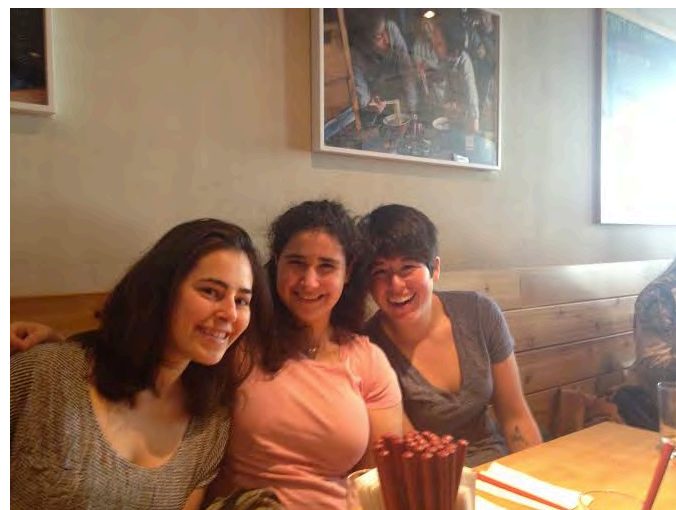


WOMEN'S, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES PROGRAM NEWS



Left. Students following their conference debut at the National Women's Studies Association meeting. Right. Students from Sexual Economies seminar take a break from meetings to have lunch during a field trip in Brooklyn.

Dear WGSS friends--

It has been a busy fall here in Williamstown. There continues to be high demand for WGSS classes, and our students are extremely engaged in both their academic work and the world around us. Four of our senior majors are writing honors theses this year. Professor Greg Mitchell took four Williams students (including senior WGSS majors Alejandra Rosales and Shanice Scantlebury) to the National Women's Studies Association annual meeting this fall, where they presented original work in a panel entitled "Feminisms of Color, National Embodiment, and Cultural Appropriation."

We welcomed Bolin Fellow Vivian Huang to Williams this fall. She dove right in to teaching with her seminar "Race, Gender, and Performance from Literature to Social Media." Professor Kieran Honderich is in preparations to take students to Uganda over Winter Study to learn and teach about worker-owned cooperatives and work with our Ugandan partners to open their own worker-owned business. Closer to home, I'll be co-teaching a winter study course on anti-poverty policy in the United States where we will train students to help low-income residents of Berkshire County to file their tax returns.

This fall we hosted director Kimberly Peirce, director of the 1999 film *Boys*

Don't Cry. She gave a talk on campus entitled, "From *Boys Don't Cry* to *Carrie*: Constructing Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Hollywood."

We are gearing up for another great spring semester. We will graduate 7 senior majors. Professor Brian Martin will teach our junior/senior capstone seminar, "Before We Were Queer: Gay and Lesbian Lives before 1990."

Please send us your news in 2015 - we love to hear what our alums are up to. Wishing you all a happy new year!

-- Lucie Schmidt, Chair WGSS



Inside this issue...

- Students Take Feminisms of Color Panel to Puerto Rico for Women's Studies Association Meeting
- Alumni Innovators
- Students Head to New York City for Sex Worker Rights

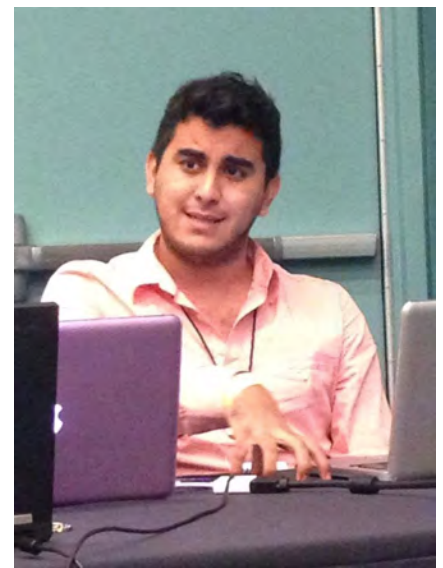
Students Present Panel on Feminisms of Color at National Women's Studies Association Meeting in San Juan



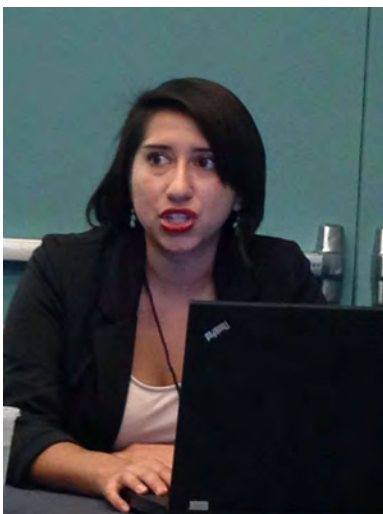
Four students traveled to Puerto Rico to present papers they had originally written for WGSS classes on a panel entitled, *Feminisms of Color, National Embodiment, and Cultural Appropriation*. Amal Dougish ('17, above left) presented her paper "Somewhere in America: Gender Discourses of American Muslims," which examined the backlash against "Muslim hipster" women who wear hijab in fashion-forward ways. Shanice Scantlebury's ('15, above center) paper, "The



Exorcism of Sasha Fierce," argued that black divas have empowered gay black men who participate in Ball culture and allowed them to reclaim the concept of a nuclear family within American patriarchal social structures. Sergio Manrique ('15, above right) described the relationship between "strong women of color" who fulfill the role of diva within gay male culture in order to illuminate the ways that gay men's diva worship places the bodies of women of color in a precarious position by projecting onto them discourses of "home." His paper, "Mi Casa, Su Casa: Shakira and the Signification of Home in the Latina Diva Body within Global Queerness," was excerpted from his senior thesis, which is supervised by Professor



María Elena Cepeda. Another of Professor Cepeda's thesis students, Alejandra Rosales ('15, below left), also presented a portion of her thesis in her paper, "A Less Than Luxurious Display of Chola Iconography." Her paper examined how mainstream white female popular music artists affect the process of transculturation by appropriating iconography. Her paper focused on the case of the "chola," a specific cultural icon appropriated by white US pop artists such as Gwen Stefani and argued that such artists transfer chola "authenticity" to themselves, remaking the subjectivity within popular consciousness while





ultimately reifying the figure in a depleted form that intensified negative consequences for women. Students at the conference also attended professional development events, met faculty from PhD programs to which they are considering applying, and attended various



panel presentations by other scholars. The National Women's Studies Association was founded in 1977 and has approximately 2,000 members, around 1,600 of whom attended this year's annual meeting at the San Juan Convention Center. This year's keynote speaker was bell hooks. Students also attended a plenary presentation by Angela Davis, who recently spoke at Williams College.

WGSS ALUM TRACEY VITCHERS ('10) LAUNCHES THIRD PARTY COLLEGE SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORTING SYSTEM

Tracey E. Vitchers '10 is Director of Development & Operations at Sexual Health Innovations, a non-profit organization dedicated to developing technology that transforms sexual health and wellbeing in the United States. Sexual Health Innovations is currently building Callisto, a third-party college sexual assault recording and reporting system designed to provide a more empowering reporting experience for survivors and facilitate the identification of repeat assailants. Callisto will enable assault survivors to complete an incident report online, receive a clear explanation of their reporting options, and either directly submit the report to their chosen authority

(school or police) or save it as a time-stamped record. If the user elects to save the record, he or she may give the system permission to automatically submit a formal complaint if another survivor reports an incident with the same offender. If a student decides to officially report his or her assault, the appropriate authority will be notified and will be able to log on and view the data that the student has elected to share with them. In December 2014, Sexual Health Innovations received a seed grant from Google.org to kickstart the development of Callisto, with a goal of piloting the program on three campuses next fall.



To learn more, please visit www.SexualHealthInnovations.org or www.ProjectCallisto.org

A Journey of Healing and Inspiration



“Isn’t it time to love your body?” asks Kathryn V. White (’88). White is the author of *Rumble Tumble Joy* which was recently published (visit kathrynvwhite.com for more details or to order the book.) As White writes, in an era where female body shame has made words like saddlebags, cankles, chicken neck and thigh gap all too normalized, anorexia, bullying and cosmetic plastic surgery have increased. “A steady stream of violence against women leaves us frightened, drowning in feelings of failure, and at war with our own bodies.” *Rumble Tumble Joy* is White’s response to this disparagement and wounding. “While it contains my personal reflections on challenges in my own life, its themes are universal and are easily relatable.” Her hope is that the book will help women and girls (and even boys and men) to examine how they are treating themselves and then make empowering changes in their thinking so they can live more fulfilling lives. After receiving her degree from Williams, White also went on to graduate from the University of Washington. In addition to writing *Rumble Tumble Joy*, White’s creativity has taken the form of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, collage, mixed media, drawings, and painting.

WGSS Student Connects Migrants to Services



WGSS major Evelyn Rojas (’16) received the Class of 2006/2009 International Service Fellowship, which allowed her to volunteer for the Spanish Red Cross in Córdoba, Spain this summer. Rojas provided food, and hygienic supplies as well as basic medical care for Romanian migrant families. In exchange for the services, the families agreed to send their children to school instead of making the children drop out to work. Rojas also took it upon herself to tutor the children in Spanish so they could build fluency in time for the beginning of the school year. “I learned how to interact with people that were not only in dire need of help, but that were also completely different than me in terms of background,” Rojas said. “I learned how to be truly independent as I went to Spain completely on my own and - all in all - I became a more grateful person because of this truly enlightening experience.” Rojas hopes to pursue a career in public health and to pursue graduate school in this area.

ALUM FOUNDS GENDER EQUALITY CLUB IN JERUSALEM



Emily Prey ('14) recently wrote to us from Israel, where she is teaching at the American International School and has begun advocating for the girls' rights there. It all started at a pool party, she said. "The girls were told that if they wore bikinis they had to wear t-shirts over them. After taking WGSS 101, I realized I could not stand for this so I spoke to the principal. I made him understand how incredibly sexist the rule was and that teaching girls that their bodies are inherently shameful is not a good thing." Following this incident, Prey began a Gender Equality Club at the school to create a space where teachers and students can talk about other feminist issues and advocate for progressive policies for women and girls. "I just want to say how important WGSS coursework was to me and how much it is affecting my actions."

PROFESSOR RECEIVES NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION GRANT FOR WORLD CUP STUDY

WGSS professor Greg Mitchell recently received a research grant from the National Science Foundation to study issues related to sex work during the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. His preliminary findings are that authorities used unfounded fears about possible increases in prostitution and sex trafficking to justify the takeover of red light districts and target them for "urban renewal" and development. This resulted in a series of violent state sponsored raids in which women were physically and sexually assaulted by police. He is now mapping similar patterns in South Africa, Russia, Qatar, the United Kingdom and other recent and/or upcoming host cities for global sporting events such as the World Cup and Olympics. Mitchell was also a founding member of the Prostitution Observatory, a research collective based at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro which will continue to monitor issues related to sex work and violence against sex workers during through the 2016 Olympics in Rio.



(Above. Mitchell and Observatory members in the field. Photo credit: Rolling Stone.)

WGSS and Oakley Center Host Kimberly Peirce, Filmmaker



Kim Peirce, director of the Oscar-nominated *Boys Don't Cry* (starring Hillary Swank and Chloe Sevigny) as well as *Stop Loss* (starring Channing Tatum, Ryan Phillippe, and Joseph Gordon Levitt) and *Carrie* (starring Julianne Moore and Chloe Grace Moretz) visited Williams in October. In addition to doing a colloquium with Professor Leyla Rouhi for faculty at the Oakley Center, she presented clips from her films at Paresky Auditorium and spoke to students and members of the public about the choices she made as a director. Ms. Peirce also discussed breaking into Hollywood as an out lesbian woman, challenges getting *Boys Don't Cry* funded and navigating the MPAA ratings board, her feelings about directing sexual assault scenes, how her own experiences with her brother joining the military shaped her work in *Stop Loss*, and what it was like to remake the film *Carrie* when she was close friends with Brian de Palma, the director of the 1976 version. Ms. Peirce also met with small groups of students individually.

Debating Western Approaches to Development at MCLA



This Fall WGSS Professor Kieran Honderich and senior Niha Pendurthi ('15) spoke about their experiences with and views on international aid and development for a packed auditorium of hundreds of people at MCLA. The discussion was prompted by MCLA's choice to use Nicholas Kristoff and Cheryl WuDunn's bestseller *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* as a common text for all first year students. While the book inspired many, some questioned the politics of celebrity journalism and raised ethical concerns about the book as well as its incarnations as a television series and Facebook game. Professor Honderich has led students to Uganda to work on issues related to development and HIV positive individuals. She also taught a WGSS tutorial this semester about actually existing alternative economies that provide a different model for development than that of Mr. Kristoff and Ms. WuDunn. Pendurthi has long been interested in Western ideas of international development and spoke about her experiences doing research in Africa.

WGSS STUDENTS VISIT SEX WORKER STORYTELLING COLLECTIVE



Students in WGSS 301 (Sexual Economies) and WGSS 402 (Global Sex) traveled to Brooklyn this year to meet with members of the Red Umbrella Project (Red UP), a small peer-led organization that “amplifies the voices of people in the sex trades to take greater control of their lives and livelihoods through sustained and structured peer-

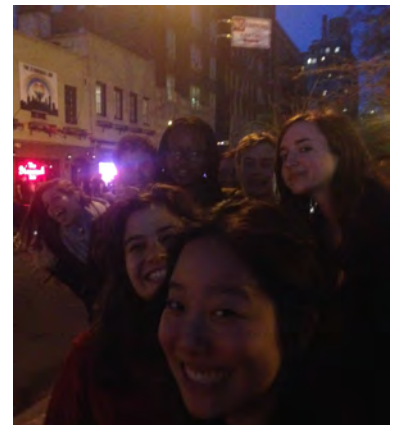


mentoring initiatives, multimedia storytelling platforms, and public advocacy skills development programs.” Over the course of these two meetings, students heard candid stories from eleven current or former sex workers with experience in various sectors of the industry. Themes included stigma faced by workers, violence experienced at the hands of police or while incarcerated, “coming out” stories involving difficulty talking to parents, children, and intimate partners, and stories of entry into and exit from the industry, as well as accounts of both empowerment and struggle. As Alex Mendez ('17) said, “The sex workers all had differing experiences when it came to sex work itself. Some expressed that they derived true enjoyment from it and others stated that it was merely a means for them to survive, but one startling overlap within all of their anecdotes was the common experience of police brutality. All the sex workers present at our meeting conveyed that at some point they had either been harassed by police or experienced some sort of physical abuse at their hands. When taking this overlap into account, the real social injustices started to surface.” Later



in the day, students went to the Museum of Sex, where there was an exhibit on pornography and the history of legal cases regarding obscenity laws as well as feminist debates related to the adult film industry.

Photos: Top Left and Right. *Students in Sexual Economies and Global Sex outside the Queer Pride Center that hosted the Red Umbrella events.* Above Right.



Global Sex students visiting the sight of the Stonewall Riots at the end of their field trip. Above Left. WGSS Professors Margaux Cowden and Greg Mitchell at the Museum of Sex.

W G S S S P R I N G 2 0 1 5 C O U R S E S

101: Intro to Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies	Case/ Cowden
152: Fourteenth Amendment	Dubow
206: Shakespeare, Sex and Power	Bell
209: Poverty in America	Johnson
236: Sex, Gender & Political Theory	Njoya
240: Performing Masculinity	Mitchell
241T: Sex/Gender in Ancient Greece & Rome	Wilcox
242: Women, Gender and Sex in Islam	Yacoob
249: Body Politics in South Asia	Gutschow
254: Manet to Matisse	Ockman
262: Language, Gender & Sexuality	Kowalski
306: Queer of Color Critique	Mitchell
308: Gender & Society in Modern Africa	Mutongi
320: Dangerous Bodies	R. Manigault- Bryant
326T: Queer Temporalities	Hidalgo
333: 19 th Century British Novel	McWeeny
335: Chicana/Latina Feminist Literature	Hernandez
343T: Racial-Sexual Violence	James
353: Gender & Psychopathology	Sockol
362: Difference & Desire	Lee
381: Who's Afraid of Failure?	Schleitwiler
389: Fiction of Virginia Woolf	Case
404: WGSS SENIOR SEM: Before We Were Queer	Martin
408: 19 th Century Novel: From Desperate Housewives to Extreme Makeovers	Martin
412: Feminist & Queer Interventions in Literary Theory	Cowden