

FEMINIST *trajectories*

Newsletter of Rutgers University
Women's and Gender Studies Department

Spring 2011



photo courtesy of Anna Sampaio

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Chairing the Women's and Gender Studies Department for the 2010-2011 academic year while appointed in American Studies and Jewish Studies has been a challenge and an opportunity to explore new frontiers of interdisciplinary teaching, scholarship, and activism. It has been a privilege to chair a department ranked third in the nation and whose members are such active and original scholars and dedicated and engaging teachers. This letter includes only a few of our department's many accomplishments and is meant merely to whet your appetite for the richer coverage of what we have achieved that appears throughout the rest of *Feminist Trajectories*.

As a department we have mounted a highly successful "Affective Tendencies" conference organized by **Liz Grosz** and **Ed Cohen** that attracted scholars from across the globe, and our graduate students organized their own well attended and lively conference, both of which are described in greater detail in this newsletter. We completely redesigned the departmental web site and created our own departmental logo based on an award-winning design from our 35th-anniversary design

competition. We also sent our Undergraduate Director **Carlos Decena** to a planning conference in the Dominican Republic that will allow our department to compete for inclusion in the next phase of the GEMMA Exchange, which involves sending our own students and faculty members to our European and Latin American partner universities instead of exclusively hosting exchange students and visiting scholars ourselves.

Uncivil Gadgets

As part of our effort to extend the kind of scholarship performed by Women's and Gender Studies to the wider Rutgers community, we have initiated a partnership with Project Civility at Rutgers and many other academic and student life units to create "Uncivil Gadgets II: When the Internet and Public and Private Spaces Collide," a sequel to a panel this past Fall 2010. Our Wednesday, March 9, 2011 panel, to be held at 8:00 P.M. in the Busch Campus Center, will be chaired by our faculty member **Jasbir Puar** and will explore the question of where privacy, freedom of speech, criminal acts, and public spaces begin and end and

Notes From the Chair: Leslie Fishbein

what are student, civil, and human rights on these issues. We will ask whether we have acquired technological gadgets at the expense of face-to-face social skills and intimacy. "Uncivil" Gadgets II will continue the conversations on how law and university policy should negotiate the balance between the need to prevent and to punish sexual and other forms of victimization and bullying and the need to safeguard civil liberties on the Internet.

Honors, Awards and Publications

Our faculty members have garnered many honors, awards, and other forms of scholarly recognition. **Radhika Balakrishnan**, faculty member and executive director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership, has concluded her first year of leadership, securing grants in excess of \$600,000 for the program and operations of the center. The fundraising effort included a Ford Foundation award for Rethinking Macro Economic Strategies from a Human Rights Perspective, a multi-year project that includes research, international advocacy and training involving human rights groups and economic policy scholars and practitioners. **Ethel Brooks'** op-ed essays on the expulsion of Romani people in various European countries have recently appeared in *The Guardian*. In Summer 2010 Brooks' book *Unraveling the Garment Industry: Transnational Organizing and Women's Work* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) received the award for Outstanding Book for 2010 from the Society for the Study of Social Problems. **Susan J. Carroll** and Richard L. Fox recently published *Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics* (Cambridge University Press 2010).

Carlos Decena is scheduled to have his book *Tacit Subjects: Dominican Transnational Identities and Male Homosexuality in New York City pub-*



lished by Duke University Press in early 2011. **Mary Hawkesworth** is spending her sabbatical year in Graz, Austria and continuing with the editorial work of *Signs*, which has had a record number of submissions this year. She also is working on a book, *Political Women in the 21st Century: Activism, Advocacy, and Governance*. The book's premise is that, in order to gain a richer understanding of contemporary women's political activism, it is important to supplement accounts of women's engagement with official institutions of state, political parties, campaigns and elections, and international institutions with consideration of political frames that encompass transformative efforts and a more comprehensive understanding of power that can be gained by placing women's lives at the center of analysis.

In addition, **Mary Hawkesworth**, Women's and Gender Studies (Co-PI); **Sarah Tobias**, Institute for Research on Women (Co-PI); **Lisa Hetfield**, Institute for Women's Leadership; and **Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel**, Institute for Research on Women, have been awarded a Rutgers University Fair Cycle III grant for their study *Beyond the Gendered Plateau: Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Women Faculty Advancement through*

the Academic Ranks, which attempts to account for the fact that women's academic careers in higher education tend to plateau at the mid-ranks of faculty, while men's careers tended to proceed to the highest rank.

Nancy Hewitt spent the 2009-2010 academic year in England. As the Pitt Professor at Cambridge University, Hewitt delivered lectures at Oxford University, Queen's University, Belfast, and the Centre for Gender Studies at Cambridge. She also delivered the keynote address at the British American Nineteenth-Century History conference. In recognition of her many achievements, Hewitt was selected by her alma mater, The State University of New York at Brockport, to receive an honorary de-

gree and to deliver the Commencement Address on May 15, 2010. Hewitt also published the edited volume *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism* (Rutgers University Press, 2010), a book of seventeen essays that interrogate the utility of the "wave" metaphor for capturing the complex history of women's rights by examining both historical and contemporary aspects of the diverse movements that comprise U.S. feminism.

Jasbir Puar delivered the Annual Distinguished Lecture at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and the Noted Scholar Public Lecture at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Puar is the co-editor, with Julie Livingston, of a special issue of *Social Text* on "Interspecies." In 2010 her op-ed essays on sexuality, nationality, and homonationalism appeared in *The Guardian*. **Yana Rodgers** worked on three consulting projects for the World Bank to examine women's well-being in Nepal, Vietnam, and the Philippines. The projects included presenting research results at a February 2010 workshop on gender and well-being in Vietnam and a December 2010 workshop on gender and conflict in Norway.

Graduate Students' Achievements

Our graduate students have been productive scholars whose achievements have been recognized by a variety of fellowships and awards. Doctoral candidate **Agatha Beins** currently is a graduate fellow in the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis 2010-11 seminar themed "Narratives of Power." Beins published the article "Sisterly Solidarity: Politics and Rhetoric of the Direct Address in U.S. Feminism in the 1970s" in *Women: A Cultural Review* 21(3):293-308. Both **Anahí Russo Garrido** and **Stina Soderling** have been awarded fellowships in the 2011-12 Institute for Research on Women (IRW) Seminar on "(De)generations: Reimagining Communities." In 2010 doctoral candidate **Jillian Hernandez** received a graduate scholarship award from the National Women's Studies Association. **Magda Grabowska** was awarded a Marie Curie Three Year Post-Doctoral Fellowship to be held 2010-2013. **Nafisa Tanjeem** was awarded the P.E.O. (Philanthropic Educational Organization) International Peace Scholarship offered to selected international students who are pursuing their graduate studies in the USA or Canada.

Anahí Russo Garrido presented a lecture, "Entre Cuerpos, transformaciones, yoga y despapaye: El Big Bang de los espacios lésbicos en la Ciudad de México" for the Gender Studies Program (PUEG) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in Mexico

City on May 26, 2010 She presented a paper in the session on Queer Sym-biosis: Negotiating Intimacy in Queer and Domestic Spaces in Mexico City at the Tepoztlan Institute for Trans-national History of the Americas in Tepoztlan, Mexico, July 21-28, 2010. She also was an invited panelist in the session on The Politics of Solidarity in Early Lesbian Networks in Mexico City at the CLAGS Conference on Lesbians in the '70s held in New York City, October 8-9, 2010. **Eunsung Lee, Ashley Falzetti, Bahia Munem, Jillian Hernandez, Stephanie Clare, Sonja Thomas, Ariella Rotramel, and Nafisa Tanjeem** presented papers in 2010 at the National Women's Studies Association conference. **Miriam Tola** presented at the conference on Empire: A Retrospective at The University of Pittsburgh; Stina Soderling presented at a conference entitled Queering the Countryside in Bloomington, Indiana; **Laura Lovin** organized a panel and presented at a Critical Geography conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; **Sara Perryman** will present at the Cultural Studies Association Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois, in March 2011. All of these students have received travel conference awards.

Job Placement

Dr. Danielle Taylor Phillips, a recent graduate of the Women's and Gender Studies Department, has accepted a tenure-track position in Women's Studies at Texas Woman's University where she will begin teaching in Fall 2011. In July 2010, doctoral candidate **Catherine Sameh** became the Associate Director of the Barnard Center for Research on Women. Sameh's article "Discourses of Equality, Rights and Islam in the One Million Signatures Campaign in Iran" was published in the *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Volume 12, Issue 3 (2010). The Department congratulates **Valsala Kumari**, who successfully defended her dissertation "Microcredit as a Poverty Alleviation Strategy, Women's Empowerment, and Gender Relations." Valsala will continue to work as Secretary to the Government of Kerala, India, in the Labor and Employment Department.

WGS New Directions

Women's and Gender Studies is devoting this academic year to renovation. Under the leadership of our Undergraduate Director Carlos Decena, the Undergraduate Committee is working toward completion of a substantial revision



of the undergraduate major. Simultaneously under the leadership of our Graduate Director **Anna Sampaio** the Graduate Studies Committee is revising procedures for graduate exams, for their evaluation, and for faculty commentary to be returned to the students. Under the direction of **Charlotte Bunch** our Women's and Gender Studies Department is undertaking a two-stage retreat to evaluate the current status of the department and to reimagine its future. The first stage of that retreat will be held on Friday, March 25, 2011 in the Cook Campus Center and will be followed by a second stage to be held early in the Fall 2011 semester when the department is under new leadership.

Postdocs and Visiting Scholars

We also have been privileged to have several visiting scholars enrich our course offerings and provide lectures and research briefings. **Diane Elson**, Department of Sociology, University of Essex, Great Britain, was the 2010 Laurie Chair in Women's and Gender Studies. **Marta Zarzycka**, Assistant Professor of Gender Studies, Department of Media and Culture Studies and the Research Institute for History and Culture, Utrecht University, was a visiting scholar in the Fall 2010. **Tetyana Bureychak**, Harvard University Shklar Fellow, Spring 2011; Assistant Professor, Department of History and Theory of Sociology, I. Franko National University of Lviv (Ukraine) will be a WGS Visiting Scholar in Spring 2011. **Kyla Schuller** is our Women's and Gender Studies ACLS New Faculty Fellow and Postdoctoral Associate, 2010-2012. **Yvette Taylor**, a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the School of Geography, Politics, Sociology, Newcastle University, holds a Fulbright Distinguished Scholar's Award for the 2010-2011 academic year. Clearly this academic year has been a rich and promising one for Women's and



Gender Studies at Rutgers. We hope to build on these achievements and to make our teaching, scholarship, and activism available to the wider academic community and the world at large.

(Pictured, page 2, top center: Professor Leslie Fishbein, mid-center: Professor Radhika Balakrishnan, lower center: Professor Jasbir Puar. Page 3, clockwise: recent graduate Danielle Taylor Phillips, doctoral candidate Yurika Tamura presenting at the *Affective Tendencies* conference, Professor Ed Cohen introducing the graduate student panel at the *Affective Tendencies* conference, visiting scholar Tetyana Bureychak, Professor Charlotte Bunch).

Upcoming Events Spring 2011

Monday, March 7

Women's and Gender Studies
Research Briefing:

**"Pushing Back: Women-
led Grassroots Activism in
Contemporary New York
City's Transnational Com-
munities of Color."**

Ariella Rotramel,
Doctoral Candidate

12:00 - 1:30p.m.

Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building
Sponsor: Department of
Women's and Gender Studies.

Wednesday, March 9

**Panel: "'Uncivil' Gadgets
II: When the Internet and
Public and Private Spaces
Collide."**

Panelists:

Jasbir Puar, moderator, As-
sociate Professor of Women's
and Gender Studies, Rutgers
University

Barbara A. Lee, Esq., Pro-
fessor of Human Resource
Management, School of Man-
agement and Labor Relations,
Rutgers University

Anne Newman, Director of
the Office of Student Conduct,
Rutgers University

James Mandala, Psycholo-
gist, Assistant Director, Coun-
seling, ADAPS, and Psychiatry,
Rutgers University

Joe Rollins, Associate Profes-
sor of Political Science, Queens
College and the Graduate Cen-
ter, CUNY

Maurice J. Elias, Professor
of Psychology and Academic
Director, Rutgers Civic Engage-
ment and Service Education
Partnership Program (CESEP)

8:00-10:00pm

Multipurpose Room, Busch Cam-
pus Center

Co-sponsored by: Project Civility at
Rutgers, Dean of Students Office, Office
of Undergraduate Education, College
Avenue Campus Dean, Graduate School
of Applied and Professional Psychology,
School of Communication and Informa-
tion, School of Management and Labor
Relations, Rutgers University Libraries,
American Studies Department, Psychol-
ogy Department, Women's and Gender
Studies Department.

Tuesday, March 22

Women's and Gender Studies
Research Briefing:

**"Imag(in)ing Hegemonic
Masculinities and Nations:
The Case of Sweden and
the Ukraine."**

Tetyana Bureychak,
Harvard University
Shklar Fellow, Spring 2011
and Assistant Professor,
Department of History and
Theory of Sociology, I. Franko
National University of Lviv
(Ukraine)

12:00 - 1:30p.m.

Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building
Sponsor: Department of
Women's and Gender Studies.

Monday, March 28

Vital Voices: A Semi-Annual
Emerging Interdisciplinary
Scholars Lecture Series



Melissa Gregg,
Department of Gender and
Cultural Studies, University of
Sidney, Australia.

**"Affective Labor: Past and
Present."**

2:00 - 4:00p.m.

Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building
Sponsor: Women's and Gender Studies
Graduate Students Association,
Department of Women's and Gender
Studies, Department of Journalism and
Media Studies.

Monday, April 18th

Women's and Gender Studies
Research Briefing

**"Coloniality of Diasporas
in the Insular Caribbean:
Creolization and Beyond."**

**Yolanda Martinez-San
Miguel,**

Professor of Latino and Hispanic
Caribbean Studies and Compara-
tive Literature; Director of the
Institute for Research on Women

12:00-1:30 P.M.

Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building
Sponsor: Women's and Gender
Studies Department.

Thursday, April 21st

**Women's and Gender
Studies Department Hon-
ors Presentations**

3:00-7:00 P.M.

Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building
Sponsor: Women's and Gender
Studies Department.

Tuesday, April 26th

**"Liberation Mythologies:
Mary Magdalene and oth-
er Caribbeanist Dreams of
Freedom."**

Raquel Z. Rivera,
Affiliated Scholar at the Center
for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunt-
er College

4:00 P.M. Reception

4:30-6:30 P.M. Lecture

Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building
Sponsor: Women's and Gender
Studies Department.



Pictured, lower left: logo of Rutgers' Project Civility,
center: Melissa Gregg, lower right: Raquel Z. Rivera
photographed by Jorge Vasquez.

interview: ANNA SAMPAIO

Anna Sampaio joined Rutgers University in 2009 as Associate Professor and currently serves as Graduate Director of the Department of Women's and Gender Studies. A specialist in Latina/o politics, immigration, gender, ethnic and racial politics, post-colonialism, and transnationalism, she is currently teaching a graduate seminar in Feminist Knowledge Production that aims "to expose students to a broad range of disciplinary methodology and epistemological questions." She edited *Transnational Latina/o Communities: Politics, Processes, Cultures* with Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez and currently is working on a new book project on the impact of post 9-11 immigration policies on the lives of Latino/a immigrants. Prior to joining Rutgers University she taught at the University of Colorado Denver.

What was the main challenge in your transition to the position of Graduate Director?

As a new faculty member I had to familiarize myself with university policies and resources. The Rutgers administrative level is extremely complex. There is a multitude of interlocking institutional partners and offices that one needs to know. Plus, I recently had a baby, Eva. Spending time with her is incredibly rewarding but, of course, I need to be much more careful with my schedule. In my daily life with Eva I have learned to be always five steps ahead with planning. I had to adopt a long-term vision that is very useful in my work with graduate students.

What are your main goals as

Graduate Director?

Given my background in political science, I tend to be a big fan of rules, transparency and standardized processes. My goal is to increase the efficiency of the department and to make sure to provide students with a clear picture of program requirements, rules and opportunities. One case in point is the qualifying exam for doctoral students. It is a step that requires significant effort on their side, and I want to figure out how to improve the ways to give them feedback on what they have produced. Another key issue is facilitating the job placement of our doctoral graduates. A few months ago we launched a new section on our website with the updated profiles of all the students on the job market. Additionally, we are introducing a new Graduate Student Award for Teaching Excellence for two students who have been teaching in the department.

Are there upcoming activities and events that graduate students should keep an eye on?

For the Fall 2011 we are planning a series of professionalization workshops focusing on the job market, on the qualifying exams, and on how to obtain approval for human research from Rutgers Institutional Review Board (IRB).



Let's talk about your research. What are you currently working on?

I'm working on a few projects right now. The largest undertaking is *Terrorizing Latino Immigrants: Race, Gender and Immigration Policy Post 9/11*, a book project that examines the impact on Latino communities of US immigration politics post 9/11. I draw on Iris Marion Young to show how the State adopts the father position and the language of protection and security to take aggressive action against the immigrant other. Those who are targeted, and they are disproportionately Latinos, are racialized as foreign regardless of their immigration status. The first chapters of the book will offer a review of the history of immigration politics and a content-analysis of Congressional bills. The second part will give a compendium of raids and roundups through the content analysis of newspapers available on the database Lexis-Nexis for the years 2001-2008. The book also will include the study of three court cases involving American citizens apprehended in the war on terrorism which will show how the State begins to act toward its citizens in the same way it act toward immigrants.

Are things changing with the Obama administration?

In my book I show that while there are no radical shifts in policy, we are moving away from the discursive construction of immigrants as terrorists. The current administration created a slightly less intimidating environment for immigrants.

What do you do outside the department if relevant?

I've worked with several organizations serving the Latino community. I'm a member of the Board of Directors of Latina Initiative, a nationally recognized nonpartisan leadership and education, voter registration, and mobilization project aimed at increasing the civic and political engagement of Latinas in Denver, Colorado.

Ph.D. Students NEWS from the FIELD

Never Heard of Ethnophobia? Bahia Munem Speaks About Her Field Research in Brazil

When I first went to São Paulo, Brazil in January 2009 to conduct preliminary research on a group of resettled Palestinian refugees for my dissertation, the chair of my dissertation committee advised me to prepare for the trip as if I were going to an island for three months by myself. Two weeks after I arrived in São Paulo, her words began to resonate. This was my first time in Brazil's largest metropolis. In addition to anxieties about negotiating a very large and unfamiliar city alone, I was uncertain about how I would make initial contact with the subjects of my project. I was suffering from a deep ethnophobia—a neologism I borrow from John L. Jackson's *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity* (2005). The term, as Jackson puts forth, endeavors to capture "not only writers' apprehensions," but "it is also meant to emphasize some of the fears endemic to fieldwork, reasonable fears about conducting something as murky, qualitative, and jumbled as fieldwork" (24).

After conducting archival research in the Museu Memorial do Imigrante (Immigrant Memorial Museum) for nearly two weeks, I mustered up the courage to go to the small city in the greater São Paulo area where 56 of the Palestinian refugees had been resettled. Before their arrival in Brazil, they had been living for nearly five years in a makeshift refugee camp on the desert border of Jordan and Iraq. These Palestinian refugees were displaced from Baghdad, as a result of the US-led invasion in 2003. Brazil, in a tripartite agreement, made an overture to resettle them in 2007. Fortunately, the very first day



that I ventured into my research site, I was able to make contact with, and interview, a prominent member of the community in which the refugees had been resettled. He then facilitated connections with people who would become important interlocutors and key informants. Slowly, the ethnophobia began to ease.

Since that first three-month trip to Brazil, I have made two more field visits. The last trip was this past summer. This third and final research visit was made possible by a Woodrow Wilson Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship. I landed in Brasília, Brazil's capital, for the first time, two days after the opening ceremony of the World Cup in South Africa. The Brazilian nation-state's entanglement with *futebol* is notorious, and I would soon get better insight into the ways in which this "played" out locally. Since my research brought me to the capital to obtain information and documentation regarding the Palestin-

ian refugees' resettlement process, I needed access to the government ministries that housed these documents. I never considered that *futebol* matches would have an impact on the government's operational schedule.

The day after I arrived, I headed to the Judicial Ministry to see about documents. Unfortunately, the judicial archives were closed for inventory, so I told the attendant that I would return in two days. She motioned to the large placard that I somehow missed on my way into the facility. The placard displayed the alternate schedule of operations for those days in which Brazil played a match in the World Cup. This alternative schedule was not for the Judicial Ministry alone; it was applicable to all government offices, as well as NGOs. And yes, in two days Brazil was slated to play. I was quickly reminded that fieldwork always requires flexibility and plenty of alternate plans.

Despite government closures, the two weeks I spent in Brasília were very productive. I was able to collect important data about the resettlement process, and I also conducted critical interviews. Moreover, I learned to navigate the airplane-shaped capital with relative ease. I then headed to São Paulo to reunite with some of the resettled persons whom I had first met in 2009. This time the metropolis with 11.5 million inhabitants was more familiar than strange, and movement within the city was much easier to negotiate. More importantly, the contacts that I had established and maintained over the course of previous field visits made this final stage of my fieldwork incredibly rich and significant. These factors allowed the ethnophobia to remain at bay.

Overall, while conducting research for my dissertation, I have learned that fieldwork is indeed "murky," complicated, and requires a lot of ingenuity. Yet, in my experience, it has certainly been worthwhile.

Anahi Russo Garrido

on Being a Visiting Scholar in Gender Studies in Mexico City

Last year (2009-2010) I had the opportunity to be a visiting scholar at the Gender Study program (PUEG) of Mexico's National Autonomous University (UNAM). The Gender Studies program at UNAM was founded in 1992. To my knowledge, another gender studies program has been in place in the country at El Colegio de Mexico since 1983. Mexico's Autonomous University (UAM) now also offers a certificate and an MA in Women's Studies. The Gender Studies program at UNAM offers courses, but it also develops strategic actions promoting gender equity across the university. At the moment, a certificate in gender studies is available to graduate students, but no major or MA/PhD programs are in place.

As a visiting scholar, I had the opportunity to attend a graduate seminar entitled "Borders and Citizenship" for two semesters taught by Dr. Marissa Belausteguigoitia and Dr. Ana Maria Martinez de la Escalera, two of the most engaging, passionate, and brilliant professors I have had. The readings for the course formed an eclectic mix of knowledge produced across the Americas and Europe. We read an interdisciplinary body of theories/communiqués/novels from authors such as Roland Barthes, Joan Scott, Subcomandante Marcos, Jacques Lacan, Octavio Paz, Martha Lamas, Susan Sontag, and Norma Alárcon. The first semester we thought of intersectionality through a voyage that first led us to the borders of Northern Mexico, the arid land of feminicides, militarization, and Aztlán. We then traveled to the South, where Zapatistas remain active to this day and the indigenous population has theorized embodiment from a different set of experiences and frameworks than Northern Mexican theorists. The second semester began shortly after Haiti's and Chile's earthquake had taken place. We therefore spent considerable time analyzing images that were circulated in the press, questioning how different tragedies were represented, how to write regarding the pain of others, and in which histories these images and words were inscribed. Overall,



I believe that the course taught us how to engage with immediate questions. It made what we do as scholars urgent and vivid. In the spring I also attended a seminar entitled "Lesbian Theory in Latin America." This seminar was open to undergraduates, graduates, faculty, activists and the general public. It was taught by one of the best known scholars on lesbian feminism in Latin America, Dr. Norma Mogrovejo. About five men and fifteen women from all paths of life participated. I was once again happily surprised to see how theory was used to think through current events, at a moment when same-sex marriage had just been legalized in the city, the poliamorous movement was growing and the separation between Church and State was crumbling in practice. Many class participants had a foot in the movement and academia at the same time. The division between practice and theory was thin, the separation between texts and current events tenuously perceptible, and the hierarchies between/among activists and academics of different experiences unapparent. Such a site of reflection enables the production of theories/strategies, engaging and strengthening all participants.



At the end of the academic year, I gave a lecture on my work that was moderated by my advisor for the year, Dr. Hortensia Moreno. As I was still in the middle of fieldwork, making sense of my data required writing from a different place. I knew that this was not a final product, so I allowed myself to write a creative and unconventional paper that was likely to open various possibilities for further writing. I titled the paper "Between Bodies, Transformations, Yoga and Celebration: The Big Bang of Lesbian Spaces in Mexico City." The paper was intended to explore lesbian spaces simulating the movements of Big Bang, from the smallest unit to its broadest expansion. The title attracted a few students and scholars, but I must confess that it also gathered a few new age or spiritual practitioners who invited me to a sun ceremony after the presentation (I never attended). It was rather amusing since it was unexpected, but it reminded of the power of titles.

I highly recommend taking part in the visiting scholar program at PUEG/UNAM. More details are available at: <http://www.pueg.unam.mx>.

(photos by Anahi Russo Garrido)

MA Students' REPORTS



Kristin Catena

The past year and a half has gone by quickly, but I have learned a lot from the WGS MA program. The center of my study has been a thesis that focused on the resignation of former New Jersey governor James McGreevey. The project interrogated the gay rights and religious discourse at work in the coverage of this event and created new arguments about homonormativity in the United States. The thesis was an interesting new project that helped me develop my research interests in sexuality, public media, and religious discourse.

After completing the degree, I plan to find a place in the work world while beginning the process of researching Ph.D. programs in sociology, anthropology, and ethnomusicology and hope to begin one of these programs within the next few years. During my time at Rutgers, I also have served as the co-chair of the Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Student Association (WGS-GSA) and worked as a research assistant at the Center for Behavioral Health Services and Criminal Justice Research (CBHS-CJR). I have enjoyed working with WGS-GSA to serve the needs of MA and PhD students in the WGS program and was especially pleased to present in WGS-GSA's new graduate student conference this past fall. While working with CBHS-CJR, I was able to learn more about the process of operating large-scale research projects as well as learning about the experiences of incarcerated women through face-to-face interviews.

(Kristin Catena defended her thesis on December 16, 2010)

Rebecca Brafman



As I am currently interviewing for a residency position in Emergency Medicine, one of the most common questions that I am asked is: "How will your MA in Women's and Gender Studies influence your medical career?" I am thankful that I have many available answers to this query, as my time at Rutgers was productive in terms of furthering my long-standing interest in Gender Studies but will also affect my future career as a physician.

By concentrating my elective courses around the general theme of "Gender and Health," I was able to take "Health Care Reform" at the School of Public Policy, which focused on racial and gender disparities in health care, while "Sociology of Health and Illness" exposed me to critiques of the medical establishment and patient care. Similarly, "Women and Health" and a colloquium centered on the theme of "Reproduction" provided a more in depth study of the ways in which an understanding of the challenges facing women can enrich and inform medical treatment, to the benefit of both patient and practitioner.

The core courses in the Women's and Gender Studies department broadened my knowledge of feminist literature, philosophy, and methods of inquiry, while presenting me with multiple opportunities to engage with professors and classmates whose diverse experiences and areas of interest created a valuable environment for learning.

I completed my practicum by serving as the head coach for the New York Rugby Club Under-19 Girls' team. The program seeks to introduce teenage girls to a new sport but also, through participation in individual and group mentoring, enables the girls to aim towards academic improvement, as well as goal-setting and achieving in life as well as in the classroom.

Though coaching teenage girls presented its challenges and frustrations, ultimately the experience was productive and rewarding both for me and the team. In particular, I observed the ways in which rugby provides a channel through which these young girls were able to formulate their own identities and take a sense of ownership over their bodies, their lives, and their future directions. This concrete and practical manifestation of feminist activism provided a useful and educational counterpoint to my academic and professional focus on women and medicine. Both aspects of my scholarly interests will be vital to my personal and vocational future.

(Rebecca Brafman completed her practicum on November 13, 2010)

Tara Chetty

The Fiji Islands lie in the South Pacific, almost as far away from New Jersey as you can get. It's been a year and a half since I ended up at Rutgers, thanks to Fulbright and US foreign policy shifts in the Pacific, and at times it feels a little surreal. But while many people have never heard of the Pacific island nation – apart from the name of some bottled water – Fijian feminists have had a long relationship with activists based at Rutgers and with the global women's movement. It is through these connections that I first heard of Rutgers and the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), while I was working for a feminist organization in Fiji – the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. The practicum, as part of the M.A. in Women's & Gender Studies, was an opportunity to bring together my experiences in feminist scholarship with this history of activism.

My time at Rutgers coincided with the CWGL's hosting of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, coordinated by Mary Jane Real. In Fiji we were familiar with the work of the Coalition and had used its materials in our own advocacy. Real and I, both part of Asia-Pacific feminist networks, had met a couple of times before, so we soon decided to work together here in New Jersey. I would help out with Coalition communications, and Real would supervise my practicum. Working with the Coalition was a chance to reengage with feminist activism and see firsthand advocacy in the global arena, such as during the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York City. However, it was also a chance to engage feminist theory with feminist praxis. I was interested in how neoliberal ideology and practices may have been influencing the work of the Coalition. While the feminist activists of the Coalition, who are also academics, engage in sophisticated analysis of the effect of various fundamentalisms on women's human rights defenders, it seemed neoliberalism was a less important thread.

Based on four months working with the Coalition, I asked questions about how neoliberal ideology and practice may emerge in funding and communications. I also looked at some of the history of the group and at the careful development of the women's human rights defenders framing in the extensive and multi-sited work of the Coalition.

I will wrap up this project and head home in the spring, where the work of women's human rights defenders has become increasingly fraught since the December 2006 military *coup d'état*. In Fiji feminist activists continue to negotiate the tricky terrain of a militarized government, censored media, entrenched religious, and cultural fundamentalisms, and the effects of neoliberal globalization.

(Tara Chetty will complete her practicum in May 2011)



interview:

JULIE RAJAN

Julie Rajan, Assistant Professor in Women's and Gender Studies, is the MA Program Director.

We had an enrollment boom in the WGS MA Program. How do you explain it?

Part of it is certainly the rising interest in issues pertaining to women and gender both inside and outside of academia, as well as to the greater applicability of women's and gender issues in the workforce. With an MA in Women's and Gender studies, one can pursue further academic studies in various disciplines or begin work right away in various work contexts, from NGOs to political organizations. I also have seen a rising interest among undergraduates in Women's and Gender Studies. This means that stereotypes of who feminists are and what constitutes women's and gender issues are being challenged by our instructors, especially in what materials they bring to and how they present those materials to students. Students, female and male, are learning how gender experiences pervade a variety of issues, from national controversies over sexuality to US policies in Iraq and Afghanistan.

What are the greatest strengths of this MA Program?

One of them is the caliber and diversity of our students. A key strength is also the organization of the program, which allows students to cater our academic curricula to specifically develop their own individual interests, whether they be in women and politics, literature, or human rights. No doubt, one of our greatest strengths is our stellar, world-renowned faculty who bring their current research and expertise in their own fields of study directly to students through a wonderful array of thought-provoking classes and in their roles as advisors. Finally, the program's inclusion in the IWL Consortium gives students the advantage of engaging with other women's and gender studies units to expand their experiences in the program.

What do you like most about your job?

I have most enjoyed speaking with MA students about their long-term interests in women's and gender studies and helping them to utilize the tools and resources we provide to help them to achieve their goals.

What should prospective students expect from this program?

Students should expect strong support for their academic initiatives both from faculty and staff, a range of high-caliber classes, and a program that is interested in assisting them explore women's and gender studies in ways that are meaningful to them.

What are you currently working on?

Right now, I am reworking material for my current text, *Rewriting Nation: Post-Independence Narratives of Resistance Written by Women Residing in India*. This analysis traces evolutions in the complex relationship between postcolonial fictional and non-fictional narratives written by women who reside in India and evolutions in narrative of the Indian nation since 1947. In process is my recent text, *Women Suicide Bombers: Narratives of Violence* (Routledge, April 2011), which explores narrative representations of women bombers by media, cultural, academic, and government venues internationally that have engendered problematic assumptions about women bombers in various conflicts in the postcolonial era.



Conference NOTES #1

Affective Tendencies (by Miriam Tola)

With 19 presenters and 4 key-note speakers, over 250 attendees coming from Northern Europe, Australia and all over the United States, and dozens of volunteers, the international conference Affective Tendencies (October 7-9, 2010) was the highlight moment of 2010 for the Women's and Gender Studies Department. The conference was organized by professors Elizabeth Grosz and Ed Cohen in the frame of the project "Thought As Action: Gender, Democracy, Freedom" launched by the Centre for Women and Gender Research at the University of Bergen, Norway, a longtime partner of Rutgers WGS.

Elizabeth Grosz explains that the conference "addressed questions on how sexuality, pleasure and bodies constitute affective life. How are our conceptions of the body altered and complicated through the understanding of affective forces? How are relations of power – those that constitute relations of oppression, whether in terms of gender, race, class, nationality, religion or sexuality – to be understood following the 'affective turn'? How do affects flow among bodies, human and non-human?"

Affective Tendencies kicked off with a graduate student panel organized by Ashley Falzetti and Stephanie Clare that included presentations by Jillian Hernandez, Max Hantel, Yurika Tamura, and me. Over the weekend WGS graduate students had the opportunity to attend exciting and thought-provoking talks by a number of core and affiliate faculty members including Ed Cohen, Carlos Decena, Mary Gossy, Marisa Fuentes, and Kyla Schuller. The delegation of speakers from Northern Europe involved in the "Thought as Action" project included Ellen Mortensen, Vigdis Broche-Due and Jami Weinstein. Other featured speakers were Jean Franco from Columbia University and Richard Dienst from the English Department at Rutgers. Among the attendees were Ranjana Khanna, Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Duke University, and Elizabeth Wilson, professor in Women's Studies at Emory.

David Eng gave the first keynote presentation exploring how political and psychic genealogies of reparation might supplement one another in theories of the human, while helping us to understand better the social and psychic limits of repairing war, violence, colonialism, and genocide. Drawing on Jean Genet and Pierre Bordieu, celebrated queer theorist Leo Bersani offered a provocative analysis of the film *Safe* by Todd Haynes. WGS Professor Jasbir Puar opened her talk by invoking the suicide of Rutgers student Tyler Clementi. Through an interrogation of the racial implications and the role of digital technologies related to Clementi's suicide, Puar complicated the narratives of "homophobia" and "gay bullying" following recent gay youth suicides. Lauren Berlant closed the conference with a close reading of *Last Tango in Paris* that explored the role of sex in the "affective turn" of queer and feminist work. Overall, the conference showed the key role of feminist and queer contributions in the understanding of affective life. It was a stunning collective effort made possible also by the generosity of many graduate students who volunteered their time. On the closing day, reflecting on the strange euphoria in the air, many used the term "convivial" to describe the event. Conviviality: is there a better catalyst for stimulating creative thinking?

Networking at NWSA (by Nafisa Tanjeem)

Last November I had the opportunity to attend the National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference 2010 in Denver, Colorado. I presented a paper on how the postcolonial state of Bangladesh implemented a racial purification project on bodies of women, who were raped by Pakistani army in 1971, in the name of "rehabilitation." Comments, and criticisms from attendees helped me a great deal to hone my analysis.

I also attended several sessions on the themes "complicating the queer," "the politics of nation," "outsider feminisms," and "the critical and the creative." Some of the paper presentations significantly overlapped with my research interests. For example, Gulzar Charania (University of Toronto) explored ways in which Muslim queers negotiate their sexuality within a complex terrain of gender, race, and imperialism. Payal Banerjee's (Smith College) paper discussed how complex gender dynamics underscore the material and discursive practices informing the large-scale employment of Indian immigrant IT workers in the US. McKeage (Southern Connecticut State University) and Rivage-Seul (Berea College) showed how a fourth wave feminist project of "taking back the kitchen" can seize control of the food supply from multinational corporations and return cooking to local communities. Q/A sessions after the paper presentations offered me an opportunity to share my thoughts with the authors.

The conference hosted some very useful workshops that dealt with feminist pedagogy in classrooms. I participated in such a workshop titled "Are my Politics Showing? Teaching Multiple Perspectives" (offered by Barbara LeSavoy, State University of New York & Ayana Weekley, Grand Valley State University) which discussed how to engage diverse perspectives in the Women and Gender Studies classroom and how to use or not use own identities while teaching contested topics among differently positioned learners. This workshop offered me a forum to share my struggles and coping mechanisms as a first-time instructor at a US University and also to learn from experiences of my fellow instructors and other faculty members. Juana Maria Rodriguez (Associate Professor, UC Berkeley) and Gayatri Gopinath (Associate Professor, New York University) gave an awesome presentation on tensions and possibilities of feminist queer theories that both expanded the field and simultaneously reinforced silences about nation, race, ethnicity, class, and region in the Saturday plenary session on "Complicating the Queer."

The most breathtaking, exciting part for me was the performance by Ananya Dance Theatre on "Kshoy! Decay!" By using metaphors of mud, Professor Ananya Chatterjea and her fellow dancers explored afterlives of women from global communities of color who have been forced to relocate or evacuate from their homelands. Added bonuses were the chance to network with graduate students and faculty members who joined us from all over the world and a brief but intriguing experience of downtown Denver life.



'70s Lesbians: Whose Decade? (by Agatha Beins)

The conference "In Amerika They Call Us Dykes" (City University of New York, October 8-10, 2010) was the culmination of a series of events about lesbian lives in the 1970s organized by the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at CUNY. A variety of scholars and activists attended the two-day event in mid-October, including Women's and Gender Studies Ph.D. candidate Anahí Russo Garrido. What was striking to me as I entered the basement auditorium for the plenary that began the second day—my first experience of the conference—was the number of people in the audience with short gray hair.

Happy about this sight and perhaps guilty of romanticizing the energy, anger, and creativity of the 1970s, I was eager to become part of a larger conversation about identity, politics, and revolution with people who had experienced it. As with most encounters with the world, it is not so simple. First, there were conversations in the plural, not all of which were in harmony, and, second, my imaginary of the 1970s is, of course, just that: imaginary.

After the panel on which I presented, entitled simply "Lesbian Feminist Publications," a woman whom I know from the Lesbian Herstory Archives and who was active in the group Radicalesbians in the 1970s came up to me and told me that she did not want to be treated like data, like bits of information. Or this is what I remember hearing her saying to me. I interpreted her comment to be one effect of hearing narratives about lesbians and lesbian feminism in the 1970s that did not reflect her experience of being a lesbian and being active during that decade. Based on what others who attended the conference have told me, I feel that this moment also could be interpreted as symbolic of what appeared to be a very visible generational tension: between women who were active in the 1970s and those who are studying women who were active in the 1970s. However, I am troubled about reproducing this generational narrative and for finding it apropos. Also contributing to my ambivalence is that my recollection of this event is an oversimplification based on a small sample of people in a particular place and time and on whose voices were loudest.

Is there, then, a moral to this story? It is surely not that we all need just to get along, nor that I need to more or less easily accept the generational model. Perhaps it is simply that politics is messy, regardless of place and time, or that feminists have for decades collaborated through disagreement. Perhaps that one's anger over injustice—regardless of its occurrence in the 1970s or 2000s—does not easily rest, leading to passionate (if sometimes vitriolic) encounters with one's activist kin. Regardless, I am reminded of the very political aspects of knowledge production, for what I do matters, although often in ways I cannot predict or control.

Conference NOTES #2

Celebrating Difference: the WGS Graduate Students Conference (by Ashley Falzetti)

This year we decided to celebrate the variety of research taking place among graduate students in our department with a Fall Graduate Student Conference on Thursday, October 28, 2010. The evening started off with a panel made up of Nafisa Tanjeem, Agatha Beins, and Stina Soderling that showcased the wide range of interests of our Ph.D. students. Nafisa offered a fascinating reading of the difference between the movie *Slumdog Millionaire* and the novel *Q & A* on which it is based, showing the imperial project embedded in the translation of the story for film. Also concerned with processes of transnational circulation, Agatha discussed the printing and reprinting of images of Indochinese women in North American feminist publications in the 1970s, raising questions about how we imagine race and nation in the Women's Liberation movement. Stina discussed her field work in rural Tennessee and proposed an alternative metaphor of queer life that focuses on life cycles rather than urban night life. As a group these presentations highlight the combination of feminist history, queer theory, and cultural criticism that give shape to contemporary Women's and Gender Studies.

The evening was an opportunity for us to make connections across research and cohorts. Including a mixture of first-time presenters and others who have presented at numerous conferences, it became a great opportunity to learn more about the processes involved in conference presentations and planning. MA Student Tara Chetty and Ph.D. candidate Ariella Rotramel produced a panel that explored the tensions of neoliberalism in women's rights activism and the feminist classroom from very different positions, highlighting the need for work that engages these questions from multiple levels and experiences. Leaving plenty of time for questions at the end of panels allowed attendees to develop engaging discussions that cut across and enriched the presentations. With generous support from the Graduate Student Association and the Women's and Gender Studies Department, we had a delicious feast to spur on conversation. Jessica Landers and Kristin Catena wrapped up our evening with intriguing interpretations of confessions and monstrosity. Kristin's presentation explored the rhetoric of New Jersey politician James E. McGreevey's description of himself as a "gay American" in his highly publicized coming out narrative. Jessica used a variety of television and film images to explore contemporary obsessions with identifying with vampires and other forms of monstrosity.

As one of the organizers of this conference, I hoped to foster a richer sense of community across cohorts and research topics. It is so easy for us to focus on our own little corners of the department and the field, but it is quite remarkable to see the connections between our work when we really get together to talk about our current research. Thanks also goes out to Stephanie Clare, who helped conceptualize and organize the conference, and to Jillian Hernandez who helped to review and organize panels. There are already plans to organize a similar conference next fall, and we hope that it can continue to be a space in which we can reach out to and learn from those who have come before us.

People

Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel



is the new Director of the Institute for Research on Women. A professor in the Comparative Literature department, she is an affiliate faculty member of Women's and Gender Studies. Dr. Martínez-San Miguel's research interests include Latin-American literature; colonial, Hispanic Caribbean, and Latino literature; colonial and postcolonial theory; migration studies; and literary theory. She joins Rutgers from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Martínez-San Miguel earned her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. She currently is working on her fourth book project entitled *Coloniality of Diasporas: Rethinking Intra-Colonial Migrations in a Pan-Caribbean Context*, a comparative study on internal Caribbean migrations between former/actual metropolis and colonies, to question transnational and postcolonial approaches to massive population displacements and their cultural productions.



Kyla Schuller received her PhD in Literature from UC San Diego in June 2009, where her dissertation was recognized as the University's Distinguished Dissertation in Humanities/Fine Arts produced during the previous two years. After research residencies at UC Irvine and UC Berkeley, she joined the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University in Fall 2010 as an ACLS New Faculty Fellow and

Postdoctoral Associate. Her work has appeared in the *Journal of Modern Literature*, *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies*, and *Post Road*. Her latest article is "Specious Bedfellows: Ethnicity, Animality, and the Intimacy of Slaughter in *Moby-Dick*" (*Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 12, no. 3, 2010). Her research focuses on the nineteenth-century construction of race, gender, and sexuality across the fields of scientific practice, literary production, and social reform. In addition to leading the honors thesis research seminar in Women's and Gender Studies, Kyla is teaching an undergraduate class on Race, Gender and Science in the Spring 2011. Currently she is working on a book project entitled *Sentimental Science and the Rise of Eugenics in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, in which she theorizes how sentimental discourse gave rise to influential new models of evolution, race, and heredity that emphasized human agency in biological development.

(photo courtesy of Kyla Schuller)

Jacquelyn Litt

joined Rutgers University in September 2010 to serve as Dean of Douglass Residential College and the Douglass Campus and Professor in Women's and Gender Studies. Dr. Litt has a distinguished record of scholarship, teaching, and administrative service that focuses on women's issues. She comes to Rutgers from the University of Missouri where she was founding chair of Women's and Gender Studies. Her first book, *Medicalized Motherhood: Perspectives from the Lives of African-American and Jewish Women*, was cited by the American Sociological Association for outstanding scholarship on race, class, and gender. Her second book, *Global Dimensions of Gender and Carework*, examines issues related to globalization, gender, and carework. Her current research, supported by a grant from the Social Sciences Research Council, focuses on the importance of African-American women's networks during the evacuation and displacement of families after Hurricane Katrina. As the principal investigator for the National Science Foundation ADVANCE grant administered at the University of Missouri, Litt was responsible for establishing practices to promote gender equity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, as well as providing support for women in senior faculty positions in the same fields. Prior to her tenure at the University of Missouri, Litt directed Women's Studies programs at Iowa State University and Allegheny College.



Alison R. Bernstein, a scholar in the field of humanities and women's studies and a former vice president of the Ford Foundation, will become director of Rutgers' Institute for Women's Leadership (IWL) as of July 1, 2011. Founded in 1991, IWL represents a consortium of eight units at Rutgers including the Department of Women's and Gender Studies. Dr. Bernstein earned her bachelor's degree at Vassar College and her master's and doctorate at Columbia University. She served as a vice president for the Education, Creativity, and Free Expression Program at the Ford Foundation from 1996 to 2010. Bernstein is currently the William H. and Camille Cosby Endowed



Chair and professor of humanities and women's studies at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. Bernstein coordinated the President's Standing Committee on the Status of Women while she was associate dean of the faculty at Princeton and has done extensive research into American Indian history, with an emphasis on Native American women. A former member of the Presidential Advisory Board on Tribal Colleges and Universities and the Board of Advisors to the Smithsonian Institution-National Museum of American History, Bernstein served as program and planning officer at the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education within the U.S. Department of Education. She is writing a book that traces the historical impact of American philanthropy on higher education.

Stephanie Clare

Dissertation: *Earthly Encounters: Readings in Poststructuralism, Feminist Theory, and Canadian Settler Colonialism*

I am a Ph.D. Candidate in Women's and Gender Studies, and I will be defending my dissertation in March 2011. As I prepare the final version of my dissertation, I now seek a faculty position that would support my ongoing research as I continue to teach and provide service. My interdisciplinary research, for which I have been granted over \$200,000 from agencies such as SSHRC and FQRSC, touches upon feminist, queer, and postcolonial theory, twentieth-century French philosophy, indigenous studies, science studies, geography, and queer cinema. I also have published two articles, one in *Hypatia* and the second in *Exit Nine*. I have extensive teaching experience in Women's and Gender Studies and English, and my teaching efforts have been recognized by Rutgers' Writing Program, which selected me both to pilot a new version of its freshman course and to teach in a high-profile presidential campaign, "Rutgers Future Scholars." Finally, as former president of the Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Student Association, I understand the importance of departmental service, especially in interdisciplinary programs. (photo courtesy of Stephanie Clare)



PhDs on the market

Sonja Thomas

Dissertation: *"From Chattas to Churidars: Syrian Christian Religious Minorities in a Secular Indian State"*



My research lies at the intersections of Women's and Gender Studies and South Asian Studies. In my dissertation, "From Chattas to Churidars: Syrian

Christian Religious Minorities in a Secular Indian State," I examine the larger questions of how socially constructed differences between women shape their capacity to create feminist networks and to act toward social change. My research specifically analyzes the Syrian Christian community of Kerala, India and the intersectional social identities of the religious community: a Christian religious minority identity, an Aryan racial identity, and a high-caste Brahmin identity. From the chatta, a clothing worn in pre-independence India by Syrian Christian women alone, to the churidar worn today by women of all castes, races and religions, my dissertation attempts to understand the complex histories and differences between South Asian peoples. My immediate research plan is to develop my dissertation into book form. (photo courtesy of Sonja Thomas)

Ariella Rabin Rotramel

Dissertation: *"Pushing Back: Women-led Grassroots Activism in Contemporary New York City's Transnational Communities of Color, 1986-2010."*

My dissertation research examines women-led activism by New York's community-based organizations—Mothers on the Move (MOM) and CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities, formerly the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAAIV). Concentrating on each group's efforts to organize around domestic workers' rights, gentrification, and environmental racism, I interrogate how these campaigns are tied to political contestations of space, which are critical to working-class transnational communities of color surviving on the geographical and economic margins of New York City. In addition to exploring these key issues, I analyze the strategies each group and its allies use, ranging from theater to counter-proposals for the use of public spaces such as the Lower East Side's waterfront in a manner that centers on community members' needs and interests. Using an interdisciplinary combination of original organizational archiving, ethnography, and interviews, I provide a nuanced approach to studying contemporary activism. I argue that CAAAV and MOM deploy a differential consciousness-based approach to activism that is heavily determined by the politics of space as they collaborate across differences while maintaining strong cultural and geographic identifications.

SIGNATURE COURSES



SAS Signature Courses 2011 with Ethel Brooks, Deborah Gray White, and Carlos Decena

Women's and Gender Studies' Professors Ethel Brooks and Deborah Gray White are teaching Undergraduate Signature Courses in the Spring 2011. Professor Gray White introduced the brand new Signature Course From Plantation to the White House, while Ethel Brooks is teaching War: Critical Perspectives for the third time. Following last fall's successful debut, Professor Carlos Decena will teach Immigrant States: Jersey's Global Routes in the fall's 2011. The Signature Courses at Rutgers University tackle topics of grand intellectual sweep by introducing students to questions of enduring importance and establishing a common basis for intellectual exchange among students and faculty inside and outside the classroom.

War: Critical Perspectives

In January Ethel Brooks was a Fellow at the 2011 Jack and Anita Hess Seminar for Faculty at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The theme of the Hess Seminar was "Teaching with, and about, Holocaust Eyewitness Accounts: Challenges and Opportunities." Drawing from this experience, the course on War: Critical Perspectives includes even more testimony and eyewitness accounts than its two predecessors and has been enhanced by the input of TAS Rachel Zaslow, Carolina Alonso, and Nafisa Tajneem. "In my writing, I call testimony 'living proof' and hope to convey to students the idea that, by listening to 'everyday' people's stories and voices, we can gain a greater understanding of the causes, theories and scholarly approaches to historical phenomena," said Ethel Brooks. "I would like students to see testimony as a political act, an act of courage and one that can open up the over-determined, seemingly straightforward nature of trauma, genocide and war in

unexpected ways." The course incorporates historical accounts, as well as literary (novels and poetry) and sometimes fictional film accounts of dictatorship and the military. At the end of the semester, students have the option of doing a creative project instead of a full-length scholarly paper. Along with the creative project, they have to write a five page analytical paper that looks at the connections between their project and the literature they have read in class. Professor Brooks adds: "I have had students choreograph a dance that exemplified cycles of violence in the Gujarat pogroms through a combination of Bhangra and Bharat Natyam dance forms; others 'dumpster dove' for six weeks and documented their excursions, what they found and what they did with what they found as a way of understanding productivity, living without, and survival. Other groups have created a multimedia publication about war and its effects on everyday life; one group cooked a meal that was both halal and kosher and used food practices in their analysis of the Israel/Palestine conflict."

From Plantation to the White House

Co-taught by Deborah Gray White and Donna Murch at the History Department, this course looks at the election of Barack Obama and addresses contemporary issues of profiling, neo-liberal and neo-conservative politics, immigration, racial identity, and gender in the 21st century. How did a people who were, just such a short time ago, on the margins of citizenship move to the center of political power in a land in which their color and ascribed status marked them as outsiders? Has racism disappeared? When and how did it begin in America; how was it sustained; and

what groups have been its victim? Michelle Obama's heritage takes us from American slave plantations to the White House, raising questions about the intersecting histories of slavery, race, women, and gender in America. Barack Obama's interracial and international heritage prompts us to ask: "Who is black in America?" Can someone choose to be black or is blackness thrust upon one? What does it mean to be brown in America today? Can a person choose their race?

Immigrant States: Jersey's Global Routes

In the Fall 2010 Carlos Decena co-taught this Signature course with another immigration specialist, Robyn Rodriguez from the Sociology Department. "We came up with a title that captures the diversity of New Jersey but also the fact that different communities live here side by side but not in a shared spaces," recounts Professor Decena. With 275 students, 11 recitations, one lecture a week, 4 speakers and the screening of the movie *Sleep Dealer* by Alex Rivera, the class was a great success that Decena hopes to repeat in Fall 2011. Carolina Alonso and Susana Matalana from Women's and Gender Studies, and Sruti Devgan and Etienne Meunier from Sociology were the indispensable TAS. Decena and Rodriguez worked with high achieving students coming from low-ranking schools in New Jersey. The course paid attention to structural questions such as the transnational demand for labor, who is performing what kind of job, and the relationship between sexuality and immigration. "It has been surprising to see how much the national debate has been playing out right here, at Rutgers and in New Jersey. This is a state in which the presence of immigrants is very strong, communities which only ten years ago were white went through drastic changes. Issues related to immigrations are very close to our students," concludes Decena.

(Pictured, from the left: Ethel Brooks, Carlos Decena, Kristin Catena, Louisa Schein)

UNDERGRADUATE HIGHLIGHTS



*"This Major Gets into You.
You Can't Turn Off
What You Learn Here."*

*Carlos Decena's Notes from the End of
Fall 2010 Gathering with
Majors and Minors*

On December 15th, we celebrated the end of the semester, inviting our seniors for an informal departmental dinner. It was a moment to talk with each other about both our immediate plans for the future and how we might think about plans for the next steps in our lives. Some of the students spoke about graduate school as a possibility, but most talked about their interest in working in NGOs, Teach for America, and advocacy, community organizing and/or social justice organizations. The desire to work on causes related to social change was the common thread in what they said about the futures they envisioned for themselves. I asked them to talk about how they "arrived" at the choices they had made or were thinking of making, and that's when they began to talk about the work they had done in our department. "This major gets into you. You can't turn off what you learn here," said one student, referring to the fact that she could not shake off thinking critically about what she sees on television or experiences in everyday life. The others concurred. What a joy to hear that from our students! This might be saying something we all know, in a way, but it bears repeating: the work we do in the classroom and as a collective of scholars, teachers, and mentors is transformative work, and sitting down with these talented students - our students - made me realize how important it is for us all to remember that. I thought it would be helpful to remain aware of the fact that our labor as educators already has a profoundly transformative dimension.

2010-2011 Honors Thesis Projects

Rachel Bogan, "Breaking the Silence: A Review of LGBTIQQ and 'Coming Out' Support at Rutgers University"

Marisol Conde-Hernández, "Multiple Marginalizations of Undocumented Youth in New Jersey"

Victoria Finn, "'I'm a Guidette': Interpretations of New Jersey-Italian Americans in Reality Television"

Jolie Gralick, "Lipstick and Liberation: The Politics of Beauty during World War II"

Mehreen Ismail, "A Culture of Dieting: Obesity Discourse and Its Impact on Healthy Weight Children's Body Image, and Eating Patterns"

Lesley Pairoi, "Representations of Lesbians in Cuban Media"

Devangi Patel, "Teaching Core Principles of Sex-Based Physiology at Rutgers University"

Komal Patel, "Immediate Reactions of Mainstream Media to Terrorist Attacks"

Vidhi Patel, "Analyzing *Our Bodies, Ourselves*: The Past, Present, and Future of Women's Health"

Undergraduate Awards 2010

Alan Gould, Recipient of the Dorothy Hamilton Balliet Award for Outstanding Research.

Martha Guarnieri, Recipient of the Eleanor Brilliant Award for Outstanding Senior in Women's and Gender Studies.

Suzan Sanal, Recipient of the Dee Garrison Award for Peacemaking and recipient of the Douglass Alumnae Prize in Women's and Gender Studies.

Rosemary Mattam, Terese McWilliams, Melanie-An E. Vela, Recipients of the Gilda Morales Award for Outstanding Women's and Gender Studies Student Activism.

Pictured: Professor Carlos Decena, WGS Undergraduate Program Director with WGS majors and minors.

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