

September 3, 2019

TO: The Women's and Gender Studies Community

FROM: Mary Trigg, Chair

Fall Welcome Back Letter

Welcome to the new members of our community, and welcome back to those who are returning. I hope your summer was productive and relaxing, and that you are anticipating an excellent year ahead. As we begin the new academic year, I write to update you on happenings over the summer and the past year.

We are delighted to welcome seven new Ph.D. students: Sam Brooks, Kimi Bryson, Carlos Burgos, Jasmine Cannon, Michelle Ling, J. Randolph and Erica Reed. Our three new MA candidates include Elizabeth Del Tufo, Rebecca McGrath and Sheilagh Mescal Gunstensen. Their collective interests include transgender and carceral studies; black feminist sexual ethics; Afro-Latinx masculinities in the United States; the intimate lives of working class black women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; queer futurity and anti-oppression movements; the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, and religion/spirituality as they relate to popular culture and language; maternal grief; gender based violence; and feminist education. Their rich set of intellectual interests demonstrate the range of interdisciplinary work that takes place in our department.

We also welcome Nicole Gamboa to our Women's and Gender Studies community. Nicole is our newest staff member, serving in a temporary administrative assistant position and filling the role that Mary Kiefer had formally filled. We are grateful to Mary Kiefer (Suzy) for her 12 years of service to the department, and wish her well in her life after WGS. In other staff changes we are fortunate that Voichita (Ileana) Nachescu, who joined us last September as a Teaching Instructor, will also this year serve as the Assistant Undergraduate Director. In addition to teaching she will be working closely with Undergraduate Director Yana Rodgers on course scheduling, PTL administration, and other parts of the undergraduate program.

I am also very happy to report that Assistant Professor Maya Mikdashi was successfully reappointed after her third year review, and Assistant Teaching Professor Julie Rajan was promoted to Associate Teaching Professor. Please join me in congratulating them both.

I am also delighted to share that the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) has committed, over the next five years, to increase the funding to our graduate program with the goal of increasing the number of doctoral students we are able to admit annually.

Our offices and graduate student lounge in the RDJC Building were all freshly painted over the summer, and our additional space in the Ruth Adams Building (Suite 207A) is now ready for graduate students to utilize. Although it is not large, it includes an office and lounge area for TAs and PTLs to advise students.

Some of our faculty have taken on new departmental roles. We are excited about our pilot for 988:101 (Gender, Race & Sexuality): this fall Professor Brittney Cooper will be teaching half of

the sections as a large lecture course (250 students), with ten sections taught by our graduate students. This is a first for us. We now have faculty directors for our minors and certificate program: Professor Sylvia Chan-Malik is directing the social justice minor; Professor Louisa Schein is faculty director for the critical sexualities minor; Professor Brittney Cooper is now directing the gender and media minor; and Kyla Schuller is faculty director for our on-line certificate program in women's global health leadership. On another positive note, Professor Zakia Salime has moved a greater percentage of her line from the Sociology Department to WGS.

As we look ahead we anticipate final approval of our department's name change from the Department of Women's and Gender Studies to the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. All signs are good: it appears to have gotten bogged down because of leadership changes at the university. We are also waiting for final approval of our proposed BA/MA program. SAS has given the green light and we await final word so that we can plan for the program's launch in the fall of 2020.

Also on the curricular front, last year the WGS faculty approved changes to the undergraduate women's and gender studies major, which will now go before the SAS Curriculum Committee. These and other initiatives came out of our productive faculty retreat, held last fall.

WGS Fall Events

It is shaping up to be another busy fall. We begin with our annual fall welcome and barbecue lunch, which we are co-hosting with the Institute for Women's Leadership (IWL), on Tuesday, September 10th at noon. Please join us to meet staff, faculty, and students from the other eight units that make up the IWL.

Mark your calendars for the additional Women's and Gender Studies events:

Monday, September 16, 2019 — 1:10 PM

Colonized by Data: Resisting Capitalism's Emerging Social Order

College Avenue Student Center, Multipurpose Room A

Authors Nick Couldry and Ulises Alí Mejías will discuss their latest book, *The Costs of Connection: How Data is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*, with Gloria Steinem Chair Naomi Klein.

Sponsored by: Institute for Women's Leadership, Department of Women's and Gender Studies, School of Communication and Information

Thursday, September 26, 2019 — 4:30 PM (Reception to follow) *Everything Man: Paul Robeson in Scholarship and Song*

Lecture by Dr. Shana Redmond with musical accompaniment by Sonya Hedlam Schare Recital Hall, Marryott Music Building 81 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ

Please join us as we celebrate Paul Robeson as an activist, scholar, and musician. Lecture by Dr. Shana Redmond, Professor of Musicology and African American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles and author of the forthcoming book, *Everything Man: The Form and Function of Paul Robeson*. Musical accompaniment by Sonya Headlam, Soprano. Parking available at 85 George Street.

Sponsored by: The Paul L. Robeson Centennial Committee and the Departments of English, Presidential Term Chair in African American Literature; Women's and Gender Studies, Henry Rutgers Term Chair in Comparative Sexuality, Gender, and Race; Music; American Studies

Monday, October 7, 2019 — 5:00 PM

Care Work is Climate Work: A Series on the Green New Deal

Douglass Student Center, Traves Hall

A Gloria Steinem Endowed Chair event featuring a panel on care work and the Green New Deal.

Sponsored by: Institute for Women's Leadership, Department of Women's and Gender Studies, School of Communication and Information

Wednesday, December 11, 2019 — 4:30 PM

WGS & IWL Annual Holiday Gathering

Location TBD, Douglass Campus

For a fuller listing of all IWL-unit sponsored events, see the IWL Calendar. I close by thanking each of you for your hard work, commitment to our students or to your studies, and for all you give to Women's and Gender Studies. I look forward to an exciting and productive year ahead.