

## Contents

Letter from the Director	1
A Past Director Returns to Lecture on Her Work	2
The WGST Faculty Seminar	4
Why the Study of Sexuality Matters	6
Ann Early Award Winner	6
Maynard Award Winners	7
Our 2016 Graduate Certificate Recipients	10
Margareta Deschner Teaching Award	11
Spotlight on a Women's and Gender Studies Alumna	11

## Letter from the Director

It has been a great pleasure to work this year with those committed to advancing the Women's and Gender Studies Program, in particular the members of the Council, the Executive Committee, and the dean of Dedman College, Tom DiPiero. It has been a busy year of both events and programmatic reorganization.

A number of events were held to both highlight the work of SMU faculty and to cultivate a faculty community. In early October, we held a "Meet and Greet" to welcome faculty members interested in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Faculty members met others from all parts of campus with whom they might subsequently collaborate. In part as a result of these exchanges, a faculty seminar on Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies was inaugurated. At each meeting over the course of the spring semester, a faculty member presented his or her work, whether a recently completed manuscript, or a lecture, or a work-in-progress report. These presentations made clear the vitality of the work of SMU faculty in these fields. (See page 4).



Kathleen Wellman,  
Interim Director

We were also very pleased to be able to welcome back Professor Carolyn Sargent, the former SMU Professor of Anthropology and director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program from 2000-2008 and current Professor of Anthropology at Washington University, to speak about her research with the Malian immigrant community in her February 11th lecture, "Gender, Politics, and the Immigrant Experience in Paris." (See page 2). We were delighted that some of Carolyn's former students were able to attend, and others wrote to express their appreciation of the positive impact of her courses and her mentoring on their careers and their lives. We also invited the notable historian of American feminism, Ruth Rosen, Professor Emerita of History from USC and research fellow at UC Berkeley, to lecture on "America's Longest Revolution: Feminism in America." We were disappointed when health issues forced her to cancel.

This year we also co-sponsored several other visiting lecturers:

With the Center for Presidential History, Professor Catherine Clinton, the University of Texas at San Antonio, "The Assassination of Mary Todd Lincoln"

With the Gartner Lecture Series and the Honors Program, Professor Robert

Tobin of Clark University, "Nineteenth-Century Germany and Sexuality."

The work of the program has been greatly facilitated by the hard-working Executive Committee composed of Professors Joci Caldwell-Ryan, Crista DeLuzio, Sheri Kunovich, and Beth Newman. The committee rewrote by-laws, reviewed all syllabuses, and streamlined a number of processes to make them easier and more attractive to faculty and students. The program continues to add new courses in new areas as they develop and as new faculty members join our community.

Professor Beth Newman, the former director of the program (2008-2014), was the originator of many of the initiatives brought to fruition this year. She has been a most gracious source of information about all things Women's and Gender Studies related. I am immeasurably grateful to her for her guidance as I negotiated this new administrative role.

Professor Joci Caldwell-Ryan remains, as she has long been, the crucial instructor in the program. Her courses, so central to the program, have been integrated into the new curriculum and will thus continue to attract students from all parts of the university. Joci also supervises interns in the program and as well as the graduate student adjuncts, whom we have been fortunate to be able to have teaching some sections of the WGST Images Course.

This year's newsletter contains some brief reflections of our Ann Early Award Winner, our Maynard Scholars, and those graduate students completing their Graduate Certificates. (See pages 6-11). They are a truly impressive group of students. It is most gratifying to read their remarks about how the program has influenced their academic and professional development. We continue to be most grateful to the legacy of Professor Betty Maynard, which allows us to support and recognize the accomplishments of Women's and Gender Studies students as Maynard Scholars. We are also always pleased to learn of the accomplishments of our graduates. This newsletter features recent graduate Whitney Harp and how she has put her education in Women's and Gender Studies to use. (See page 11).

Many thanks for your interest in the Women's and Gender Studies Program at SMU.

Best wishes.

Kathleen Wellman

## A Past Director Returns to Lecture on Her Work



On February 11, 2016, Carolyn Sargent, the former director of the program from 2000-2008 and professor of Anthropology, spoke about her research with the Malian immigrant community in Paris. Now [professor of Anthropology](#) at Washington University at St. Louis, Carolyn served as president of the Society of Medical Anthropology from 2008-2010 and again in 2011-2012. She has worked in the Caribbean, Africa, and Western Europe, specifically on reproductive health, medical decisions, bioethics and questions of immigration and health, with prolific publications on all of these issues.

Carolyn's lecture, "Gender, Politics, and the Immigrant Experience in Paris," focused on how Malian men and women have dealt with issues raised by contraception in the context of Muslim religious beliefs and French culture. Carolyn provided a context: prior to 1976, Malian immigrants were primarily men who worked in industry, public works, and other forms of unskilled labor.

Since the decree of 1976, intended to limit immigration but which also allowed family reunification, some 40% of the Malian community in Paris are women and children. Contending with immigration policies, the health care system, the social welfare system, and the public housing administration, Malian women and men deal with the conflict between Malian traditions and French practices. Contraception brings Islamic

injunctions and Malian male authority into conflict with French expectations of female autonomy and rights to determine fertility.

In her research, Carolyn both followed medical practitioners and interviewed men and women in a variety of settings where French medicine connects with Malian immigrants, including maternal health clinics, public hospitals, family planning clinics, worker hostels, and migrant community associations. The French maternity system, which provides comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care, informs Malian women about reproductive health, public assistance, and women's rights. The mandated post-partum interviews gave Malian women access to information and Carolyn occasion to speak with women as they considered their family planning options. As French medical advice to women strongly favors family planning, it has produced a sharply gendered debate within the immigrant community.

Carolyn discussed a number of cases revealing these conflicts, particularly between married couples. Her lecture highlighted how Malian women and men make reproductive decisions within their understanding of Islam and their Parisian context and pursue individual and family goals. Interpretations of Islam prove crucial in such decisions.



Participants in Carolyn's Study

Carolyn's interviews with several Imams confirmed that Islam does not have a definite teaching on contraception. As result, although both men and women emphasize religious devotion in their lives and religious doctrine in their important decisions, their interpretation of Islamic texts and their implications for contraception are highly gendered. Nonetheless, many Malian men and women believe that that Islam forbids it and cited Islam to validate or invalidate women's decisions about contraception. However, absent a single Islamic ruling on contraception, interpretations vary.

The discourse about contraception revolves around interpretations of Islam but also demonstrates women's agency and pragmatic decision making. Women take into account Islamic strictures, family relations, the wellbeing of their children, and their personal interests. Some women seek their husband's consent to use contraception; some husbands similarly reassure their wives. Some women found justification in Islam for using contraception; some had husbands who interpreted Islam as permitting contraception. Other women were certain that God would understand their decision to use contraception to benefit their children or even alleviate their fatigue from constant childbearing. Other women, who faced that implacable opposition of their husbands, took the pill in secret. Some women deliberated between two conflicting commands of Islam--not to practice birth control and not to mistreat children--and decided to take the pill for a limited time. Other women objected to contraception as a policy promoted by white people to prevent women of color from having children. As they try to manage the contradictions of everyday life in France, women frequently assert individual agency. While the prevailing gender ideology in France leads Malian women to become more assertive, Malian men often see that as problematic.

Carolyn described the problematizing of reproduction and gender relations from the perspective of Malian men. Many husbands see their wife's decision making about reproduction as calling into question their roles as the head of household. Health professionals note, however, that many husbands oppose the use of contraception by their wives. The power of women to make such decisions raises concerns among many of Carolyn's male subjects that, in France, Malian women "catch ideas" perceived by some men as antithetical to Islamic teachings and problematic for traditional hierarchical family relations. Since France guarantees women's rights, Malian men expressed anxiety that their wives might be lose respect for them, be unwilling to return or retire to Mali with them, or be inclined to initiate a divorce.

Carolyn also interviewed a number of male immigrants living in workers' hostels who have decided not to bring their wives to France. They consider that female autonomy in deciding issues such as contraception shows that French institutions undermine their traditional authority. They see social workers, midwives, and

mediators as advocates for Malian women's autonomy against their interests. To the consternation of some male immigrants, Malian women in France have learned their rights and found their own voice.

## The WGST Faculty Seminar

[Professor Caroline Brettell](#), University Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Ruth Collins Altshuler Director of the Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute, gave the first presentation in advance of the publication of her most recent book, *Gender and Migration*, to be published by Polity Press (2017). Caroline introduced this work with an overview of how she developed an interest in migration at Brown as a graduate student of the early feminist anthropologist, Louise Lamphere. Caroline's initial scholarly work focused on Portuguese immigrants in Toronto. Her interests led her to follow Portuguese immigrants to France and to focus in particular on female immigrants. Like other feminist anthropologists, Caroline revived life stories to convey her research findings. As she explained, her interests and publications have evolved in ways analogous to the development of Women's Studies. She has thus expanded her interest in the anthropology of migration to international immigration and, more recently, to gender and immigration.

Her most recent book, *Gender and Migration*, is intended, in part, as a vehicle for teaching. Its language is accessible, and it discusses an array of issues sure to interest students, scholars, and general readers. The issues the book addresses resonated with seminar participants and contemporary American culture as well, largely because the focus of this book is on immigration to the United States. Caroline thus sets out some of the broad patterns of male/female immigration to the United States, how it changed, and what factors help to explain the evolving ratios within ethnic groups of male to female immigrants. For example, in the third wave of immigration to the United States, Irish immigrants were primarily female, Jewish immigrants, permanently leaving the dire political situation in Europe, emigrated with their entire families, whereas Italian immigrants were predominantly male. Caroline explores gender and the labor market in a fascinating variety of contexts from immigrant women's Lions Clubs and entrepreneurship to the debates about female agency and sex-trafficking. Despite the complexity of the issues she raises and the scholarship she synthesizes, Caroline offered a number of comparative analyses of the present-day American context. As is always helpful in a text which will prove useful in thematic undergraduate classes as well as in graduate courses introducing graduate students to crucial issues in the field, Caroline's conclusions point the reader (and auditor) in the direction of future work in the field.

On February 25, the seminar welcomed [Professor David Doyle](#), Assistant Dean of Dedman College, Director of the University Honors Program and the Dedman College Scholars Program, and Adjunct Assistant Professor of History. David had pre-circulated, "Paradise Lost: Codman and the new Twentieth Century," the seventh chapter of his manuscript, "A World of Friends," and a draft of a book proposal for feedback from seminar participants.

David's book manuscript focuses on male same-sex friendships in the nineteenth century from the early national period through the end of the First World War. His manuscript tells the story of an evolution of the perception of those relationships through the lives of two men, Boston architect Ogden Codman (1863-1951), and New York playwright Clyde Fitch (1865-1909). David presents both their fascinating life stories within their wide-ranging social and cultural circles both in the US and in Europe, using an exceptionally rich trove of archival materials. David makes the claim that male same-sex relations were accepted and even widely praised in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, however, an emphasis on sexuality as central to identity fundamentally altered perceptions of such relationships. Even then, David further argues, this twentieth century development stigmatized gender non-conformity rather than homosexuality. The story of this evolution of views of same-sex male relationships of friendship, love, and sometimes sex is crucial to this study. David's analysis is anchored in historiography and gender theory. But his story centers his two protagonists' lives set against the backdrop of the social and cultural history of nineteenth-century America. The chapter the seminar read dealt specifically with the end of Codman's long life (1863-1951), when views of same sex relations were changing in the US, and he and his friends could be categorized as deviant within contemporary discussion of sexuality.

Seminar participants were much engaged by David's project. The ensuing discussion raised questions and produced suggestions of a number of themes common to David's protagonists' lives, which he might want to explore to illuminate his fascinating subjects and their significance.

**Professor Cara Diaconoff**, visiting professor of creative writing in the English department introduced her novel, *Marian Hall*, and read a chapter from it to a meeting of the seminar on March 17. Cara fictionalizes the intriguing story of Elizabeth Bentley (1908-1963) who spied for the Soviet Union from 1938 to 1945. After the war, she became an informant, naming many other Americans she claimed also spied for the Soviet Union. Her reports were initially treated skeptically, but recently declassified documents have given her information greater credibility. While Bentley's life is an intriguing tale, Cara pointed out the ways in which the outlines of her biography obscure a number of fascinating elements of her life story, which included a New England upbringing, a peripatetic childhood, elite education, foreign travel, and complicated love affairs. Aspects of her life allow for a rich fictionalized exploration of twentieth-century political, social, and gender issues.

Cara not only presented some of the many facets of Bentley's life that provide so much material for a novelist to explore imaginatively, she also discussed the ways the use of historical fiction allows her free reign to delve into the emotional dimensions of her protagonist's complex life and to set her actions and possible motives into a context enriched by fictional invention. In Cara's novel, Elizabeth Bentley becomes the richly and imaginatively developed character Marian Hall, Cara's protagonist. Her reading from the introductory chapter of the novel evoked the childhood of a young, unconventional girl as she moved into new and challenging settings. Seminar participants found the chapter a moving and recognizable account of the interior life of the young Marian Hall. Cara introduced central themes the novel follows in developing the protagonist's story. Participants were eager to discuss the many ways the novel's subject resonates in the present historical moment. They also urged Cara to take advantage of current interest in the Cold War to seek out publishers who have published other works of fiction about the period.

Subsequently, when Cara used a section of *Marian Hall* to apply for one of three fellowships in fiction writing with the Norman Mailer Center, she received one of them to begin a new novel inspired by the lives of civil-rights activist Viola Liuzzo and her children.

On April 21, the 2769 birthday of Rome, **Professor Melissa Dowling**, Associate Professor of History, Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor and Director of Classical Studies, delivered a lecture, "Celibacy and Eroticism in the Worship of Isis in the Ancient World" on her current research on the cult of the Isis from its origin in Egypt to its practice in Imperial Rome. The cult of Isis, she noted, was a religion of more than 4000 years duration. Melissa explicated the legend of Isis, beginning with her love for her brother, Osiris, when they shared a womb. When he was later tricked into death by their evil brother, Seth, Osiris became god of the underworld. But Isis had sufficient magic to rouse him to produce her son, Horus.

Isis had many important functions attributed to her, particularly her role in supporting happy erotic marital relations, fertility, and protection of women in childbirth. She was a crucial goddess, protecting women in their essential role as producers of children at a time of significant maternal deaths in childbirth and child mortality. Isis was the goddess of sexual pleasure in marriage, but Melissa also provides evidence of those who sought spells to appeal to Isis for illegitimate sex as well.

Melissa's slides illustrated some of the many manifestations of Isis in the Roman world – in temple arts and architecture, Roman literary sources, novels, poems, and satires. She also discussed the practices of members of the cult, from baptism to meal offerings to the goddess. She differentiated between the initiation rites for male priests, who followed an ascetic and celibate life and those of female priests, who neither adopted as severe a regimen nor ascended as high. Ultimately, Melissa's research suggested that the cult of Isis empowered women within the roles of wives and mothers as men lost power as citizens under the Empire. Some images of Isis could easily be incorporated later by Christians into the iconography of the Virgin Mary.

## Why the Study of Sexuality Matters

*Dr. David Doyle*



Emerging from such intellectual traditions as the social history of feminists, civil rights, and lesbian and gay movements, the study of sexuality is an increasingly vibrant field—and a field that is opening up many long-static discussions of vital importance in American history. Without considering sexual histories within such issues as slavery, European immigrations, or the interactions between European settlers and Native Americans, it is hard to arrive at a coherent picture. Concepts such as social constructionism, and the ability to articulate gender and sexuality as distinct categories of analysis have given scholars the tools to significantly advance our knowledge of the past.

To zero in on just one important period, the nineteenth century was a pivotal moment in American history. When understood as the long nineteenth century—from the passage of the Constitution in 1789 to the American entrance into the First World War in 1917—the country underwent an extraordinary amount of change. As the economy evolved from the market revolution, the explosive growth following the Civil War at mid-century, to world power by the beginning of the new century, a number of significant social and cultural changes resulted.

The stories surrounding sexual customs and laws, same-sex relationships and sexual minorities are a central part of this American tapestry—and if left out, leave an incomplete picture of the modern society that emerged. It is inconceivable to discuss the early nineteenth century's emerging middle class culture of separate spheres without attention being paid to the same-sex romantic friendships that were so central to American life—in both the male and female spheres. Similarly, within the many single-sex worlds of different social classes that remained over this century, there are further insights into American society. The men living and working at sea, in the military, in factories, or the men and women at single-sex schools and colleges are all an important part of this story. Furthermore, during this period as large numbers of people began moving to cities after leaving rural homelands domestically or world-wide, a visible sexual minority population arose for the first time. Each period of American history presents a similar situation: without the study of sexuality, the historic scholarship addressed at best an incomplete, and at worst a grossly misleading, reality.

George Santayana's famous warning, "Those who forget their history are destined to repeat it," is particularly relevant when considering America's history of gender and sexuality. It would be not only daunting but ill-advised to attempt an understanding of such pivotal events and controversies as the late twentieth-century spread of no-fault divorce, debates over abortion after *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the Defense of Marriage Act (1996), sodomy laws still found in many states up until the decision of *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), or gay marriage without clear historical context. Ominously, these issues have not left us, and historical work on sexuality and its history is even more crucial as religious freedom laws continue to roll back existing legislation that seeks to provide equality for all people.

## Ann Early Award Winner

*Annika Rieger*

When I visited SMU my senior year of high school, I was able to sit in on a women's history class taught by Professor Crista DeLuzio. The students were engaged, discussion was intelligent, and the subject matter was fascinating. It was such a great experience, and it made me excited about college classes in general and the Women's and Gender Studies Program in particular. When I was able to enroll in classes, the first one I picked was "Women in American History to 1900." That class was the start of my WGST courses, and I have enjoyed

every one that has been part of my minor. What I most enjoyed about the courses was the breadth of subject matter – I took courses focusing on psychology and sociology as well as history. Women’s and Gender Studies has been applicable to all aspects of my SMU education and has helped me become more critical of normative assumptions and the status quo.

This fall I will be beginning the next chapter of my education at Boston College, where I will be pursuing a PhD in sociology. I am very excited to be able to continue my studies, and ultimately I hope to join academia as a professor. During my time at SMU I have been active in Environmental Society as vice president, worked on undergraduate research as an Engaged Learning Fellow, and have been a member of the University Honors Program.



Annika’s many academic accomplishments were recognized at the University Honors Day on April 18. In addition to the Ann Early Award in Women’s Studies, Annika was recognized as the Outstanding Senior in Sociology and as a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the Robert Hyer Society, and the University Honors Program

## Maynard Award Winners

### *Kayla Finstein*



My women’s and gender studies education at SMU has been invaluable to me as a student, woman, citizen, and human being. Being fluent in both the historical and contemporary rhetoric of gender and sexuality gives me a broader perspective in everything I do. While my degrees have a holistic liberal arts focus, women’s and gender studies has been a crucial piece of the puzzle. It stands alone as a unique area of study, but also relates to other fields. Women’s and gender studies is a field in dialogue with these other fields; it builds upon them and is broadened by them. It has given me insight into the other subjects that I study and the opportunity to make scholarly connections between the discourses that characterize other disciplines. In essence, women’s and gender studies has unified and given greater meaning to my other areas of study.

Far from limiting my opportunities for future academic, professional, and personal development, my women’s and gender studies education has given me the knowledge and critical skill to gain access to an array of fields, to understand how various institutions function, and to deploy rhetoric effectively—all with a deeper understanding of how gender and sexuality issues have developed and why they remain so critical to societies in the twenty-first century.

I am preparing for a future in which our understandings of gender and sexuality, and all of the human complexities that those entail are open for interpretation, criticism, and contextualization. I expect to pursue further interdisciplinary study where boundaries between traditional fields are inclined to disappear and new ones to emerge. Engaging in the ensuing discussions thoroughly and effectively will require the kind of interdisciplinary foundation women’s and gender studies has given me. I will always rely on my WGST education as a basis for personal beliefs, career development, and scholarly arguments throughout my life.

Kayla’s activities include: High School Program Facilitator, Texas branch of IGNITE building young women’s political ambition and leadership skills; Campus Coordinator, the Conflict-Free Campus Initiative, raising awareness of conflict mineral harvesting in the Congo and human rights issue effects; Social justice and human rights contributor to Hilltopics, SMU University Honors Program; Participant Civil Rights Pilgrimage; Embrey Human Rights Program Costa Rica trip research on women’s rights and political participation in Costa Rica

## *Kendell Miller-Roberts*



The Women's and Gender Studies Program has allowed me to put words to the realities and issues that have always influenced my life. My upbringing as a Chinese adoptee in a family of all women has made me hyperaware of how the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation affect us all in the way we experience life. Being able to learn and study these issues from an academic perspective has given me clarity and a deeper understanding of the impact of gender and how it bleeds into all other aspects of life.

The WGST courses have given me a sense of empowerment, not only as a woman, but also as an individual, who is now cognizant of how the intersection of gender identities shapes the world. The discourse and terminology surrounding gender has given me the tools and knowledge to understand better how the world operates. It has also allowed to me to fully recognize the importance of women's voices throughout history and in the present, despite the fact that they have often been silenced. More importantly, this recognition has made me realize

how my own experiences as a woman are valid and worth listening to.

The WGST courses have reshaped my world perspective. They have been important not simply to my intellectual development but also to defining my values and career goals. I want to pursue my Master's degree in Public Health with a concentration in either "Maternal and Child Health," or "Sex, Sexuality, and Gender." The Women's and Gender Studies Program has given me the opportunity to expand my mind and challenged me to recognize the impact of gender on the world through discourse and inquiry.

Kendell's activities include: Women's Interest Network Vice President; LGBTQ+Allies Panelist; "Love Your Body" Week Student Representative; Spectrum Member; Meadows Brown Bag Performer; Sexual Assault Awareness Month April 2016 Student Representative

## *Tessa Nemec*

When I first came to SMU, I was a Business Management Major and a Fashion Media Minor. When I took Professor Ryan's Gender: Images and Perspectives class, I knew I had found the focus of my greatest interest and passion. I immediately changed to a Women's and Gender Studies Minor.

Coming from Oklahoma and having attended Catholic elementary school, and middle school, I had had a very conservative and sheltered upbringing. My high school was also religious but more inclined to support individual thought, and, for Oklahoma, it was socially liberal. High school was the first time I was able to think for myself and decide my own opinions. They differed greatly from what I had previously been taught.

My time in high school developed my passion for social justice, particularly on issues of domestic violence awareness and women's reproductive rights. Coming to SMU and discovering the Women's and Gender Studies Program has only increased my knowledge and strengthened my commitment to women's rights. The program has truly played a tremendous positive role in my college experience. The classes I have taken have allowed me to continue to develop my thinking and increased my social awareness.



My involvement in the Women's and Gender Studies Program has also made me a better business student. We live in a time when inequality, whether in regard to race, gender, or sexual orientation, is still very real. My awareness will help me make more ethical business decisions and work to decrease inequalities in the workforce.



Through the SMU Women's and Gender Studies Program I have been able to cultivate my passion and define my future career. I hope to work one day for a non-profit organization that supports domestic violence awareness or women's reproductive rights. These issues are important not only not only to me, but to women on the SMU campus, in our country, and the world. At a time when women's basic rights are being questioned and dismissed, I think it is so important that women make supporting other women a priority.

Tessa's activities include: Business Management Major; Women's and Gender Studies Minor; Panhellenic Council President; Marketing Teacher's Assistant; BBA Scholar; Member of the SMU Honors Program; Member of Mortar Board; Genesis Women's Shelter Volunteer

### *River Ribas*



The Women's and Gender Studies Program has been a crucial component of my academic career at SMU. It introduced me to a radically different perspective on female agency, seeing women as autonomous actors rather than as exceptions to the patriarchal norm.

Two classes had a great influence on me. Professor Martha Satz's class on the Ethical Implications of Children's Literature shaped me as a creative writer by showing me how literature can influence culture. I was astonished—although, I suppose I shouldn't have been—to see that the cultural "isms" of American society exist in children's literature. *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison presented the African-American experience. This was a text that really spoke to me as a biracial woman. When I was younger, I wanted to change my hair texture rather than my eye color. The thick, voluptuous curls were far too much for a middle schooler to manage and the tangles were a nightmare. Furthermore, I knew my

hair marked me as racially ambiguous. Soon, I grew to love my curls, but Pecola's yearning for blue eyes still spoke to me. When I created my own children's book, I considered my protagonist carefully. Inspired by Dr. Seuss and other authors who engage children's imagination, I imagined a protagonist without race, sex, or orientation—a simple stick figure. My hope was that any child would identify with this figure—scared of the dark, of falling, and of nightmares—and find solace in my book.

Professor Richard Bozorth's class on Contemporary LGBT Literature exposed me to the writings of authors marginalized not only by their society but by other, smaller groups and even sometimes by their families. These writers' characters revealed a matrix of intersectionality long before the term was coined. I found Audre Lorde's amazing account of her experience as a West African immigrant's lesbian daughter in early twentieth-century *America in Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* especially poignant.

My Women and Gender Studies classes have made me much more attuned to cultural issues and have given me the tools to create art to combat patriarchal and heteronormative thinking and to express the veracity of experience outside the "norm."

River's activities include: Hamilton Scholar, research assistant, summer 2015; Student assistant, Kimbilio Fellows Writing Retreat in New Mexico; Website designer for Kimbilio Foundation for African American writers. <http://kimbiliofiction.com/>; Co-chair of 2016 Vagina Monologues

## Our 2016 Graduate Certificate Recipients

### *Lauren Miskin*

Through my participation in the Women's and Gender Studies Certificate Program, I have grown immensely as both a scholar and a teacher. Because of the program, I was able to attend Duke University's 2014 Feminist Theory Workshop. At this three-day workshop, I listened to keynote lectures by prominent feminist scholars (including Karen Barad and Karen Engle) and participated in smaller seminars with other graduate students and faculty members from universities across the country. Through conversations with new and established scholars, I achieved a deeper understanding of the kinds of debates taking place within the field of feminist theory at large. I left the workshop feeling inspired and energized, and I drew upon my newfound knowledge to plan my dissertation, [\*Earthly Things: Exotic Objects and the Fashioning of Empire in British Literature\*](#), which traces the gendered and imperial meanings attached to things like porcelain, shawls, rouge, cameos, and diamonds in the British literary imagination. I was also eager to share my insights with my undergraduate students in my "Gender: Images and Perspectives" class. This course provides SMU students with their



first (and often only) introduction to women's and gender studies. While I was initially anxious that the course material might be met with some resistance, for the most part, my students proved to be receptive, curious, and open minded. Many came to class each week eager to discuss examples of gender ideology and inequalities that they had found in their own lives and popular culture, and I was continually impressed by their insights and enthusiasm. For me, teaching this class affirmed that women's and gender studies courses can empower undergraduate students to speak out against injustice and encourage them to think of themselves as engaged citizens whose perspectives are important, valuable, and worth sharing.

### *Katharine Boswell*



Participating in the WGS program has been an invaluable experience throughout my graduate career at SMU. One of the most important things I gained from being a part of the WGS program was the connection to other graduate students interested in women's studies who were outside of my discipline. As we all know, graduate study can be an isolating experience, and getting to know other students through meetings, the theory class, and various events helped make my time at SMU all the richer. I have greatly benefited from forming relationships with students who have a similar investment in women's issues and who approach them from a different disciplinary standpoint than my own training in English. I also benefitted from the opportunity to teach the introductory WGST class, "Gender: Images and Perspectives." Many of my students in this class had little prior

exposure to the issues we discussed. While teaching this class, I was reminded of the important work WGS does on campus and the necessity of exposing students to issues of gender and inequality. I'm grateful for the opportunity to have taught this course and to have participated in the WGS program as whole.

## Ashley Winstead

My Women's and Gender Studies courses have been among the most theoretically-engaged seminars I've taken in my graduate career. In particular, Prof. Beth Newman's "Sex and Gender in Victorian Literature" and "Advanced Feminist Theory" (with Prof. Evelyn Parker) courses introduced me to Judith Butler's and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theories of performativity, which have played an instrumental role in shaping my dissertation. While my dissertation largely focuses on narrative theory and issues of object agency in contemporary American literature, the critical language of my project has been deeply informed by what I learned in WGS courses. In addition to my dissertation, one of the most exciting essays I've written as a graduate student was a paper on the shared logics of mandatory ultrasound laws and women's self-help relationship books. The Advanced Feminist Theory course prepared me for the in-depth research and legal/literary analysis required to write that essay. Overall, my experience in the WGS program has truly shaped me into a better scholar.



## Margareta Deschner Teaching Award

Professor David Doyle has been selected by the Women's and Gender Studies Program as this year's recipient of the Margareta Deschner Teaching Award. This award recognizes excellent teaching about women, gender, and/or sexuality. David's courses have greatly enhanced the interdisciplinary character of the program and added the crucial area of sexuality studies with a primary focus on the history of sexuality in an American context. David's students consistently appreciate that his courses allow them to "understand American history in a whole new way." As one of them said, "the wealth of information forced me to challenge the way I think about social issues." The Women's and Gender Studies Program is acutely aware and deeply appreciative of David's many contributions to our course offerings and our program.

## Spotlight on a Women's and Gender Studies Alumna

Whitney Harp, SMU class of 2014 graduate, serves as the State Program Manager for IGNITE Texas. [IGNITE Texas](#) is a non-partisan 501c3 that seeks to build political ambition in young women. In her role as State Program Manager, Whitney manages fourteen high school programs, eight college chapters, two regional college councils and facilitates programs at Dallas Law Magnet and North Dallas High School. Working with IGNITE unites two of Whitney's greatest passions: politics and women's empowerment. Under Whitney's leadership, IGNITE expanded programming for both college and high school.

A large part of Whitney's work focuses on planning IGNITE's signature events, including the Annual Young Women's Political Leadership Conference. The 2016 conference, hosted at SMU in February, was the most successful to date: hosting 250+ students from across the state, and 31 elected officials from all sectors of government. The highpoint of the conference were the eloquent keynote remarks delivered by guests of honor, Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson and Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham. Students were visibly inspired by being in the presence of so many female elected officials. Whitney is now working on Girls Rock!, an inaugural event to be hosted by IGNITE Texas at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science on June 11.

In addition to her work with IGNITE Texas, Whitney is finishing her Masters in Multicultural Women's Studies at Texas Woman's University. She recently graduated from the Leadership Irving program. This June, Whitney will serve as Faculty-in-Residence at New Leadership Texas, a week-long residence program for women leaders interested in politics. Whitney was also recently engaged to the love of her life and is in full wedding planning mode, working towards their March 18, 2017 wedding in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Women's and Gender Studies Network  
Southern Methodist University  
P.O. Box 750227  
Dallas, TX 75275-0227

This Newsletter is produced by the SMU Women's and Gender Studies Program. Please help us continue this project by becoming a subscriber (\$5.00) or renew your subscription payable to:

SMU Women's and Gender Studies Program  
P.O. Box 750227, Dallas 75275

Alternatively, you may donate to our newsletter and our other programs by visiting our website at [https://sites.smu.edu/apps/giving/humanities\\_and\\_sciences.asp](https://sites.smu.edu/apps/giving/humanities_and_sciences.asp).