

September 6, 2022

Dear WGSS community,

As we begin this new school year, I want to extend a warm welcome to the new members of our community and to those who are returning. We are coming together in person as a community for the first time in two-and-a-half years, and in the midst of the continuing challenges of the pandemic, attacks on reproductive justice and LGBTQ+ communities coming from the Supreme Court and into people's everyday lives, ongoing war, gun violence, and violence against communities of color. As I wrote last year, through it all, our community continues its work of teaching, activism, institution-building, research, writing and providing new understandings of the world and envisioning new ways of being, struggling, and building beauty and justice. Thank you for all that you do, collectively, to interrogate power and work for justice. Your work, in all its facets, is an inspiration for everyone.

I also extend my thanks and gratitude to our WGSS staff members—Monique Gregory, Feronda Orders and Crystal Smith—for carrying the work of the department throughout. Up until now, the staff has been working remotely to support the department. As of September, they will be back in person under the new FlexWork program. Someone will be in the office five days a week, and we will post hours and contact information, as well as each staff members flex schedule, on the office door and in staff email signatures. In the next few weeks, as we say goodbye to Crystal, whose last day was August 19, we hope to welcome a new Program Coordinator to support the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs.

It is with deep gratitude that I introduce our leadership team for this year. As most of you know, since January Ed Cohen has been serving as WGSS Graduate Program Director, and I want to extend my thanks and profound appreciation for his leadership, his dedication to our students, and his deep engagement with WGSS graduate education and our intellectual mission, and my happiness that he will be continuing in this position for the next year. This semester, our (newly award-winning!) Undergraduate Program Director, Kyla Schuller, is on sabbatical, and I want to extend a warm welcome to Dana Luciano as our Interim Undergraduate Program Director, and am thrilled to announce that, as of January 1, Dana will be taking on the role of Associate Undergraduate Director and will continue supporting our students and curriculum upon Kyla's return. I also want to extend my profound thank you to Ileana Nachescu for the wonderful work she has done as our Assistant Undergraduate Director, and to welcome her back from sabbatical. Our MA Director, Julie Rajan, is also on sabbatical, and I am deeply grateful to our newly-minted Associate Professor, Maya Mikdashi, for stepping in as Interim MA Director for the Fall semester—thank you, Maya! I also want to congratulate our dear colleague Judy Gerson on her retirement—and to let you all know that Judy will continue to be in her office this Fall as she organizes and compiles her archive as a founding member of our department, which will be housed in the Rutgers Libraries. Thank you, everyone, for your service and for making this such a thriving department!

I am thrilled to announce that we have two postdoctoral fellows joining us this year, Evelyn Autry and Jaime Coan. Welcome back to our very own Evelyn Saavedra Autry, who, after joining as an ACLS Emerging Voices Fellow in 2020 and as a WGSS-SAS Fellow in 2021, now joins us as a 2022-2024 Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow. Evelyn has a Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies from the University of Georgia, and has taught at Fisk University, Tennessee Tech University, Middle Tennessee State University, and the University of Georgia. Evelyn's research examines representations of indigenous women in cultural productions of the Peruvian Internal Armed Conflict (1980-2000). Evelyn employs decolonial approaches and testimonial literature to focus on the systematic oppression of indigenous women, indigenous feminism, trauma and memory studies, indigenous popular art, Latinx studies and testimonial literature. Welcome to Jaime Shearn Coan, who comes to department as the Institute for Global Racial Justice Postdoctoral Fellow from 2022-2024. Jaime has a Ph.D. from the City University of New York (CUNY)

and has been the Communications Manager for the ONE Archives Foundation. Jaime's groundbreaking work on live performance as an alternative site of AIDS historiography, and in particular, his focus on Black queer performance in the 1980s as embodied archive, opens up generative avenues for collaboration with our faculty and graduate students alike. We are super-excited to have Evelyn and Jaime as part of our community, and very much look forward to hearing more about their work over the course of these next two years!

I am thrilled to congratulate our newly-promoted colleagues, Brittney Cooper and Carlos Decena, to the rank of Full Professor, and Maya Mikdashi, to the rank of Associate Professor with tenure. It is such a pleasure and an honor to have you as colleagues. Welcome back and congratulations to all!

We are delighted to welcome our two new Ph.D. students, Lu Rose Biltucci and David Carré, and our ten new MA candidates, Aakanksha Bhattar, Erin Aufrichtig, Tazmine Weisberger, Aven Watters, Maira Asif, Jillian Boyle, Ryleigh Stull, Sarah Vamvounis, Bandana Devi, and Kim Anh Nguyen. Their collective interests include anti-Blackness, Black queer ontology, Black affect, and the archives of Black queer Caribbean diaspora; technologies of cartography, Equatorial zones and racialized environmental classifications; gender violence and the climate crisis; gender, development and economic empowerment; queer being, queer family formation, queer kinship and queer disruption; intersectional activism; gender formations of public policy, US politics, and administration; gender, identity and political representation; sexual and reproductive health and rights; gender and LGBT+ cultural history, disabled and chronically ill communities; sex education; women in the work force, reproduction, and sexual violence against women; and immigration policy and reform. We are excited to work with them and to support the incredible range of interdisciplinary work that takes place in our department.

On Monday, September 19, from 10 am-12 noon, we will have our **in-person** faculty meeting, and we look forward to welcoming you with breakfast and lunch. For this first faculty meeting of the year, it will be a delight for us to welcome Dean Rebecca Walkowitz to WGSS to celebrate the beginning of the academic year. It will be wonderful to have the chance, after such a long time, to greet all of you in person and to welcome Dean Walkowitz to our community!

Please follow us on social media to keep up with departmental and consortium events –and let Feronda know about any upcoming events you have planned so that she can share them on social media. Before the semester starts, have a look at our WGSS Feminist Playlist on Spotify and send Feronda and me any favorite songs that you would like to add so that we can update our playlist and circulate this newest version over our social media channels, so that we can listen, dance, and continue to be inspired by feminist grooves throughout the year!

Thank you, everyone, as always, for all that you do! I look forward to continuing our work together and to seeing many of you in person after such a long time apart.

Warm regards,



Ethel Brooks
Chair