies, analyzes popular texts and media for their treatment of gender and sexuality and the intersection of those categories with racial and class identities. Explores the visual representation of women (and men) and analyzes how visual and textual media shape our attitudes and identities. Required reading and assignments include close readings of texts, film screenings, class discussions and activities, writing assignments, and creative projects.



WMNS/HIST/SOCL 2303: Gender & Reproductive Justice

Professor Margot Abels

 TF 9:50–11:30 am

NUpath: Difference/Diversity,
Societies/Institutions


Introduces the social, legal, and economic barriers to accessing reproductive healthcare domestically and internationally. Draws on various theoretical and analytic tools including critical race theory, critical legal theory, sociology of science, human rights, feminist theory, and a range of public health methods. Access to reproductive health services, including abortion, is one of the most contested political, social, cultural, and religious issues today. Covers domestic, regional, and international legal and regulatory frameworks on sexual reproductive health.



WMNS/MSCR 2505: Digital Feminisms

Professor Lauren Savit

NUpath: Creative Express/Innov,
Interpreting Culture, Writing Intensive

MR 11:45–1:25 


Explores the unique ways that feminist activism and theory are impacted by the increasing digital nature of our world. From hashtags to Tumblr, feminists are using digital tools and platforms to aid in the pursuit of social justice. Offers students an opportunity to develop a timeline that traces feminists' engagement with the Internet, new media, and technological innovations from the late seventies to the present. Examines the strengths and challenges that the digital world creates for feminist engagement.



Spring 2025 Courses

WMNS/AFCS 2325: Black Feminist Studies

Tiffany Bailey

 T, 11:45–1:25; R, 2:50–4:30

NUpath: Difference/Diversity,
Societies/Institutions


Invites students to study the history and contemporary landscape of Black feminist scholarship. Covers a range of disciplines and historical periods to introduce students to important texts and theoretical developments in this vast and interdisciplinary field.



WMNS/ANTH/POLS 3100: Gender, Social Justice, and Transnational Activism

Professor Layla Brown


NUpath: Difference/Diversity,
Societies/Institutions

TF 1:35–3:15 pm 

Introduces key issues, themes, and debates in feminist transnational theory, practice, and activism in contemporary contexts and how it has changed under socioeconomic, political, and cultural processes of globalization. Examines differences among women relating to race, class, sexuality, national identity, and political economy in reckoning with possibilities for sustainable social justice. Students interrogate the relationship between the local and global; the production of knowledge in different regional spaces; the pragmatics of political mobilization; the varying contours of “social justice”; and other key issues. Offers students an opportunity to discuss the impact of globalization, neoliberalism, and state and intimate violence on gendered politics and relations and to contend with the politics of difference, to debate its challenges, and to imagine possible futures for transnational gender justice.

WMNS/POLS/PHIL 3500: Sexuality, Gender, and the Law

Professor Libby Adler

 MW 2:50–4:30 pm

NUpath: Ethical Reasoning,
Societies/Institutions


Examines the legal regulation of gender and sexuality. Investigates concrete legal cases to study the history of constitutional interpretation and the current status of rights for women and sexual minorities. Focuses on important theoretical issues emerging in the writings of diverse feminist and queer legal scholars. Addresses debates over the value of conventional equality approaches in legal doctrine; equality vs. 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.



WMNS 6100: Theorizing Gender & Sexuality

Professor Carla Kaplan

**Foundational requirement
for the graduate certificate

W, 2:50–6:10 pm 

Seeks to challenge and expand our understanding of the relationship between biological sex; gendered identities; and sexual “preferences,” practices, and life ways. This interdisciplinary course offers debates around sex, gender, sexuality, and the body that push beyond binary models reliant on a simple “nature/culture” distinction. Focuses on dynamic and variable aspects of sexuality, sex, and gender within and across cultures, representational forms, and historical periods, analyzing the circumstances in which they undergo significant challenge or transformation. Uses particular paradigmatic “case studies” to push hard at the boundaries of sex and gender and to dialogue around contesting conceptualizations of “the body,” “sex,” and “gender,” particularly as they circulate in specific discourses of feminism, queer theory, and poststructuralism; ethnic studies; critical race theory; and cultural studies.