

The Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Newsletter

Spring 2026



Pleasure & Danger: Sexual Freedom and Feminism Now, 2015

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Director's Note



Protesters gather on Forsyth St. on January 20th for a Walk Out: Vigil for What We've Lost

Dear feminists and other resisters –

This semester brings us ever more creeping (well, stomping actually!) authoritarianism and lawless brutality, both here and abroad. Indeed, toxic masculinity (and its women enablers – looking at you KKKristi Noem) has rarely been more vividly and explicitly manifest.

But resistance abounds. Every day brings new marches, neighborhood watches, mutual aid brigades, vigils, and civil disobedience actions. We all look to Minnesota as brave exemplars of resistance even in the face of the gestapo-like tactics of the federal government, including state sanctioned assassinations and abductions.

Here at Northeastern, many of us are doing what we must to fight fascism and create long-lasting solidarities. On January 20th, in concert with actions in all 50 states spearheaded by Women's March, we held a Free America Walk Out with the theme of "what we have lost." In frigid weather, over 300 of us (students, faculty, staff, and community members) gathered for speeches right by Ruggles and then marched a few blocks away to a park where we heard from student leaders (and were joined by some wonderful high school students!). This intergenerational group of student and faculty activists continues to meet regularly and WGSS will be hosting a gathering on February 18th to share strategies and create solidarities for the long battle ahead. If you are interested in joining this gathering, please do contact me directly (s.walters@northeastern.edu) for more information.

WGSS will not, for the first time, put on our fabulous and SRO Women's History Month Symposium, because the university has chosen (with no explanation or accompanying data) to drastically cut our budget, making it close to impossible to do any substantive events. However, we will be showing a film on March 19th in conjunction with the Boston-wide "Women Take the Reel" film festival. The film, "No One Asked You", is a wonderful documentary about battling misogyny with comedy in the war over abortion, with a discussion before the film about the current state of abortion rights with leaders from Reproductive Equity Now and our own law faculty member Sarah Lee Day. The event will be held at 5:00 pm in 105 Behrakis Hall. Please do come to this event and, as ever, smash the patriarchy.

In Solidarity-
SW

New Faces in WGSS

Cassidy Rotigliano

*Signs Graduate
Research Assistant*



Cassidy Rotigliano (she/her) is a PhD student whose research focuses on the intersections of “trans” theory and environmental/animal studies with 19th century American sea literature. Her research seeks to ask questions about what it means to transgress and think across the boundaries between the human and nonhuman, and is particularly interested in our human relationships with the sea and its creatures through 19th century whaling narratives and novels. Cassidy previously attended Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts for her BA in English literature and creative writing, and has worked as the Assistant Director of the Northeastern Writing Center.

Grace Phillips

*WGSS Program Assistant &
Signs Editorial Intern*



Grace Phillips (she/her) is a third-year undergraduate student majoring in English with minors in Journalism Practice and Writing. She is the Lifestyle Editor of the Avenue Magazine and aims to continue pursuing a writing career with a special interest in feminist storytelling. She is currently researching birds as literary and visual symbols of queerness and transgressive resistance, and how they allow us to reconceptualize national and gendered borders. Out of office, Grace enjoys reading, crocheting, and a crisp Diet Coke.

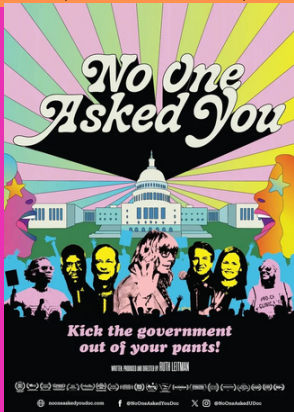
Spring 2026 Events

"Strategies for Resistance:

Students & Faculty Organizing Together"

February 18, 6:00 pm, Barrs Room (472 Holmes Hall)

This is an intergenerational discussion among student leaders and faculty activists. We will gather to share strategies for resisting the slide into authoritarianism on college campuses and beyond. Professors **Sasha Sabherwal** (Anthropology, Asian Studies), **Layla Brown** (African Studies, Anthropology), **Margot Abels** (Human Services, WGSS), and **Gretchen Heefner** (History), and long-time organizer WGSS program director **Professor Suzanna Walters**, will share their best practices and student leaders will be encouraged to share their strategies and to ask any questions about getting organized and resisting over pizza and refreshments. This is intended to be a dialogue where we can all learn from one another and plan how to resist fascism on campus and in the world.



Film Screening of "No One Asked You" March 19, 5:00 pm - 7:30 pm, 105 Behrakis Hall

Join Northeastern WGSS for our **Women Take the Reel** festival screening of **No One Asked You**. Comedian Lizz Winstead (co-creator of *The Daily Show*) and Abortion Access Front crosscut the U.S. to support abortion clinic staff and bust stigma. Pop culture icons and next-gen comics fuel this six-year road film activating small-town folks to rebuild vandalized clinics, exposing wrongdoer politicians, anti-abortion extremists, and media neglect as the race to the bottom ensues. A bold call to action reminds us that even as our rights burn down, joy will prevail.

The film screening will be followed by a discussion on the current state of abortion rights moderated by **Professor Suzanna Walters** and featuring WGSS executive committee member and visiting assistant professor of Law **Sarah Lee Day** and **Claire Teylouni, Sr. Director of Policy & Programs** at Reproductive Equity Now.

Women Take the Reel Film Festival March 2026

This annual film festival is a collaborative effort among Women's and Gender Studies departments involved in the **Consortium for Graduate Studies in Gender, Culture, Women, and Sexuality** (as well as select institutions/universities aligned with its mission) that features films about issues relating to gender, race, sexuality, class, and/or feminism.

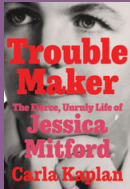
The focus is on the intellectual investigation of these issues, so every film is accompanied by a Q&A and discussion with the film director, producer, local activists and practitioners, and/or faculty members from the host institution for each film.

The full calendar of events can be found [here](#).

**WOMEN
TAKE THE
REEL
FILM
FESTIVAL
2026**

Tip of the Feminist Cap

Recent Accomplishments in WGSS



Carla Kaplan

Congratulations to Professor **Carla Kaplan** (English, WGSS) on the publication of **Troublemaker: The Fierce, Unruly Life of Jessica Mitford**, a biography of the activist, communist, and muckraker Jessica Mitford. The book is a finalist for both the 2026 PEN/Jacqueline Board Weld Award and the 2025 National Book Critics Circle Award. The book was also named a *Boston Globe* "Best Books of 2025", a *New York Times* "Books We Love"/Editor's Choice, a *Town & Country* "Best Book" for November, and a *Bloomberg* "Ten Best" book of November.

Patricia Williams

Patricia Williams (School of Law, Philosophy & Religion) is the co-recipient of the **Women in Legal Education Section 26 Ruth Bader Ginsburg Lifetime Achievement Award**, alongside Professor Peggy Cooper Davis. This award honors women who have led distinguished careers in teaching, service and scholarship for at least 20 years and who have had an impact on women, the legal community, the academy and the issues that affect women through mentoring, writing, speaking, activism and by providing opportunities to others. Congratulations, Professor Williams!



Libby Adler

Libby Adler (School of Law, WGSS) has been appointed a **commissioner on the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth**, with a two-year term beginning in January 2026. The Commission advises those in state government on effective policies, programs and resources for LGBTQ youth. Congratulations, Professor Adler!

SIGNS Updates

Call for Papers!

Catharine Stimpson Prize for Outstanding Feminist Scholarship

Apply to the 2027 Catharine Stimpson Prize for Outstanding Feminist Scholarship by **April 1st, 2026**. The prizewinning paper will be published in *SIGNS*, and the author will receive \$1,000.

Named in honor of the founding editor of *Signs*, the Catharine Stimpson Prize is designed to recognize excellence and innovation in the work of emerging feminist scholars.



CRISIS

Special Issue

Apply by **March 1st, 2026**

Feminists are no strangers to crisis. In the context of rapidly escalating population-threatening catastrophes—the global rise of fascism; war and genocide; climate crisis and Indigenous dispossession; sharp rises in unhoused, migrant, and refugee populations and their subsequent criminalization; increased normalization and legalization of gendered and sexual violence; lethal threats to public and reproductive health; the upward distribution of resources and wealth; and the crisis of the university—feminist theorizing feels both as urgent and as under threat as it was during the dawning of women’s studies as an academic enterprise.

This special issue invites contributions theorizing and responding to crisis. Where and how do we locate crisis (or crises)? What enables crisis conditions, and how do we—feminists and feminism—survive them? Feminist, queer, and trans theorists are uniquely positioned to offer critical readings of crisis within the longer temporal frame of slow violence and everyday brutality.


Guest Editors: Jih-Fei Cheng (Scripps College), Cati Connell (Boston University), Gowri Vijayakumar (Brandeis University)

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

2026 Summer Session A Courses

WMNS 1103: Intro to WGSS

Professor Margot Abels

 Online, asynchronous


NUpath Difference/Diversity NCDD
NUpath Societies/Institutions NCSI

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 Naomi Darrow


T/Th, 1:30-5:00 pm 

NUpath Difference/Diversity NCDD
NUpath Societies/Institutions NCSI

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/PHIL 1271: Sex in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Professor Liz Bucar

 Online, asynchronous

NUpath Difference/Diversity NCDD
NNUpath Ethical Reasoning NCEI


Explores approaches to gender, social organization of sexuality and gender, sexual ethics, and marriage in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Explores various sources within each tradition that serve as normative foundations, contemporary cultural and sociological dynamics that challenge those foundations, and psychological/existential considerations for understanding the general nature of human sexuality. Addresses how these traditions understand gender and gender roles, seek to shape and control interactions between men and women, regulate sexual relations outside of and within marriage, view sexuality education, regard homosexuality, and examine historical and contemporary approaches to marriage, divorce, and parenting.



Summer Session B 2026 Courses

WMNS/PHIL 1104: Goddesses, Witches, Saints, and Sinners

Professor Sarah Riccardi-Swartz

MTWR, 9:50-11:30 am 

NUpath Difference/Diversity NCDD

NUpath Interpreting Culture NCIC

Introduces and examines the theory that Near Eastern and European religions were originally goddess centered through analyses of image, text, and ritual in the ancient world. Explores scholarship about the patriarchalization of these primal religions. Includes a consideration of scripture such as the Hebrew Bible, Greek Testament, and Qu'ran, as well as noncanonical texts.

