

WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES AT LSU

at Louisiana State University



Director's Notes
with
Michelle Massé

Volume 6, Issue 1

Fall 2008

Currents in WGS On Campus & in the Community

Returning to WGS as Director was a hurricane of activity, literally and figuratively. Gustav blew lives apart, but also brought them together in surprising ways, as the story elsewhere in this issue about Pam Monroe shows. But we also had a hurricane of WGS activity as we said good-bye to Rita Culross, Interim Director Extraordinaire, and Mary Ann Brown, the Administrative Coordinator who's been WGS's stable center for five years now, while new waves of people and events blew in.

We are delighted to welcome eight new faculty and affiliates, including Sarah Becker, our newest joint appointment (from whom you'll hear more in this issue), and many new students. The Graduate Minor is proving to be a strong draw, and our formidable undergraduate recruiting and advising team creates and responds to increasing interest in the undergraduate major and the minor. The energy of new and old faculty has generated new courses (24 in the spring), events (see within) and acquisitions, as book donations come in and we anticipate still more arriving if current grant proposals are funded.

Our bookshelves, offices, and courses—if not coffers—are overflowing. Thanks to the strong support of the College of Arts and Sciences, at least some of that overflow will be taken care of by our moving to a new suite of offices on the first floor of Himes that will give us much-needed office space so that our students can meet with faculty and advisors, student groups can gather, and we can display and store our holdings.

We'll be celebrating both our new space and the new year soon, but do stop by 238 Himes Hall before semester's end to take a last look at the old.

Trans-Atlantic Queer Studies

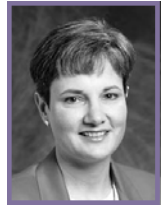
This fall Comparative Literature Professor Elena Castro is teaching a course entitled, "Trans-Atlantic Queer Studies." Students examine cultural representations of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transexual, and queer identities in the texts of the Spanish-speaking world alongside considerations of the construction of alternative family structures, and queer theories. Taught from interdisciplinary perspectives, the course explores how queer theories intervene in current debates over the meaning and validity of sexuality as a way of understanding human sexual desire, emotions, and behaviors.

Of particular interest, Castro notes, is the fact that a country like Spain, historically a Catholic country, has one of the most advanced laws in terms of same-sex couples. Same-sex marriage and adoption are legal in the country and considered equal in rights to the heterosexual marriages and/or adoption arrangements.

Students read theoretical, literary, and visual texts and have particularly enjoyed Alison Bechdel's graphic novel *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006), Max Farberbocks' film *Aimee and Jaguar* (1999, German with English Subtitles), and Pedro Almodovar's film *La Mala Educación* (2004, Spanish with English Subtitles).

Responding to Unexpected Needs During Hurricane Gustav

In late August Glenda Jones, an Assistant Professor of English and Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, excitedly drove from Wisconsin to Louisiana to pick up her newly adopted one-month-old infant. On the second day of her trip, she learned of Hurricane Gustav and the mandatory evacuation, right as she also found out that she had to remain in Louisiana until the state of Wisconsin notified the state of Louisiana that the adoption had been accepted—for two weeks. Hotels were impossible to find due to evacuees and so on August 28th, just days before Hurricane Gustav hit Baton Rouge, a pressing email came through the WGS listserv and the digital networking began.



A professor from UW emailed WGS Director Michelle Massé to explain the situation and ask whether any WGS faculty might put Glenda and her new baby up during the storm. Michelle sent this email along to the WGS listserv and Social Work Professor and WGS faculty member, Pam Monroe, generously responded. Like the majority of Baton Rouge, Monroe's neighborhood was without power for over ten days, but they made it through the storm safe and sound. Glenda was able to leave with her baby to head home a few days early, but said that she would never forget the hospitality and kindness she received from Pam and her family.

Art and Playgrounds Highlight *Women and Leadership*

By Katie-Scarlett Fuller-King, Anthropology and Women's & Gender Studies Student



Members of Group 2 stand proudly with Dr. Rita Culross at the Auction

Ask any student who has ever taken a service-learning course to define the necessary qualifications for such an undertaking, and you will receive varied responses. The students in Dr. Rita Culross' WGS/ELRC 3600 class are likely to respond: an open mind, an open heart, and the determination to take on a challenge. This course offers students an overview of women in leadership, particularly focusing on fundraising. At the time of enrollment, none of us had any idea what Dr. Culross had in mind, but I believe I speak for all of us when I say that had we known, we would have enrolled twice!

During the first few weeks of class, Dr. Culross introduced us to Dr. Marybeth Lima of Biological and Agricultural Engineering. Dr. Lima presented us with a special project: design and execute a fundraiser to benefit the LSU Community Playground Project. Her passion for her cause inspired enthusiasm in all of us. Two PowerPoint presentations later, we ready to get started. We learned about the playground at nearby University Terrace Elementary. However, she explained that presently she had absolutely no money and that she intended to build the playground on March 28, 2009 in conjunction with the Gulf-South SUMMIT on Service Learning and Civic Engagement through Higher Education.



Dr. Marybeth Lima and her students beam at the thought of raising enough money to build the next LSU Community Playground

Once the idea began to sink in, we soon realized that this was a huge opportunity for us all to make a real difference in the community. Dr. Culross maximized our efforts by dividing us into teams; conveniently titled Group 1 and Group 2 (think Dr. Seuss with a commitment to community involvement). Group 2 held our fundraiser on Friday,

November 14th in Peabody Hall. We decided that the best way to draw attention from a large cross section of the community would be to host an art auction. Within three weeks, we had our plan and began moving forward. We started looking for locations, food donations, and begging every hippie friend and art student we knew to donate their work.



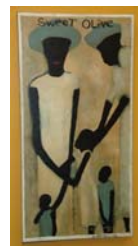
Art enthusiasts and playground supporters peruse the art for sale

After weeks of fliers and planning, the auction was ready! We transformed the Peabody Conference room into a lively gathering of friends, family and community members complete with cool tunes, free food, face painting, and of course LOTS of art! We began as a silent auction, but soon noticed that some of the pieces were still looking for new homes. That's when we decided to go live and began a not-so-silent auction that made Christie's look like a garden party. By the end of the night, every piece of art found an owner. Not only did we manage to raise over \$2000 in donations, but also awareness and support for Dr. Lima's cause!

Don't forget to look for Group 1's project, raising funds soon on a campus near you. They'll be the enthusiastic group of women selling t-shirts!

Support the LSU Community Playground Project

Marybeth Lima and her students have designed and built over a dozen playgrounds in Baton Rouge to date. Their goal is to construct one for every parish public school. One of the ways in which Marybeth is seeking funding is through a collaboration between the LSU Community Playground Project and artist Bill Hemmerling. He is selling limited edition giclees, pictured right, to help support the construction of the playground at University Terrace. If you've been looking for the perfect gift for the holidays, a special occasion--or just the perfect present for yourself, look no further! For more information on the LSU Community Playground Project or on purchasing giclees, please contact Marybeth Lima at mlima1@lsu.edu or at 225.284.8858.



Visit www.billhemmerling.com for more information about the artist.

Meet Our New Faculty

Dorota Heneghan,
Foreign Languages

Dorota wrote her dissertation at Yale on "Fashion, Gender, and Modernity in Galdos, Pardo Bazan, and Picon."

She's interested in the literary construction of gender in the context of nineteenth-century fashion and commodity culture, and will be reviving Spanish 4100, "Women Writers of the Hispanic World," in the near future.

Jenell Johnson, English

Newly arrived from Penn State, Jenell wrote "Echoes of the Soul: Psychosurgery in the American Vernacular" for her dissertation. Her interests include the rhetoric of science and medicine, rhetorical theory, disability studies, and feminist science studies.

Carolyn Lewis, History

Carolyn joins us from UC Santa Barbara. Her dissertation, "Coitus Perfectus: The Medicalization of Heterosexuality in the Cold War United State," has resulted in several publications as well as ongoing research and teaching interest in definitions of sexual "health" in the twentieth-century United States, as well as the institutionalization of heteronormativity, and women's health.

Megan Macnaughtan, Chemistry

Megan, who received her Ph.D from Purdue, modestly notes that she doesn't conduct research or teach in WGS areas, but goes on to state that she is a "committed feminist" who has regularly participated in programs to support women, particularly women in the sciences. She is particularly welcome, both for her expertise and commitment.

Rebecca K. Miller, Libraries

Rebecca Miller is a newly arrived Information Literacy Librarian with an M.S. in Library Science from Chapel Hill. A member of the Women's Studies section of the Association of College and Research Libraries, she is also our new library liaison.

Turn the page to continue reading about our new faculty!

Four Questions with Sarah Becker

PhD: University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 2008

Dissertation: "Ghetto" or Getaway? Constructions of Crime & Danger in an East Coast Vacation Village

Current Position: Joint Professor, WGS/Sociology at LSU

What are your research interests and future plans?

I've done research on alternative schooling, the intraracial nature of criminal victimization, gender and criminal co-offending, and community anti-crime organizations. Though these topics are diverse, a conceptual thread ties them together. That "thread" is my interest in interrogating the relationship between social action and social structure. I strive to take seriously the ways in which social structure affects people while also providing room for human agency. In my ethnography of "Cromwell Alternative North," for example, I look at how race and gender came together with institutional and classroom-based factors to encourage students' pursuit of particular identity categories--categories that had consequences for their educational outcomes. And as part of my research in "Gardner Village," I look at how cultural, structural, social, and historical factors operated in the context of a community with low/moderate levels of crime to lead to the formation of set of very aggressive civilian-run anti-crime organizations. While conducting research in Gardner Village, I became particularly interested in how people's understanding of their (immediate and broader) social environment influences how they behave and what consequences their behavior has for the social/cultural/structural context from which it emerged.

This interest in how people view their social world(s), what actions those views encourage, and the effects of action on social structure also influences my current research agenda. I plan to pursue a few projects at LSU. One is a study of violence in bars and other "party" locations on/around college campuses. Specifically, I'd like to examine the narratives that people construct around incidents of violence in these contexts. The other project is a study of how gender influences access to criminal opportunity within methamphetamine distribution networks. In talking with meth users and dealers in the South and Midwest, I'd like to explore the effects of sexist gender ideology on women's career mobility in the illegal economy. And, finally, as a third project, I plan to do whatever I can to bring Temple University's "Inside/Out" program to the LSU campus. Inside/Out takes an introductory-level college course into a prison for a semester, where the classroom is half college students and half prisoners. Those students and prisoners work together to learn the course material, but often end up learning a lot more in the process.

Do you see media representations of crime as a gendered phenomena?

Media representations are absolutely gendered. But they are also racialized and "classed" as well. Images of crime, criminals, and victims in news media and pop culture are deeply influential on what people believe/feel about crime, criminals, and punishment policy. Impressions people have about who is likely to be victimized, how they are likely to be victimized, who is likely to be a criminal, and who isn't likely to break the law also affect how they navigate daily life. One of the big ironies of "stranger danger" stories, for example, is that they increase women's fear of people they don't know and minimize the type of crime women are much more likely to fall victim to--that which occurs at the hands of someone they know, love, and/or care about.

How do you see feminist research and ethnography working together? Any tensions there?

Feminist research in sociology has historically been connected with ethnography and other qualitative methodologies. These methods add depth to macro-level, quantitative research on gender by providing a deeper understanding of the meanings people attach to gender categories. Qualitative methodologies also provide a space for women's voices--which is one of the central missions of feminist research, scholarship, and activism. There are many tensions present in qualitative research, however, that feminist scholars pay a good deal of attention to. One of these is the relationship between a researcher and his/her subjects. It's important to acknowledge the power imbalance that often exists between researchers and the people whose lives they apply a research lens to. Another less-talked-about but still important issue for feminist scholars who employ qualitative methods is what happens to a researcher when the power imbalance is reversed--when the researcher occupies a less powerful position than those he/she is researching. This is particularly applicable to women conducting interviews or observations in all-male or historically male-dominated settings. It's also a concern for researchers investigating subjects like sex/sexuality, which often elicit objectionable or difficult-to-manage responses from study participants. I'll be talking more about these subjects in my brown bag presentation this April.

As the program continues to evolve, what should WGS focus on in the future?

I can honestly say that it seems like WGS is already expanding in all the right directions. The program moving out into its new and larger office space; the increasing numbers of faculty becoming affiliated with WGS or teaching WGS-related courses; the vibrant and involved WGS students I've met so far; and the dedication to high-quality teaching, service learning, and mentoring that I've seen WGS faculty display are just a few of the things that make me excited to be a part of it all--present and future!



Selected Faculty & Graduate Student Accomplishments

PUBLICATIONS

Nina Asher's essay, "Made in the (multicultural) U.S.A.: Unpacking tensions of race, culture, gender, and sexuality in education," was published as the lead article in the March 2007 issue of the leading journal, Educational Researcher, published by the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

Laura Marks recently published an article of film criticism, "Legacy, Wreck, and the Futures of Hip-Hop Feminism in AfroDite Superstar," in Phoebe: Journal of Gender & Cultural Critiques, 20.1.

Pallavi Rastogi's recent monograph, Afrindian Fictions: Diaspora, Race, and National Desire in South Africa (Ohio State University Press, Fall 2008), is the first published book-length study of Indian fiction in South Africa. This summer she also published an edited collection, Before Windrush: Recovering an Asian and Black Literary Heritage within Britain (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Summer 2008), with Dr. Jocelyn Fenton Stitt of Minnesota State University.

Jessica Ketcham Weber and recent LSU alumna *Lisa Costello* are co-authors of a forthcoming article, "A Dialogue on Action: Risks and Possibilities of Feminism in the Academy in the 21st Century," in Thirdspace: A Journal of Feminist Theory and Culture, 8.1 (December 2008). This summer Jessica also published an article discussing feminist media activist tactics in an edited collection, Teaching in the Pop Culture Zone: Using Popular Culture in the Writing Classroom.

PRESENTATIONS

This summer at the National Women's Studies Association's annual conference, WGS Grad Minors *Elizabeth Domangue*, *Ashli Dykes*, *Casey Kayser*, *Laura Marks*, and *Jessica Ketcham Weber* presented a roundtable workshop entitled "Anti-Racist & Anti-Homophobic Work in the South: Feminist Pedagogies of Resistance."

AWARDS/GRANTS

Supported by a Dissertation Improvement Grant from the National Science Foundation, *Meredith Anderson* spent 3 months in Kerala, India this summer, studying the social and economic influence of Kudumbashree, a government sponsored microcredit program for women.

Dana Berkowitz's paper, "Maternal Urges, Biological Clocks, and Soccer Moms: Toward a Theory of Gay Men's Procreative Consciousness And Fathering Experiences," has been selected by the National Council on Family Relations as the winner of the 2008 Outstanding Research Paper Award. A summary of the paper will be published in an upcoming issue of the Feminism and Family Studies Section Newsletter.

For all her hard work in Arts and Sciences, *Brenda Macon* received the Staff Outstanding Service Award at a luncheon hosted by the LSU Foundation.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, or CASE, have named *Maud Walsh* the 2008 Louisiana Professor of the Year. Walsh, an associate professor in the School of Plant, Environmental & Soil Sciences, was selected from nearly 300 professors in the United States.

Faculty in the Media

If you have been paying attention to the newspaper and television media this fall, chances are you have seen and heard some of the WGS faculty. *Daphne Cain*, has been interviewed on WBRZ and in The Advocate about Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among hurricane evacuees. She discussed her work with evacuated children post-Katrina alongside the potential rise in cases post-Gustav. *Michelle Massé* was consulted about the controversial ideas of Vice Chairman of the House Health and Welfare Committee, John LaBruzzo, to pay poor women to get their tubes tied while giving financial incentives to college-educated families who choose to have more children. *Stacey Simmons* was featured in both The Advocate and the Baton Rouge Business Report, where she was named one of the "40 Under 40." The Advocate has covered her efforts to develop the animation and video game industries in Baton Rouge. Simmons was instrumental in bringing to Baton Rouge the Electronic Arts Inc, which will establish a 220-employee quality assurance center at LSU to test the company's sports video games.

Join LSU's speakers bureau if you would like to be consulted by the media in the future: www.lsu.edu/expertsandspeakers

Send your accomplishments to dwgs@lsu.edu for inclusion in the Professional Notes newsletter sent out in a monthly email.

Meet Our New Faculty, Cont.

Laura Moyer, Political Science

Laura Moyer, whose Ph.D. is in Political Science from Georgia, specializes in Law and Courts as well as American Politics. She emphasizes how identity politics--and specifically the politics of gender--play in the U.S. legal system. She's taught Gender, Law, and Politics, and would be interested in teaching a course on Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Law here at LSU.

Brooke Rollins, English

With her PhD from the University of South Carolina, Brooke Rollins joins the English department and brings with her an interest in classical rhetorical theory, particularly classical greek rhetoric, and critical theory. She looks forward to teaching a course for WGS on Feminist Rhetorics.

WGS Events

Mark Your Calendar: Spring 2009 Lectures

Brown Bag Series

Wednesday February 4, 12-1:15
129 Himes Hall

Maternal Urges, Biological Clocks, and Soccer Moms: Queering Gay Men's Procreative Consciousness and Fathering Experiences.
Dana Berkowitz, Sociology

Wednesday March 18, 12-1:15
Stubbs 210

The Shifting Rhetoric of Politics in the United Nations Conferences on Women.
Challen Nicklen, Women's & Gender Studies

Wednesday April 22, 12-1:15
Women's Center

Complicity Through Silence? Doing feminist ethnography in non-feminist spaces.
Sarah Becker, Sociology

Engendering Scholarship Lecture Series

Thursday January 15, 4:40-6
129 Himes Hall

Child's Play: The LSU Community Playground Project
Marybeth Lima, Biological Engineering

Wednesday February 18, 4:40-6
129 Himes Hall

The Louisiana Poverty Initiative
Pamela Monroe, School of Social Work

Tuesday March 31, 4:40-6
129 Himes Hall

Images of Gender and Alienation in the Trial of Helen Duncan for Witchcraft, London, 1944
Christine Corcos, Law School

WGS GO LUNCHEON

Undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and alumnae all gathered in November for the annual WGS GO luncheon. This year's theme "Feminisms on the Edge" brought together Debi Jensen, a feminist ob/gynecologist at Earl K. Long Hospital, Wendy Herschman, Director of The Red Shoes (www.theredshoes.org), and Vicki Lancaster, a political activist who was one of the people behind bringing Air America to Baton Rouge. The luncheon encouraged discussions around the varying ways that feminism is interpreted and expressed.



Wendy, Debi, and Vicki discuss the intersections of feminism with their careers and community work.

Welcome Back Fall Brunch

In September we gathered at Michelle Massé and Jim Catano's house to kick off the school year and enjoy some much needed relaxation post-Gustav.



Annual WGS Student Conference Call for Papers

The WGS Student Conference is set for March 5-6, 2009! The theme, **Reinforcing and Resisting Feminist Representations: Spaces, Voices, and Identities**, should provide a point of entry for many graduate and undergraduate students at LSU and other institutions. The keynote speaker is Janet Miller, Professor at Columbia's Teachers College. Please share the full call for papers with your students and colleagues. Inquiries and submissions should be sent to wgsconference@gmail.com.

The theme of this year's conference addresses the role that women's and gender studies scholarship has played in challenging, rethinking and expanding repressive and limiting understandings of feminism, gender expression, and identity in the traditional disciplines and society. We invite proposals that broadly address issues of representations of women and gender in innovative and interdisciplinary ways. Possible topics include: representations of gender in popular culture; gender, sexuality, activism and politics; intersections of queer theory, transgender studies and feminisms; global feminisms; women's autobiography; feminist research methods; the role of interdisciplinary research and pedagogy; and feminist articulations of intersectionality.

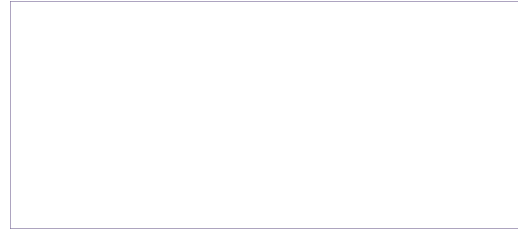
We also welcome proposals that do not directly address the theme, but which are relevant to WGS scholarship as well as alternative formats such as academic or documentary films and performances. Pre-formed panels are especially encouraged.

Submit titles and abstracts of 250 words (for individual submissions), along with your name, institutional and program affiliation by January 15, 2009 to wgsconference@gmail.com

Women's & Gender Studies

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.WOW and WGSGO.

This semester, **Women Organizing Women** has been focusing on women's issues regarding politics and violence. We ran two voter registration drives in free speech alley, and hosted a film viewing and discussion of "Unbought and Unbossed." We provided information about issues of domestic and general violence against women at tablings, the **Clothesline Project**, and Take Back the Night, as well as a forum with Summer Steib, coordinator for the Battered Women's Program, where we have volunteered. We are concluding the semester with a Halloween-themed tampon-towel drive for the BWP, and providing information on gender issues at a local drag show. For more information or questions, please email wow@lsu.edu.



WOW, WGSGO, and Spectrum members, along with WGS alum, LSU staff, and community members gather at a planning meeting about The Alliance. Formed this summer, The Alliance is a collective working group of students, staff, faculty, and community members who focus on a few campaigns a year. This year's work includes working for gender neutral bathrooms, publicizing blood drive discrimination, and the promotion of One Baton Rouge, which advocates for the acceptance and integration of all people in Baton Rouge. Contact The Alliance at adykes3@lsu.edu

WGSGO has a busy and exciting year of events and programming planned, including new endeavors as well as the return of popular programming from previous semesters. The biweekly writing group has returned to Highland Coffees, and we also held a CV workshop. The WGSGO Luncheon, (see page 5) took place on November 13th. Next semester we will continue working on professional development through workshops on the job market and publishing, as well as by continuing to hold our writing group. Interested members should contact the listserv about forming panels for the National Women's Studies Conference next November, which are due in February. For more information about WGSGO email laurahelenmarks@gmail.com; to sign up for our listserv, go to <http://groups.google.com/group/wgsgo>.