

WOMEN' S, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES PROGRAM NEWS



Left. Students in "Sex in the Berkshires" visit Edith Wharton's home during winter study. Right. Students on their winter travel course to Uganda.

Dear WGSS friends--

It has been a cold and snowy "Spring" semester here in Williamstown, but signs of warm weather are starting to emerge.

During Winter Study, Kieran Honderich, Justin Adkins, and Jonathan Leamon-Morgan took students on another amazing trip to Uganda (see page 2). Closer to home, Greg Mitchell taught a WSP class on "Sex in the Berkshires" that involved trips to Melville's home at Arrowhead, the Mount in Lenox (home of Edith Wharton) and the Susan B.

Anthony birthplace in Adams. We have a full schedule of exciting courses this semester, including our Junior/Senior seminar on "Global Sex: Identities, Migration, Globalization."

We are excited to welcome Vivian Huang, who will be joining us this fall as a Bolin Fellow in WGSS and Comparative Literature. Vivian is a graduate student at New York University, and she will be teaching a class this fall entitled "Race, Gender, and Performance from Literature to Social Media."

As the semester wraps up, we prepare to graduate our nine senior majors - we will miss them and wish them well.

Wishing you all a wonderful summer.

Best wishes,
Lucie Schmidt



Inside this issue...

- Students work with transgender rights and AIDS activists in Uganda
- Introducing our new Bolin Fellow!
- Alumni updates



WGSS Winter Travel Course Takes Students to Partner with HIV+ Youth in Uganda

Kiaran Honderich, Jonathan Morgan-Leamon and Justin Adkins accompanied a group of 12 students to Uganda to continue the College's work with HIV+ youth, establishing social enterprises to support their fight against HIV. This year they helped create an internet café/computer training center on one of the Ssesse islands in Lake Victoria. The islands have the highest HIV prevalence rate in Uganda, above 25% and resources are badly lacking. They also visited last year's café in Kamwenge, and helped them move to a busier spot for their second year of operation.

They had hoped to also work with a group of trans women who are long-term partners of the Williams program. However, the passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in December made that impossible, as the trans women have been forced into hiding and have no way to make a living. Students did spend time with three members from that group, and they are hoping others in the Williams community will join in supporting them with a donation.

Next year, they will return to Uganda to create a new social enterprise and continue monitoring and evaluating those they have created.

The Ugandans were not the only ones affected. Students reported that the trip was equally meaningful for themselves. "Seeing what [the activists] want to do made me seriously question what I'm doing with my life... We're pretty much all the same age, but they are real people that do significant and amazing work," said one participant. Another explained, "The word *activism* is a scary one. Typically when thinking of activism, confrontation comes to mind; I think of demonstrations and radical gatherings. I never thought that I would qualify as an activist... This experience has taught me that activism is not exclusively about creating a tidal wave. It starts with small ripples that spread but continue to travel until they reach the shore. A simple act of kindness can be a form of activism. By learning and exploring new things, by considering conflicting points of view we arm ourselves with the tools to become activists."

Justin Adkins (of the Davis Center) is administering a fund for the trans women in Uganda who were unable to continue partnering with Williams because they were forced into hiding by the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. To donate, visit:

www.gofundme.com/72purc



INTRODUCING PROF. VIVIAN HUANG, OUR NEW BOLIN FELLOW

Your work sits at the intersections of a lot of fields - Asian American Studies, Performance Studies, Art, Gender/Sexuality Studies, to name but a few. Can you tell us in just a few words what your research is about?

I study Asian American performance across media (including literature, photography, video art, and performance art) to theorize inscrutability not only as a burdensome stereotype but also as a potentially hopeful aesthetic strategy. As the persistent trope of “perpetual foreigner” evidences, Asians in the United States have historically, legally, and culturally been marginalized from national belonging. My research looks at artists who, rather than refute this stereotype outright, use strategies of alienation, distance, and other negative or flat affects as politicized responses to this ongoing social phenomenon.

So I understand you've made your home on both the East Coast and the West Coast... what do you miss most about each when you're not there?

I miss the pace of things, the physical proximity of people, and the way my day is organized differently in each space. More concretely, e.g., I miss California avocados and the early appearance of blood oranges, Sundays with my family, my nephew's hugs, the drive up to San Francisco.

From New York, I miss subway people-watching, the bracing anonymity, the food coop, the view from my apartment, the myriad film options.

Both the Bay Area and NYC are big foodie towns. Got any favorite restaurant tips for Williams students next time they make it to New York for a weekend?

Ah, if my digestive system could speak for itself! Where to begin? Tsampa for Tibetan, Ghenet for Ethiopian, Mogador and Olea for Mediterranean, Ample Hills for ice cream, Four and Twenty Blackbirds for pie, Bogota for Colombian/fusion (gluten-free friendly); the list goes on. Feel free to contact me for more suggestions and to exchange favorites around campus.

Any trepidation about moving to the rural wilds of the Berkshires? Plans for keeping yourself entertained while you're here?

I have high hopes for the rural wilds. I look forward to learning from people the modes of being that can flourish there. This may or may not include a ghost hunt for the Berkshires' famed authors and suffragettes. Left to my own hobbies, I will default to reading novels, experimenting in my wok, learning German, going outdoors, and having people over for food and board games.



Can you give us a sneak preview of what you plan to offer for next year?

Are you a student who is interested in reading about Rihanna and the eroticization of women of color? Have you wondered about performance studies and what it means to think of race and gender as performative? This fall, these are some of the concepts we will explore in Race, Gender, and Performance from Literature to Social Media. I'm excited to see how Williams students will engage with performance studies, queer of color critique, and the concept that emotions are political.

WILLIAMS ALUM WINS OSCAR, DISCUSSES INFLUENCE OF WOMEN'S STUDIES CLASSES



WGSS joins the whole Williams community in congratulating Kristen Anderson-Lopez ('94) on her Academy Award for Best Song for "Let It Go" from Disney's *Frozen* (co-written with her husband, Robert Lopez.) In a recent interview with Teri Gross on NPR, she gave a little shout out to her background in our women's studies classes. "If you have the deluxe CD, you will see my very strong strike across the bow at all princess-myth things in the form of a song called 'We Know Better,' which was a song that was cut. But it basically was these two princesses bonding over all of the things that the world expects and thinks of them. [The world thinks] that they're perfect and sweet and sugar and spice and all things nice, and it was the two of them misbehaving and being fully well-rounded children with all the good and bad and imagination and mischief that I really feel that it's important for our girls to be allowed to be.

It got cut, but you can tell the whole movie is full of this point of view — as much as [screenwriter and co-director] Jennifer Lee and I could put in it, because we're both Park Slope moms, we both went through the '90s, we took the women's studies courses, and I knew I wouldn't be able to push my kids on the swing at the playground if I had written a movie where the girl wore the puffy dress and was saved *not* by anything active she did, but by being beautiful enough to be kissed by a prince."



SPRING EVENTS

April 24, 7:00 pm, Oakley Center – Don Kulick (U Chicago) will present a lecture entitled "Disability and Sexuality: Who Cares?" It is based on ethnographic work in homes for the disabled in Denmark and Sweden, and explores the different approaches those societies take regarding the facilitation of sex in the lives of disabled adults.

April 29, 2:45 pm, Schapiro 129 – Kimberly Hoang (Boston College) will deliver a talk entitled, *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work*.

May 7 (details forthcoming) – Mary Patten (School of the Art Institute of Chicago), a visual artist and film-maker who combines digital media, video, books, and ephemera, will be screening her short films. Patten's work addresses a wide range of concerns, including loss and disappearance, lesbian and queer representations in visual culture, surveillance, prison and repression.

ALUMNI UPDATES



Kate Keenan ('86) is Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience at The University of Chicago. She is presenting a research paper with her team at the Society for Life History Research in Pittsburgh this May entitled, "Developmental origins of health disparities among sexual minority females." In it, she reports that compared to heterosexual women, lesbian/gay and bisexual (LGB) women have higher rates of physical health problems. She and her team tested models consistent with the minority stress theory, which purports that health disparities are attributed to greater exposure to life stressors that accompany minority status. They further examine the developmental origins of stress exposure in sexual minority girls by using prospectively collected data from The

Pittsburgh Girls Study (PGS), a NIH-funded, longitudinal study. Participants were interviewed annually for 14 years, beginning at 5-8 years. In the most recently conducted interview (ages 18-21 years.) over 10% of the sample identified as a sexual minority: 182 participants (8.7%) self-identified as bisexual, 59 (2.8%) identified as lesbian/gay, and 1,856 (88.5%) as heterosexual or straight. Further research revealed higher health risks including being overweight, nicotine use, and lower engagement in preventative health care among sexual minority women compared to non-sexual minority women, as well as higher levels of everyday experiences with discrimination. Sexual minority women were more likely to have experienced childhood stressors including negative life events, peers victimization, loneliness, and low attachment to parents all based on prospectively collected data in childhood (ages 6 to 12 years). Childhood stressors were also significantly associated with early adult health risks. They use these data to further explore the developmental origins of the observed health disparities among sexual minority women by considering childhood stressors as potentiating sensitivity to later experiences with stress and discrimination



Shelley Whelpton ('90) is a managing director in Arabella's Washington, DC office where she leads the firm's Mid-Atlantic practice. Her work at Arabella focuses on leading teams of specialists to build customized plans for clients that integrate and maximize all aspects of their charitable assets, including grants, investments, relationships and time. From 2007 to 2013, Shelley was the vice president of business development and strategy at The Sheridan Group, a DC-based policy firm dedicated to public interest causes, spanning a wide range of issue areas, including new social financing mechanisms, open access, education, youth

development, child welfare and health. She has also worked with Running Start, an NGO that facilitates getting women into elected office, and her writing on same-sex marriage appeared recently in The Huffington Post at

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shelley-whelpton/scotus-gay-marriage_b_2967674.html.



Kathryn White ('88) is nearing publication with her book, *Rumble Tumble Joy: A Journey for Healing, Inspiration, and Wholeness*. She writes, "My book is a compilation of writings I did when I attended a women's writing workshop in the late 1990s. Taking the workshop was part of my journey to heal my own wounds from abuse as well as from the vast array of disempowering societal messages regarding female perfection. I believe that the many layers of this negative messaging has shaped the female psyche in such a way that it becomes very difficult to love one's body and have high self-esteem. This leads to all sorts of societal ills

including negative body imaging, abuse, anorexia, bullying, and depression. (Please note I know that men and boys have been touched by these issues as well.) The writing workshop itself was a journey in being authentic, honest, and allowing myself to be open and intensely vulnerable with others. As I continue the journey now in moving forward with completing my book and asking for endorsements, I find a deeper level to my journey as I start to share my writings with more people and ask for their support. Joy, anxiety, irritation, gratitude, and just keep putting one foot in front of the other to maintain momentum even on those hard days when things feel like they are not coming together are all part of the practice of sharing my deeper self through my writing in order to help others on their own journeys for body acceptance and ultimately greater self-love. To find out more about *Rumble Tumble Joy*, please

visit: <http://www.kathrynvwhite.com/writings--rumble-tumble-joy.html>."

W G S S F A L L 2 0 1 4 C O U R S E S

101: Intro to Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies	Honderich/ Cowden	TF 2:35 – 3:50
201: War & Resistance: Two Centuries of War Literature in France	Martin	T/R: 9:55 – 11:10
202: Intro to Sexuality Studies	Mitchell	TR 8:30-9:45
205: Gender & Economics	Schmidt	M/R 1:10 – 2:25
214: From Putin to Pussy Riot: Discourses of Post-Soviet Gender	Cassiday	M/R 1:10 – 2:25
219: Women in National Politics	J. James	Tutorial
244: Actually Existing Alternative Economies	Honderich	Tutorial
246: India's Identities: Religion, Caste, & Gender	Gutschow	Tutorial
248: Carmen, 1845 to Now	Bloxam	Tutorial
251: Arab Women Memoires: Writing Feminist History	Egeiq	M/R 1:10 – 2:25
253: Art in the Age of the Revolution: 1860 - 1760	Ockman	M/W 11:00 – 12:15
272: Sex and the Reproduction of Society	Gutschow	W 1:10 – 3:50
301: Sexual Economies	Mitchell	T/R 9:55 – 11:10
312: An American Family & Reality Television	Chavoya	M/W 1:10 – 3:50
315: Paris on Fire: Incendiary Voices from the City of Light	Martin	T/R 11:20-12:35
317: The New Woman in Weimar Culture	Kone	T/R 9:55 – 11:10
327: Foucault	Sawicki	Tutorial
328: Narrating Other Minds: Austen, Eliot, Woolf	Case	M/R 2:35 – 3:50
329: Premodern Sexualities	Taylor	M/R 1:10 – 2:25
330: Race, Gender & Performance from Literature to Social Media	Huang	W 1:10 – 3:50
331: Queering Europe: Sexualities Since 1850	Waters	T/R 11:20-12:35
341: Cinematic Representations of Work & Migration after the Wall	Druxes	M/R 2:35 – 3:50
361: Writing about Bodies	Ockman	Tutorial
376: Sex, Gender & the Law in US History	Dubow	T/R 11:20-12:35
380: Amira Baraka & Audre Lorde	Lee, S.	T/R 11:20-12:35
386: Latinas in the Global Economy: Work, Migration & Households	Whalen	T/F 1:10 – 2:25
409: Transnationalism & Difference: Comparative Perspectives	Cepeda	M/R 1:10 – 2:25