

# WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES AT LSU

## at Louisiana State University



**Director's Notes**  
with  
**Michelle Massé**

Volume 7, Issue 1

Fall 2009

From the vantage of semester's end, the photographs of WGS's Open House seem to record a celebration that took place a long, long time ago. It's hard to believe that it was only August when we moved to 118 Himes. As we luxuriously debate where we're going to squeeze in desks, bookshelves, and files for the faculty and graduate students who now have offices at WGS, a merciful amnesia settles over our cramped existence a mere year ago.

What hasn't been purged from memory is what a very good semester we've had. Even while we prepare endless low-completer reports for the B.A., the Graduate Minor continues to grow (over 30 students now), and our undergraduate and graduate students continue to tell us about the difference our teaching and our programs have made in their lives. New faculty bring new ideas, while both new and "old" faculty bring grants, publications, and courses such as "Girls' and Women's Wellness" (WGS 4500, Laura Choate), "History of Sex in the United States: Sexual Reproduction & Social Equality" (HIST 3119, Alecia Long), and "Gender, Sexuality, and Performance" (THR 7922, John Fletcher).

"Engendering Scholarship," organized by Dana Berkowitz, in turn brought the ideas that informed those courses to larger audiences, while our other plans for spring bring more invigorating talks (our lectures), more thoughtful discussion (our retreat), and more planning for ever-widening gyres of research and activism.

If you haven't already seen our new location, stop by. The College of Arts and Sciences gave us the space we so needed; others have been equally generous in giving or loaning us what we want to make this space our own. Katie Henninger and Carol Plummer set the very high artistic tenor of what our offices should look like; local artists Tina Offer and Robin Toler have added to the vibrant climate. Come on by, and be part of our growing community.

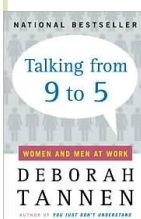
Warmly,

Michelle

## Currents in WGS

### On Campus & in the Community

#### WGS Community Connections Committee Promotes Education and Activism in the LSU Campus Community



The WGS Community Connections Committee is sponsoring a reading, discussion, and activism group on the LSU campus. The group, which is open to not only LSU faculty, staff, and students, but also to the Baton Rouge community, held its first meeting in early October. By consensus, members chose as the first reading selection Deborah Tannen's book, *Talking from 9 to 5: Women and Men at Work* and decided to meet every three weeks to discuss topics related to the reading and to talk about ways the group can contribute to its most local community: LSU itself.

Members have already become actively involved in promoting the group's objectives: Julie Ruckstuhl, an Associate Director with the LSU Student Union, wrote a press release and was responsible for getting news about the group in both *LSU Today* and the *Baton Rouge Business Report*. Rebecca Miller, Assistant Librarian and WGS member, created a Moodle Community space on LSU's website so that members could participate in online discussions.

The members' participation in the meetings has led to activism on campus. One discussion led to a front-page investigative report on the LSU Child Care Center's fee increases in the *Daily Reveille*, the campus newspaper, by Sarah Eddington, a student member of the group. Jan Shoemaker, Director of the Center for Community Engagement, Learning, and Leadership (CCELL), reported on her experiences as a volunteer with the LSU Employee Development Center (EDC). The EDC offers basic literacy training and instruction, tutoring for the GED, and other related services to LSU employees and their families. A portion of the December meeting will be spent at the Center and CCC members will decide whether they want to participate in this important venue.



Participation in the group and the discussion does not require attendees to have read the book. Also, the group is open to everyone at LSU and in the Baton Rouge community. We welcome all attendees and hope to see you at future meetings in spring 2010. We will be reading *What Men Don't Tell Women About Business: Opening Up the Heavily Guarded Alpha Male Playbook* by Christopher Flett. Bring your lunch and join us!

Brenda Macon, an associate member of WGS and Associate Director for Communication and Development for the College of Arts & Sciences, chairs the Community Connections Committee. For more information on future meetings and activities, she can be contacted at [bmacon@lsu.edu](mailto:bmacon@lsu.edu) or 578-6906.

## Programs and Events



### Welcome to 118 Himes! WGS Open House

Former Dean of Arts and Sciences Guillermo Ferreyra cut the ribbon to sanction the official opening of WGS's new office space in 118 Himes. Attendees

stopped by to tour the new offices, admire our newly donated art collection, enjoy refreshments, and hear from the outgoing and incoming Deans and the Director about the

exciting progress WGS has made since its auspicious beginnings in a tiny office on the second floor of Himes Hall.



### Welcome Back Fall Brunch

WGS faculty, students, and Friends gathered with friends and family at the home of Director, Michelle Massé, and James Catano for the program's annual back-to-school celebration.



## Annual WSGO Luncheon

The Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Organization would like to thank everyone who attended our annual luncheon, "Feminizing the Ivory Tower," on November 6. With over 30 students and faculty in attendance, the luncheon was a great success.

After lunch, attendees listened to two panels dedicated to the academic and professional development of undergraduate and graduate students in Women's and Gender Studies. The two panels focused on major concerns of students: the current job market in and outside of academia, applying to graduate programs, and navigating careers as WGS majors or minors.

The first panel, directed towards undergraduates, was led by Jaime Cantrell, doctoral student in English at LSU, with an MA in WGS from the University of Alabama; Dr. Challen Nicklen, Professional-in-Residence in Women's and Gender Studies and International Studies; and Bruce Parker, Safe Space Coordinator and a doctoral student in Curriculum Theory and WGS.

The second panel, directed towards graduate students, was led by Dr. Dana Berkowitz, Assistant Professor of WGS and Sociology; Dr. Holley Haymaker, Founder of Baton Rouge Planned Parenthood; Dr. Michelle Massé, Director of Women's and Gender Studies at LSU; Julie Mickelberry, Planned Parenthood Director of Public Affairs; and Dr. Margaret Parker, Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences.

Though the panels had different audiences in mind, a primary message of the overall luncheon was the importance of feminist-related research and activism to explain our experiences and develop a passion for careers in similar fields.

WSGO would like to especially thank our panelists for providing a dynamic discussion for all of our guests. Special thanks to WGS and the College of Arts and Sciences for sponsoring our event and to Subway for catering. For more information about WSGO, please join our Google Group at <http://groups.google.com/group/wsgo>, or contact Brigitte McCray at [bmcra4@tigers.lsu.edu](mailto:bmcra4@tigers.lsu.edu).





## Meet the New WGS Faculty

### Lauren Coats

Lauren Coats is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, where she specializes in theories of geography and space and teaches courses on American literature. She received her Ph.D. from Duke University in 2007, and in 2007-08, she served as the Council for Library and Information Resources Postdoctoral Fellow at Lehigh University.

### Stephen Finley

Assistant Professor of African and African American Studies and Philosophy and Religious Studies Stephen Finley received his Ph.D. from Rice University in 2009 and teaches courses such as "African American Religious Cultures" and "The Religious Thought of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X." His research interests include African American religious thought and traditions and religion in America. He plans to teach "Gender and Sexuality in the Black Church" as a WGS elective.

### Katherine Stamps Mitchell

Katherine Stamps Mitchell is an Assistant Professor of Human Ecology and an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Sociology. She received her Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography from Penn State University in 2009. Her research interests include child and adolescent well-being, social demography, stratification, education, poverty, public policy, and sociology of family. At LSU, she teaches courses such as "Family Dynamics," "Social Problems," and "Adolescence and the Family."

### James Rocha

Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies James Rocha received his Ph.D. from UCLA in 2007. In addition to courses on ethics and political philosophy, he also teaches philosophy of race, literature, history, and applied ethics (including medical and environmental ethics). In the spring, he will be hosting a graduate student reading group on sexual objectification, with an emphasis on pornography.

## In the Classroom

### WGS Graduate Minors bring Gender into the Writing Classroom

In the spring, a number of graduate students in the Department of English who are minoring in Women's and Gender Studies, will be teaching composition courses focused on issues of gender.

In Martha Pitts's course, **Femininity and Masculinity in American Culture (ENGL 2000-099)**, students will use writing to explore and uncover beliefs about the appropriate roles and behavior for men and women in American society. Students will learn to become critical thinkers, readers, speakers, and writers who can analyze a variety of cultural "texts" (advertisements, films, literature, magazines, newspapers, television programs, video games, websites, etc.) in terms of the intersecting cultural factors of gender, race/ethnicity, social class, sexuality, education, age, disability, etc. This course will also contain a service-learning component in which students will serve as tutors or mentors at local primary and /or secondary schools or as partners with the elderly at an assisted living center. These projects will provide context for students to explore these issues through writing and research.

**Images of Women in Literature and Cinema (ENGL 2000-104)**, taught by Helana Brigman, is a special emphasis course in which images of the witch in cinema, literature, and cultural productions will serve as the focal point for discussion. The course will begin by looking at the ways in which students understand the witch figure today, then introducing feminist inquiry (writers, concepts, and ideas), and finally moving to earlier representations of the witch (both literary and cinematic) as well as writings of feminist inquiry and theory.

Penelope Dane will be teaching **Conspicuous Consumption (ENGL 2000-119)**. This course will use argumentative writing to explore students' individual and social relationships to consumer advertising. Women's relationships to their bodies (and increasingly men's) are deeply affected by media images and advertising. This course will have a strong gender component and will examine the ways in which media advertising impacts how students relate to themselves and to each other.

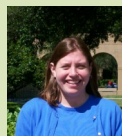
In Brigitte McCray's **Sexual Literacy: Writing about LGBT Issues ((ENGL 2000-131)**, readings and writing assignments will center around the paradoxical ways American society treats issues of sex and sexuality—on the one hand, school administrators, parents, and government officials attempt to erase such issues from the classroom while, on the other hand, the media is saturated with heated debates over the issue of sexuality. In order to begin to untangle issues involved in this paradox, students will undertake a research project involving several process drafts that conclude in a well-documented academic essay centered on an LGBT issue explored in the class and in course readings.

**Dissecting Issues in Women's Health through Writing (ENGL 2000-148)**, taught by Cara Jones, will present students with a wide range of issues in the area of women's health, such as reproductive issues, mental health, alternative therapies, nutrition, health care concerns, and body image. Students will explore these issues through course readings, research, and writing.

### Special Topics WGS Courses for Spring



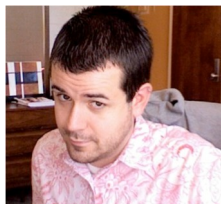
WGS 4500-1: Laura Choate, Assistant Professor of Counselor Education, will be teaching **Girls, Women, and Wellness**, a course that will focus on contemporary trends and issues related to girls' and women's development, mental health, and wellness. Students will also explore problems disproportionately affecting girls and women across the lifespan, including: relational aggression, relationship violence, sexual assault, work/family balance, and eating disorders. Further, the class will discuss interventions designed to address these problems and to promote girls' and women's optimal mental health.



WGS 4500-2: Challen Nicklen, Professional-in-Residence in WGS and International Studies, will offer this special topics course on **Global Feminist Activism**. Though not all women share the same experiences or concerns, women continue to find it useful to organize across all kinds of borders, including those of nation, race, class, and sexuality. The focus of this course is on this cross border organizing as it takes place in transnational contexts. Through a variety of readings, films, and classroom discussion, students will explore the following questions: What issues have women chosen to organize around? How have women made connections among their disparate experiences and interests? How do the inequalities among women shape the ways in which they view their connections and activism? What are the costs and benefits of working to create change at different levels of society i.e. global, regional, national, and local?

## Out of the Classroom

### WGS Engendering Scholarship Lecture Series



Bruce Parker



Jackie Bach



Jenell Johnson



John Fletcher

Continuing the tradition of providing a forum for WGS faculty to present their research and stimulate discussion, this semester's *Engendering Scholarship* lecture series, organized by Dana Berkowitz, featured three exciting presentations. To kick off the series, Assistant Professor Jackie Bach and Ph.D. student Bruce Parker, both working in the Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice, talked about using young adult literature to foster awareness of gender variant and transgender issues among grade school and high school teachers in their lecture, "Gender Variant and Transgender Pedagogy & Curriculum." In "Feminist Bioethics & Disability Studies," Jenell Johnson, Assistant Professor of English, led faculty and students in a rousing discussion of medical ethics, as she brought together the fields of feminist bioethics and disability studies to imagine how they could productively inform one another. Assistant Professor of Theatre John Fletcher finished out the series for the semester with "Intolerations: Queer Theory, Radical Democracy, and the Ex-Gay Movement," in which he entertained the possibility that the evangelical "ex-gay" movement might offer a space for exploring fluid notions of identity and sexuality.

#### Mark your calendars for the spring series!

"Mother-daughter Relations in French Women Writers"

Kate Jensen, Associate Professor of French Studies

Wednesday, Jan. 27 · 12 noon - 1:30 pm · 129 Himes

"The Mother Wheel: Louis Farrakhan, Gendered UFOs, and the Bodily Politics of Race and Desire"

Stephen Finley, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies

and African and African American Studies

Thursday, March 4 · 12 noon - 1:30 pm · Women's Center

"Women Dancing in the Dark: Serbia's DAH Teatar"

Leigh Clemons, Associate Professor of Theatre

Wednesday, April 21 · 12 noon - 1:30 pm · 129 Himes

### WGS Faculty Win State- and Campus-Wide Awards

#### Rainmakers

LSU Rainmakers are "departmental faculty whose work most clearly brings recognition, resources, and respect to the research and creative efforts at LSU." Alas, despite lively correspondence, only departments are allowed to nominate Rainmakers. Nonetheless, among the 23 women and 77 men so honored at LSU in 2009, are four WGS faculty. We gladly raise our umbrellas to Rita Culross, Petra Hendry, Leslie Koptcho, and Alecia Long.

#### ATLAS recipients

We announced this last spring, but it bears repeating. Of the 10 ATLAS recipients in the state, and of the 7 at LSU, 4 are WGS faculty. You will know them through their beatific smiles and the books you'll soon be seeing. Congratulations again to: Kate Bratton, "Legislative Networks: Determinants and Consequences"; Petra Hendry, "The Last Lost Cause: Public Education in Louisiana"; Elsie Michie, "The Vulgar Question of Money"; and Carolyn Ware, "Gender, Performance, and Play in Veterinary Medicine."

Congratulations to **Sarah Becker** for the Economic Development Assistantship Grant she has just been awarded for her project, "Economic Development and Community-Based Anti-Crime Coalitions." The study is a comparative ethnographic investigation of localized responses to crime in two structurally variant communities in Baton Rouge. The goal of the study is to identify the mechanisms through which anti-crime efforts emerge, develop, function, and experience success (or not). The Board of Regents Grant will fund a graduate assistant for four years to work with Sarah on her project.

Congratulations also to Brusly Elementary School, the proud recipient of a \$10,000 playground grant from KaBOOM! The playground was designed by the Community Playground Project, a student-community partnership founded by **Marybeth Lima** to provide biological engineering students the opportunity to work with kids in Baton Rouge-area public schools to design the playgrounds of their dreams. Thanks to everyone in the WGS community who voted for the Brusly project!

## Selected Faculty & Graduate Student Accomplishments

The always-busy **Daphne Cain** has served as a manuscript reviewer for the National Women's Studies Association Journal.

**Angeletta Gourdine, Myriam Chancy, and Solimar Otero** received a Board of Regents grant to sponsor the "Caribbean Dislocations/Caribbean Diasporas" conference for the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars.

**Petra Hendry** and Jay Edwards completed Old South Baton Rouge: The Roots of Hope (LSU Press), a project begun through a BoR grant while Petra was Director. To find out more, stop by the WGS library in Himes 112 and take a look at the copy we bought, or go downtown to look at the exhibit in the Louisiana State Museum. (FYI: a wonderful place to bring out-of-town visitors.)

**Casey Kayser**, one of our WGS Graduate Minors, has a forthcoming essay, "In a Mansion with Kirk Cameron!: Reflections on Gender, Heteronormativity, and Materialism in Preadolescent Girls' Divination Rituals in the 1980s" to be published in a 2010 issue of *Midwestern Folklore*. Casey also presented her paper, "Don't you value family?: New Representations of Violence and the Southern Family in Elizabeth Dewberry's Flesh and Blood," at the Southern Women Writers Conference at Berry College in September.

**Alecia Long** has received a \$200,000 grant from the Ford Foundation for an oral history project, tied to a service learning course, "Listening to Louisiana Women: Sexuality, Reproduction and Social Equality." Alecia is working with Julie Mickleberry of Planned Parenthood, and with women throughout Baton Rouge.

See a discussion of **Elaine Maccio's** important work in an Advocate article, "BR Gays Report Discrimination," at <http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/60917137.html>.

**Michelle Massé** gave a presentation on "The Silent Economy of Working Margin to Margin: The Gendered Labor of Service" at the National Women's Studies Association Conference this month. She also gave bookended presentations on graduate student and faculty issues at October's Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society conference: "Learning to Live within Limited Means: Talking about Intellectual, Psychological, and Financial Economies in Graduate Education." and "Workshopping Problems in the Emotional Assimilation of Knowledge: Faculty Resistance to Graduate Student Resistance."

**Laura Mullen's** nonfiction essay, "Trust," just appeared in Ploughshares, and her essays on the line in poetry and on teaching are forthcoming in anthologies from the University of Iowa Press; her fiction is due out from the Fairy Tale Review and Hotel Amerika, while her poems are forthcoming from Bayou, and American Letters and Commentary. She has been invited to represent the US at the Taipei International Poetry Festival this fall.

**Mohamed Noor**, ex-WGS faculty and Coordinating Council member, has been awarded the Darwin award, given every 50 years for major contributions to scientific understanding. For more about Mohamed's honor, see: <http://dukeresearch.duke.edu/darwin/index.html>.

**Solimar Otero** kicked off the 2009-10 lecture series in the Women's Studies in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School (where she is a Research Associate this year) in October with "Coming Home: Sacred Spaces and Diaspora in Afro-Cuban Women's Religious Culture."

**John Protevi's** most recent book has just appeared with the University of Minnesota Press: [http://www.upress.umn.edu/Books/P/protevi\\_political.html](http://www.upress.umn.edu/Books/P/protevi_political.html) It appears in the Posthumanities Series, alongside several notable authors, including Michel Serres, Donna Haraway, Roberto Esposito, and David Wills.

**June Pulliam's** essay "Our Zombies, Ourselves: Exiting the Foucauldian Universe in George A. Romero's Land of the Dead." will appear in the December Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts. June is also chairing a session about Teenaged Monsters at the December meeting of the Modern Language Association in Philadelphia, as well as presenting "Witches and Bitches: Gender and Agency in Young-Adult Narratives about Teen Witches."

Send your accomplishments to [dwgs@lsu.edu](mailto:dwgs@lsu.edu) for inclusion in the Professional Notes newsletter sent out several times each semester.



Congratulations to December graduate **Michelle Linschoten**! Michelle graduates with a major in Psychology and a minor in Women's and Gender Studies. She is planning to attend graduate school to study the design and implementation of sex education curriculum in schools and communities. We wish her well!

## Coming up in 2010

**Pizza Party for WGS Majors and Minors**, January 28, 5 pm, Reginelli's. To RSVP, email Kate Jensen at [kjensen@lsu.edu](mailto:kjensen@lsu.edu).

In the spring, WGS and WGSGO will continue to offer **professional development workshops** for graduate students and graduate school application workshops for undergraduates. If you are interested in attending or assisting with such workshops, please contact Program Coordinator Jennifer West at [wgspec@lsu.edu](mailto:wgspec@lsu.edu).

This year's annual **Faculty Retreat** will take place the weekend of February 5 and 6 at Hemingbough. For more information, contact the WGS office at [wgs@lsu.edu](mailto:wgs@lsu.edu) or 578-4807.

## Donations Wish List

Help us become the kind of program you wish you had had when you were in school!

### For Students

- As you can see on the left, Kate Jensen, our Undergraduate Advisor, wants to have the first of what we hope will be many pizza parties for our undergraduate majors and minors. \$100 will help to make that happen.
- At year's end we want to have a special luncheon for our graduates somewhere like Juban's. For \$30, you can sponsor a memorable occasion for a student.
- Our WGS Graduate Minors present at conferences nationally. Low stipends and high expenses make this professional development a costly proposition. \$500 would help make it possible for a student to attend a conference.

### For Faculty

- WGS is reviving our old tradition of an overnight retreat, at which WGS Graduate Minors, faculty, and staff will pause to think about who we are and what we do. We'll pay for our own dinners and rooms (for those who choose to stay overnight), but \$400 would support a festive collegial luncheon for all and a small token of appreciation for the work they do every day.

### Offices

- Our new offices are wonderful. Art work, rugs, ceramics, a refrigerator, and sundry other items would make them more wonderful still. Stop by, if you haven't already, and see if any of your unused treasures (or funds) could make this space even better.

### For Everyone

- We have no speakers' fund. \$1500 can bring in someone to help our friends on and off campus through an AAUW "Start Smart" workshop which outlines negotiating skills for women. (See our cover story for more information about Community Connections' reading this spring.) A mere \$300 can bring a feminist comic on campus for some much-needed laughter, or help us to co-sponsor a talk by Anne Scott, founder of Dream Weather Foundation.

## Women Organizing Women

Women Organizing Women, or WOW, is the feminist club on LSU's campus. As a group we focus on activism and spreading the message of feminism to LSU students through service projects, tabling events, and education. Our major projects this semester included a Halloween themed pad and tampon drive for the Battered Women's Shelter in Baton Rouge and an ongoing project to bring awareness to sweatshops and the effect they have on women, an idea brought to us by a Honduran ex sweatshop worker who spoke to our group earlier this semester. We also attempted a World Aids Day tabling event, but sadly we were rained out. A permanent aspect of WOW is our friendship with other groups on campus such as VOX, Spectrum, and WGSGO and we always encourage our members to join these groups as well. In the spring we hope to continue our work helping to make life a little easier for the women living at the Battered Women's Shelter and the employees there by devoting our time and anything else we can afford to give. We also plan to take our anti-sweatshop project to the next level by introducing our mission to the rest of the student body. We also hope to continue discussing



women's healthcare and educate students and other WOW members on the topic through a forum. Interest in WOW this semester has been some of the most enthusiastic ever. As a group we are also hoping to make connections between the activism work that we do and the education that LSU has to offer, specifically the WGS courses that are offered. We also hope to continue building a relationship between our group of students and the faculty that supports our ideas. We look forward to next semester and the work we have ahead of us! For more information about how to get involved with WOW, contact Alexandra Bobet at [abobet1@tigers.lsu.edu](mailto:abobet1@tigers.lsu.edu)!

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