

# WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES AT LSU

## at Louisiana State University



**Director's Notes  
with  
Michelle Massé**

The fall semester opened with a flurry of good news. We celebrated the restoration of the B.A., the appointment of Yvette Hyde as our new Graduate Assistant for Programs and Curriculum, as well as the actual arrival of Benjy Kahan, our new joint appointment with English, as he took up residency after a year of grant-gathering (see interview within). We wished Dana Berkowitz bon voyage as she embarked on her own far-flung research travel for the semester. We welcomed not only the steady growth in the Graduate Minors, but the vitality and interests they brought to the program and to WSGO under the unflinchingly enthusiastic leadership of Wendy Braun. And we applauded the approval of WGS 1001, "The Evolution of Sex and Gender," as a Natural Sciences general education course, an approval that we believe will evolve into major enrollment growth for this unique team-taught course.

The semester was marked by more somber news as well. We listened to news of 30 percent cuts, and talked in Coordinating Council about what "core" would finally mean at LSU. Four months without an Administrative Coordinator all too often meant that year's priorities were swept aside as Yvette and I struggled to cover another job. Reports took the place of recruiting, equipment inventory outstripped initiatives, and spreadsheets overshadowed strategic planning.

Thanks to all the able assistance that has helped us to manage. I look at all we have accomplished and look forward to spring and a burgeoning of new plans, made possible with new help.

Cheers,

Michelle Massé

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## Currents in WGS on Campus & in the Community

### WGS Faculty and Graduate Student Highlight Diversity

An essential element of WGS's mission is to encourage, support, and provide a forum for interdisciplinary research by contributing to a better understanding of diversity and providing a pool of expertise concerning women and gender upon which various communities can draw. Several WGS faculty and a graduate student are examples of how WGS puts diversity at the forefront of courses and research.

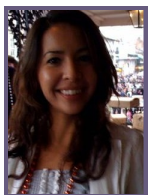


**Sarah Becker**

Supported by an Economic Development Assistantship grant from the Board of Regents and a Faculty Research Grant from the LSU Council on Research, Sarah Becker is spearheading an ethnographic study of community-based organizations in Baton Rouge. A jointly appointed Assistant Professor in Women's & Gender Studies and Sociology, Sarah will work with graduate and undergraduate students to study, learn from, and support the efforts of groups working on anti-violence initiatives, community-building efforts, and other innovative actions addressing inequality and its consequences for daily life in a set of Baton Rouge neighborhoods.

Built on an interdisciplinary methodological model, this project stresses the simultaneous pursuit of research, teaching, and civic engagement. "By drawing on ethnographic research methods, student involvement through service-learning initiatives, and immersion in the work of groups in structurally different neighborhoods," Sarah states, "this project will advance research, learning, and social goals simultaneously."

In addition to student involvement through service learning in Sarah's courses, Bethany Blackson and Tifanie Pulley have joined the research team. Bethany, a McNair scholar, will produce a set of community profiles for the study using GIS software and demographic and crime data. Tifanie, M.A. and African-American scholar from Norfolk State University, brings past research, advocacy, and community work that position her well to take on a leadership role in Sarah's study.



**Wendy Braun**

Wendy Braun, a doctoral student in Comparative Literature and a Graduate Minor in Women's & Gender Studies, utilizes active learning through community involvement to highlight diversity.

According to Wendy, "a multicultural pedagogy along with service-learning breaks down barriers between academia and the community, allowing us to foster diversity and facilitate awareness." Her Fall 2009 Introduction to

Women's and Gender Studies (WGS 2500) class partnered with Volunteers in Public

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## Diversity, continued

Schools to read with elementary school children at Belfair Montessori, a school with a diverse population at which over 51 percent of students participate in the free lunch program.

Twenty-five hundred students read with the children and also explored how community and identity are created or limited through location and representation and specifically through racial and ethnic diversity in reading materials. While improving their reading skills, the "reading buddies" also learned to expect representation of all groups in what they read and to develop strategies for achieving this, from asking for more diverse books, to writing and illustrating their own texts to share with other students. Young children who had lost faith in themselves regained it through creatively building a community of reading and representation, and college students learned how daily acts of listening created bonds that increase individual self-esteem and strengthen community empowerment.



**Benjamin Kahan**

A new joint appointment in Women's & Gender Studies and English, Benjamin Kahan emphasizes diversity through his research on celibacy and homosexuality. He arrives at LSU after spending his first year holding a prestigious fellowship at the Center for Humanistic Inquiry at Emory University for research on *Celibacies, 1886-1969*, which revisits the historical emergence of the gay "closet."

About his research, Benjamin states, "By differentiating the history of celibacy from the history of homosexuality, my project redresses the scholarly and popular tendency to read celibacy as closeted homosexuality. Rather than thinking of celibacy as a screen for homosexuality or as an internalized homophobia, my project understands celibacy in positive terms as a sexuality that does not aspire to normative sexual acts. I argue that celibacy enriches and recasts the histories of homosexuality, the women's movement, and modernism."

Last summer, Benjamin began a new book project as a Harry Ransom Research Fellow at The University of Texas, Austin in which he explores the history of acquired homosexuality.

"Sexuality's electricity courses through nearly every aspect of our lives. Its power determines who can serve in the military, who can marry, who can immigrate, who can donate blood, who gets healthcare, and so much else."

According to Benjamin, "these exclusions make LGBTQ people the most legally oppressed people in the United States (if not the most materially)," and he wants to help LSU be at the forefront of this civil rights struggle.



**Elaine Maccio**

Elaine Maccio, Assistant Professor of Social Work (SW) and faculty member in Women's & Gender Studies has been profiled as Flagship Faculty for the diversity her scholarship and teaching bring to LSU and to Baton Rouge.

As Elaine explains, "Service-learning, a form of civic engagement, is based in social justice. So, too, is social work, which places emphasis on traditionally underserved populations, and women's and gender studies, which analyzes the social constructions of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Service-learning enhances and complements my teaching and research in SW and WGS."

"Social Work with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People," a graduate course Elaine teaches that fulfills requirements for the WGS Graduate Minor, is a service-learning course. Capital City Alliance, an LGBT advocacy organization, and HIV/AIDS Alliance, an HIV/AIDS services agency, have consistently and enthusiastically served as community partners.

Students in Elaine's courses and the community partners have conducted four service-learning projects since the course's inception in 2007. All of the projects promoted equity, diversity, and community outreach as students explored the discrimination that LGBT people face, learned that the LGBT community is not homogeneous, but a multicultural group sharing one common characteristic, and worked together as educational and community institution partners to meet a community-identified need.

## Four Questions for WGS's New Joint Faculty Member

### Benjamin Kahan

PhD: University of Pennsylvania, 2008  
Dissertation: *Modern American Celibacies, 1886-1969*  
Current Position: Joint Professor, WGS/English at LSU

#### 1. What are your research interests and future plans?

My research and teaching interests run the gamut from gender and sexuality studies and nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature to modernism and the history of psychoanalysis. I am currently completing a book on how the history of celibacy might reshape our theoretical frameworks for thinking about sexuality.

#### 2. Describe your dream course to teach.

I would be excited to teach a course focused on historiographic methods and theoretical difficulties with imagining the long durée of sexuality, exploring continuities and differences across a 1000 year period. The course would ask whether writing such a long history were indeed possible, while also interrogating the uses to which such a history could be put. We would take long histories such as Alan Bray's *The Friend*, David Halperin's *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*, Valerie Traub's "The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography" as models, placing these in dialogue with a wide range of chronological shorter histories to attempt to suture together such an ambitious project.

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

WGS is such a wonderful part of LSU with a wealth of opportunities for our students. I would love to see us getting more undergraduates involved with our programming and our courses.

#### 4. If you could recommend one book to WGS students, what would it be?

I would highly recommend Quentin Crisp's *The Naked Civil Servant* - it is utterly hilarious (it will make you laugh out loud many times) and offers a brilliant depiction of queer life in England in the earlier twentieth century.

## WOW

In the Fall 2010 Semester WOW put on the “Love Your Body” event in Evangeline Hall on-campus. About 35 people, including a number of first-year students, attended. In October 2010, WOW hosted a Tampon and Towel Drive in Free Speech Alley and also put on a social to collect tampons to benefit the Battered Women’s Shelter in Baton Rouge.

## COMING SPRING 2011: THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES

In Spring 2011, WOW will be putting on “V-Day LSU 2011: The Vagina Monologues” to raise money for the Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault. Performances will run April 7-9, 2011 at a location TBA. For more information, contact Joan Broussard (jbrou83@lsu.edu) or Laurel Keys (lkeys2@lsu.edu).

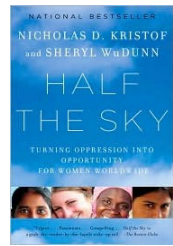
## BOOK DISCUSSION GROUPS

### WGS Faculty and Students Take Advantage of Two Book Discussion Opportunities



This fall, WGS students and faculty formed Radical Readers, a new book discussion group centered on feminist and LGBT readings. Organized by Brigitte McCray, Brianna Piche, Suzanna Foretich, and Wendy Braun, the group met at the LSU Women’s Center for brown bag lunch and discussed *King Kong Theory* by Virginia Despentes. In addition to examining the ways in which Despentes challenges common attitudes about sex and gender and modern beauty myths, participants explored the book’s relation to the recent debate over Susan Faludi’s October 2010 magazine article, “American Electra” (<http://www.harpers.org/archive/2010/10/0083140>) as well as Judith “Jack” Halberstam’s response and Faludi’s criticism of Halberstam’s critique (<http://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2010/10/19/justifiable-matricide-backlashing-faludi-by-jack-halberstam/>).

The next Radical Readers’ brown bag discussion will be held Thursday, February 24, 11 a.m., at the new Women’s Center location in Hatcher Hall, Room 313. The focus of the discussion will be *GLQ: The Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies: Queer Politics and the Issue of Palestine/Israel*, Volume 16, Number 4, 2010 (<http://glq.dukejournals.org/content/vol16/issue4/>). For more information, contact Wendy Braun (wbraun1@lsu.edu).



The WGS Community Connections Committee sponsored another reading, discussion, and activism group this semester. Open to LSU faculty, staff, and students as well as the Baton Rouge community, the group held its meeting at The Red Shoes, 2303 Government Street. The reading focus for the fall semester was *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. Twelve participants attended the discussions and learned about the plight of women around the world and seeds of empowerment from the stories in the book. As a result, participants have partnered with The Red Shoes to seek ways to make a difference in the lives of women in Baton Rouge.

For more information about the WGS Community Connections Committee reading group, contact Brenda Macon (bmacon@lsu.edu).

## In the Classroom

### Special Topics WGS Courses for Spring



WGS 4500-1: Carolyn Ware, Associate Professor of English, will be teaching **Gender and Medicine**, a course that will focus on the ways in which the practice of scientific medicine has traditionally been constructed as masculine, as has scientific thought in general. The typical patient has also been construed as male, and most medical models are based on male bodies. The nursing profession, in contrast, has been viewed as a feminine domain. Certain disease processes also have been seen as gendered, and “women’s ailments” are often stigmatized or marginalized. In recent years women have become central actors in previously male-dominated fields of medicine (including veterinary medicine), but opinions are divided over whether this has led to changes in the culture of medicine. This course explores the ways that notions of medicine (including folk healing systems), different “ways of knowing,” and gender intersect in a variety of cultures, time periods, and contexts.



WGS 4500-2: Dana Berkowitz, Assistant Professor in Sociology and Women’s & Gender Studies, will offer this special topics course on **Men and Masculinities**. The course examines males’ diverse experiences as boys/men and public discourses about masculinities in the U.S. The major thrust of the course is to examine how the gendered social order influences men’s actions and the way men perceive themselves, other men, women, and social situations. We will be using an intersectionality perspective to explore the relationships between multiple dimensions of social relations and inequalities: gender, race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality. We will also explore the ways that masculinity can be accomplished and performed by women.



# Out of the Classroom

## WGS Engendering Scholarship Fall Lecture Series



Heather Ondercin



Benjamin Kahan



Leigh Clemons

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 Challen Nicklen, featured three exciting presentations. Assistant Professor Heather Ondercin, a Women's & Gender Studies and Political Science joint faculty member, kicked off the series with "Who is Responsible for the Gender Gap? Party Realignment and the Dynamics of Men's and Women's Democratic Macropartisanship." Using yearly time series of men's and women's Democratic macropartisanship from 1950 to 2008 derived from Gallup surveys, Heather proposed that the gender gap in partisanship is a function of shifts in both men's and women's partisan attachments. Benjamin Kahan, a Women's & Gender Studies and English joint faculty member, led faculty and students in a discussion, as he explored celibacy as an alloerotic sexuality. In a lecture titled "Andy Warhol is a 'V': Philosophical Bachelorhood and the Celibate Factory," Benjamin challenged perceptions of celibacy as a sexuality involving one person, autoerotic, rather than alloerotic and interpersonal like hetero- and homo- sexuality. Leigh Clemons, Assistant Professor of Theatre, finished out the series with "Women Dancing in the Dark: Serbia's DAH Teatar," in which she discussed one of the oldest alternative theatre companies in Serbia and its role in protesting the rule of Slobodan Milosevic and promoting social change in the country.

Look forward to an exciting  
Spring 2011 Engendering Scholarship Series!

## LSU Presents at NWSA Conference

The NATIONAL WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION conference was a chock-ablock with LSU presenters this year.

**Sam Adams**, a WGS undergraduate major working with Sarah Becker in the Aspire program, gave a talk on "Gender and Power in Restaurants."

**Jaime Cantrell**, a WGS Graduate Minor, organized a panel, "(Re)Conceptualizing Ideologies of Power and Rhetoric: Identity and Gender in (Trans)National Discourses." Jaime's own presentation, "Down and Abject in the U.S. 'South': Affective and Symbolic National Identity in Erskine Caldwell's Tobacco Road," was part of the panel. Drawing upon analysis from Leigh Anne Duck's *The Nation's Region*, Jaime describes her presentation as an "attempt to illuminate temporal and spatial boundaries surrounding (im)penetrable discourses between private and public, social and cultural, and individual and national identities for the purposes of broadening our understandings of regional narratives in national rhetoric."

As a member of the Age Studies group, **Michelle Massé's** talk "On Not Going Gently into that Good Classroom: Age and the Feminist Course" focused on age issues in the classroom for both teachers and students and how/why this is particularly important in feminist classes.

**Martha Pitts**, also a WGS Graduate Minor, spoke about "Teaching Girls' Studies in the Composition Classroom," which addressed the question: How does an African-American feminist graduate teaching assistant develop and promote an interdisciplinary gender studies course while placing the experiences of African-American girls at the center of analysis while simultaneously maintaining its relevance to all students?

The 2011 NWSA Annual Conference will be held November 10-13 in Atlanta, Georgia. The deadline for submitting proposals is February 15. For more information, visit <http://www.nwsa.org/conference/cfp.php>.



## Welcome Back Fall Brunch

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



## Selected Faculty & Graduate Student Accomplishments

**Dr. Sarah Becker** (Sociology/WGS) and doctoral students **Wendy Braun** (CPLT/WGS) and **Danielle Thomas** (Sociology) presented a paper at the 36th Annual Mid-South Sociological Association Conference on October 16 in Baton Rouge. Their paper, "Post-Feminism for Children: Exploring Parallel Feminist/Post-Feminist Themes in *Bratz* and *Sex and the City*," analyzes the popularity of Bratz dolls as part of a wider moment in the history of modern feminism through a comparison with *Sex and the City*, critiquing the feminist and post-feminist thematics found in each show in order to understand better how entertainment media for children and entertainment media for women engage with, understand, and support, challenge, or undermine the past and potential future progress associated with feminist activism.

**Wendy Braun** has received a \$500 Tom W. Dutton Service Award for her outstanding commitment to community service. She will be honored at the Campus Life Leadership and Involvement Awards Reception on Thursday, April 28, 3 p.m., in the LSU Union Atchafalaya room.

**Jaime Cantrell** was awarded the 2010 Historical Literary and/or Cultural Studies Paper Prize for her paper "Down and Out in Mississippi: Authenticity and Exemplarity in a Small Town Gay Bar" at the fall meeting of the South Central Modern Language Association in Fort Worth, Texas.

Original designs by LSU Department of Theatre faculty **E.J. Cho** in sound design and James Murphy in set design, as well as LSU alumna Polly Boersig in costume design from Swine Palace's 2007 world premiere production of *Cocktail* have been chosen to represent the United States at the 2011 Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space, the world's largest theater design exhibition and competition.

**Rita R. Culross** presented a paper, "University Admissions Officers: Perceptions of Student Performance in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program," at the 12th International Conference of the European Council for High Ability in Paris on July 8. Funded by a Board of Regents ATLAS grant, the project was co-authored by Emily Tarver, an ETPP doctoral student and secondary English teacher at the LSU Laboratory School.

**Joyce Jackson** was recently appointed to Director of the African & African American Studies Program at LSU and served as Program Director for the 2010 annual meeting of the Louisiana Folklore Society. She was also awarded the Center for French and Francophone Studies Summer Research Grant for her field research project titled, "The Shrine Keepers: Efficacy of Women's Performance in Ndepp Healing Rituals in the Lebou Ethnic Group of Senegal" and selected as one of twelve people from Baton Rouge to be a delegate at the National Congressional Black Caucus Conference in Washington, D.C. for her post-Katrina research on displacement and cultural sustainability with youth in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans. In addition, she contributed a chapter, "The Gospel Caravan," to the volume *Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing: How the Apollo Theater Shaped American Entertainment* published by the Smithsonian Institution.

Last summer, **Benjamin Kahan** was awarded a Dorot Foundation Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Jewish Studies at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin. He has also received a Wood Institute Travel Grant by the College of Physicians of Philadelphia for research on his second book project which is tentatively titled "Sexual Emergencies: An Acquired History of Sexuality, 1870-1930."

**Michelle Massé's** co-edited collection, *Over Ten Million Served: Gendered Service in Language and Literature Workplaces*, has just been released by SUNY. You can learn more about the book at <http://www.overtenmillionserved.com/Welcome.html>. Michelle and her co-editor, Katie Hogan, have been interviewed by *Inside Higher Education* (<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/08/13/service>) and discussed by Marc Bousquet in his blog, "How the University Works" (<http://chronicle.com/blogPost/Cushy-for-Whom-/25984/>), as well as elsewhere. Book signings were held at both the NWSA and Modern Language Association conventions. Michelle also organized a panel on "The Critical Condition of Service in Higher Education" that was accepted by the Conference on Labor in Higher Education, and in addition to her own co-edited collection, had two new titles published in her SUNY series on Feminist Theory and Criticism: *Mothers Who Deliver: Feminist Interventions in Public and Interpersonal Discourse* by editors Jocelyn Fenton Stitt and Pegeen Reichert Powell and *Ideologies of Forgetting: Rape in the Vietnam War* by Gina Marie Weaver.

**Laura Moyer** was awarded a Summer Stipend grant to help fund data collection for an ongoing project on the development of sexual harassment law and presented the preliminary findings of this work to a short course on Gender Equality Policy at the American Political Science Association Meeting in Washington, D.C.

**Solimar Otero's** work, *Afro-Cuban Diasporas In The Atlantic World*, was published by the University of Rochester Press.

**Martha Pitts** will be reviewing "*We Must Be Up and Doing*": *A Reader in Early African American Feminisms*, edited by Teresa C. Zackodnik (Broadview, 2010), for *African American Review*. She also received a grant from LSU Credit Union's Teaching Enhancement Fund to cover costs for a paper presentation at the NWSA conference in Denver.

### MILESTONES

Congratulations to **Catherine Lemieux** on the arrival of her new family member, Sofia Jing Rui Lemieux.

Congratulations to **June Pulliam** for completing her Ph.D. program.

## WGSGO

### Achievements for Fall Semester

Along with constructing a new website (<http://classes.slis.lsu.edu/wu/7008/fa10/ajohnson/WGSGO-LSU/WGSGO-LSU/WGSGOatLSU.html>), the organization helped to oversee production of WGS T-shirts, with over 50 pledges for pre-order.

An October activism campaign over a sexist banner led to the group's efforts cross-posted on two nationally recognized feminist blogs: Sociological Images and Ms. Magazine Blog.

A Pedagogy Roundtable Series was established to assist WGS professors and graduate assistants in the WGS classroom.

WGSGO had a significant presence at both Fall Fest and Rainbow Rush to build a bridge between graduate and undergraduate students.

WGSGO is also a proud co-host of Radical Readers--the Feminist and LGBT reading group which discussed Virginia Despentes' *King Kong Theory* as its first text.

Finally, monthly mixers have added a pleasant social component to the organization, supporting friendships within WGS.

The fall semester proved to be quite successful, and WGSGO looks forward to an equally vibrant spring semester!



**Want to purchase a T-shirt?  
Contact Wendy Braun at  
[wbraun1@tigers.lsu.edu](mailto:wbraun1@tigers.lsu.edu).**

### ***Mark Your Calendar – Spring 2011 Lectures***

## **Engendering Scholarship Lecture Series**

Tuesday, February 8

129 Himes Hall, 12:00-1:30

**‘Jaime Cantrell, WGS Graduate Minor and English Doctoral Student**

*What is a Southern Queer but Deviance Multiplied?:*

*Representing Sexual Otherness and Southernness in a Small Town Gay Bar*

**Martha Pitts, WGS Graduate Minor and English Doctoral Student**

*Teaching Girls’ Studies in the Composition Classroom*

Tuesday, March 22

129 Himes Hall, 4:30-6:00

**Lauren Coats, Assistant Professor of English**

*American Discovery and Exploration: A Sentimental Story*