

# *Feminist Trajectories*

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

*Spring 2012*

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## *A New Chair, A Renewed Commitment*

On July 1, 2011, Abena Busia assumed the position of Chair of the Women's and Gender Studies Department at Rutgers University for 2011-2014. A member of the WGS faculty since 1995, Professor Busia is renowned for her groundbreaking work on African feminism, African women's writing, and diasporic studies. She has brought her scholarship to bear on the position of chair, solidifying the strong interdisciplinary nature of WGS and moving the department in new and exciting directions.

Based on conversations with faculty and staff during the last department retreat, Professor Busia has worked extensively on strengthening and clarifying the concepts and strategies that undergird interdisciplinary research. Importantly, this effort includes a renewed focus on undergraduate and graduate teaching: how do the dynamic and rapid intellectual changes in our field translate into pedagogical practice? As Professor Busia points out, however, "Our strength is also one of our challenges." As chair, she is working to negotiate the WGS department's powerful ability to bring together thinkers of all different stripes with the demands of particular disciplines, teaching strategies, and assessment.

Along these lines, Professor Busia has multiple initiatives on her wish-list, such as securing a position for an Africanist-feminist economist to create a feminist economics specialization in the department. With the already strong work on economics from Radhika Balakrishnan and Yana Rodgers, such a hire would make Rutgers the place to be for feminist economics. Professor Busia has also shored up the department's international standing by representing the department and the Center for African Studies on a trip to Liberia at the start of a five year project to create centers of excellence in agriculture and engineering at Liberia's two universities. The objective of the trip was to gather information for curriculum transformation. She is working with Joanna Regulska, a former chair of the department and the Vice President for International Programs, to foreground the gender studies component of a prestigious USAID grant to create these centers of excellence in higher education. Rutgers University is part of a consortium of Universities working on these centers and our faculty is responsible for making sure women can enter agricultural and engineering professions and receive the sustained academic support to remain. It has been a productive year in Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers with many more accomplishments to come.

# WGS GRADUATE CHAIR

**Yana van der Meulen Rodgers** took over as Graduate Director in July 2011. Professor Rodgers is Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, focusing on quantitative methods, economic development, labor movements and economics of the family. She is a prolific scholar, her most recent book being *Maternal Employment and Child Health: Global Issues and Policy Solutions*, and a regular consultant for the World Bank and the United Nations. With this professional record, it is unsurprising that she has already made a big difference in the lives of the graduate students.

Professor Rodgers takes over a graduate department with a successful track record of student awards, scholarship, and job placement. In the short-term, then, her goal is to reinforce the department's strengths by getting to know each graduate student and their work and learning the ins-and-outs of the Graduate School handbook. In the long-term, she hopes to institutionalize more synergy between students and faculty by encouraging intellectual interactions outside of the classroom. Though advising is already very strong, Professor Rodgers hopes to increase the working relationships students have with their faculty through co-authorships, conference networking, and mentoring. She is a tireless advocate for the graduate students because, much like Professor Busia, she understands how important and risky interdisciplinary work can be. She says her performance will ultimately be judged upon garnering as much support as possible for the department's masters and doctoral students. Emphasizing the vital importance of this work, as well as Rutgers Women's and Gender Studies national and international standing, is how she makes her case.

## FACULTY RESEARCH REPORT

by **Judith Gerson, WGS Core Faculty**

Imagine being able to teach at a university in an innovative, top-ranked gender program with outstanding students and wonderful colleagues yet not remain at Rutgers. That was my experience last semester participating in the ongoing scholarly exchange that Rutgers University has with Utrecht University. Established in 1636, Utrecht University takes its name from its home city—the fourth largest in the Netherlands, located in the center of the country. The Gender Studies Programme has its offices in the midst of this beautiful medieval city rimmed with two levels of canal walks and marked by strikingly modern academic buildings and expansive parks on the outskirts. Though the built and natural environments were all bonuses to my stay, what made my time truly remarkable were my Utrecht colleagues and students.

Gender Studies at Utrecht offers two distinct masters programs—a professional degree in Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics, and a research masters in Gender and Ethnicity. There are also two baccalaureate minors in gender studies and in postcolonial studies. Doctoral students fortunate enough to be admitted enhance the intellectual work of the program through their research and teaching. Although many of these truly outstanding students come from the Netherlands, this English language program attracts numerous students from throughout Europe and from every other continent, which makes teaching and intellectual interactions fascinating.

I taught two graduate seminars, gave several additional guest lectures, and presented my research to faculty and doctoral students. In the first seminar, Feminist Toolbox, students interrogated several prominent feminist theoretical and methodological approaches to develop a diverse repertoire of analytic resources. In the second class, Feminist Research Techniques, students read exemplary feminist texts and used one of each author's methods in their own research projects. In addition, I gave guest lectures in an undergraduate class on Feminist Historiography, a graduate seminar on Contemporary Feminist Debates, and received valuable feedback on my scholarship in a meeting of the gender studies research forum.

The opportunity to co-teach graduate seminars enabled me to understand in depth the pedagogical opportunities and constraints faculty encountered as they developed and taught their courses and how they met those challenges. It also fostered close working relationships with several gender studies faculty, which remain invaluable to me. I am confident that some of the most significant intellectual innovations and practices I encountered while in residence will reshape my work at Rutgers in the years to come.

The bilateral exchange is open to graduate students and faculty from both universities. In the Spring 2012 semester Rutgers is looking forward to hosting several visiting faculty from Utrecht. I hope that their presence as well as my experience might encourage other Rutgers scholars to consider participating in this exciting intellectual exchange with the Gender Studies Programme in Utrecht.





Professor Puar presents her paper “The Cost of Getting Better: Ecologies of Race, Sex and Disability” at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin (Photo by ICI)

**Jasbir Puar**, one of our core faculty members, spent last Summer as a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry (ICI) in Berlin, Germany. The ICI is an independent research center that assembles interdisciplinary teams to work around a core theme for up to two years. The 2011-2012 core theme was “The Subtle Racializations of Sexuality: Queer Theory, the Aftermath of Colonial History and the Late-Modern State”. Professor Puar has worked extensively on the various alliances between LGTB and feminist activism and nation-states seeking to display their progressive credentials, both in academic venues such as her award winning book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* and popular outlets like an online column in The Guardian newspaper (UK). As a result, the ICI selected her to open the lecture series on the core theme.

Her lecture, entitled “The Cost of Getting Better: Ecologies of Race, Sex and Disability” was delivered to a packed house on June 7. In it, she examined the potential for affective connectivities and conviviality to rethink neoliberal stratification. Responding in particular to the suicide of Tyler Clementi at Rutgers University, she analyzes how the discourses surrounding queer suicide reproduce problematic assumptions not only about race, class, and gender, but also bodily health, debility and capacity. Her talk built on an earlier lecture she delivered here in the WGS department at our October 2010 conference “Affective Tendencies.” From that talk, to her additional research this Summer at ICI, Professor Puar has developed her examination of the connections between queer suicide and broader social justice issues about disability into a chapter of her forthcoming book *Affective Politics: States of Debility and Capacity*.



Professor Fuentes in her office in the Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building

**Marisa Fuentes**, a core faculty member in WGS since 2009, received her PhD at Berkeley in African-American Studies in 2007. She truly embodies the new generation of interdisciplinary scholars alluded to by Professor Busia, as her work on women and slavery in Barbados is pushing slavery studies and gender studies in exciting directions. She spent a month in the Barbados archives this summer, returning to the thousands of pages from the eighteenth century Minutes of Counsel, one of the only archival sources that documents the executions of enslaved people. She also looked at the wills of white women from 1740-1800 to examine the ways in which white women’s relationship to laws surrounding property was mediated by enslaved women. Despite having visited these archives every year since 2000, and even living in Barbados from 2003-2005, her research illuminated a whole new set of questions for her book project, particularly how white women subverted patriarchal legal formations through protection of their assets, including slaves.

Working on slavery and women in the eighteenth century presents unique archival challenges, both because the colonial archives that form her empirical base are often inaccessible, dilapidated or lost and because, in her words, “enslaved women become subjects through violence and extraordinary circumstances but are otherwise invisible.” Thus, to think about daily life in Barbados, and the complex interpersonal relationships that produced and indexed the social structures of the time, Professor Fuentes turns to literary theory and philosophy. Through this interdisciplinary approach, she can historicize the theoretical problem of enslaved women not being able to speak or tell their histories today. Her summer research was another step in completion of her book, *Archives of Slavery: Gender, Power and Sexuality in Eighteenth Century Urban Caribbean* which will string together these many complex threads to examine how the construction of legal, architectural and historical “spaces” marked enslaved women’s bodies and experiences, in life and death.

# TEACHING HIGHLIGHTS

## an interview with Debotri Dhar

by Max Hantel

*Debotri Dhar is a 5th year PhD Candidate in WGS. She is a scholar, writer and activist. Her dissertation focuses on postcoloniality and women's human right against sexual violence. She combines academics with activist concerns and public speaking, and has led multiple initiatives on gender at the grassroots level in India. Debotri is also a published writer and novelist, and is currently completing her newest book which undertakes a feminist rewriting of Hindu mythology.*

### Tell me a little about your course.

The course I'm teaching this fall is 'Introduction to Social Justice' (904:201). The general goal of this course is to interrogate the inequalities and injustices pertaining to gender, race, class, disability, sexual orientation, national origin and so forth. Claims to social justice have conventionally been located within the space of the political, and it is in political activism that the struggle to end inequalities finds its clearest articulation. Hence I suppose it becomes inevitable for a course on social justice to lay emphasis on activism. I, however, wanted to do something different with this course, and decided to focus on literature, and more specifically, on fiction.

A move beyond a reductive understanding of politics allows us to appreciate how literature is also inherently political in nature, shaped by the dominant impulses of its times even as it continues to shape them. So in my course, we examine how the mainstream literary canon has historically marginalized female experience, and how women's writing has functioned as a creative response to this marginalization. Of course, this analytical frame raises all sorts of sticky questions, the most important one being that, in privileging gender, what about the other inequalities – of race, class, age, nation and sexual orientation, for instance – that may be overlooked or even enacted by women writers? This then leads us into the fractured and ever-expanding terrain of feminist literary theory and criticism, where the course engages the contribution of Black, Chicana, postcolonial, socialist, psychoanalytical and queer feminist theories.

In every class, we read essays by feminist literary theorists alongside works of fiction. I must also mention that the course is interactive; while I assign the essays, students are responsible for picking out the pieces of fiction that we read. It is amazing what our undergraduate students can do if only we let them; to go along with our essays, students have picked out excellent short stories and extracts of novels

by Alice Walker, Virginia Woolf, Kate Chopin, Arundhati Roy, Khaled Hosseini etc.

### Now in your fifth year, can you speak about the evolution of your teaching?

I've begun my fifth year in the Ph.D program, and I can say with absolute certainty that my teaching has evolved to a degree I could not even have imagined when I first started teaching at Rutgers. I did have somewhat of a vision of what, for me, constitutes good feminist teaching – the ability to fashion a democratic classroom and to create a safe space for my students, for instance, as well as to connect with my students emotionally while challenging (and being challenged by) them intellectually. But this innate sense of the qualities I wanted to embody as a teacher needed considerable chiseling, guidance from senior professors. And of course, practice, practice, practice! Over the years, and with many trials-and-errors as well as many more successes, I now have a clearer vision of myself as a teacher. My growth as a teacher is very clearly reflected in student evaluations of my teaching, and in the last course I taught, my students not just had some very encouraging things to say in their evaluations, but also gave me a 5 out of 5 in every single category!

### How does your background as a creative writer influence your pedagogical choices?

Yes, my background as a creative writer strongly influences my pedagogical choices. I always include fiction as part of my course materials, and this semester, fiction actually forms the core of my course on Social Justice. Additionally, this time I allowed my interest in fiction to also shape our course assignments. Remember Jean Rhys' postcolonial novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in which Rhys gave voice to the mute, mad character of Bertha from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*? I, too, have published several feminist fictional re-writings, my personal favorite being my short story 'The Husband' (in the anthology *Indian Voices*), where I

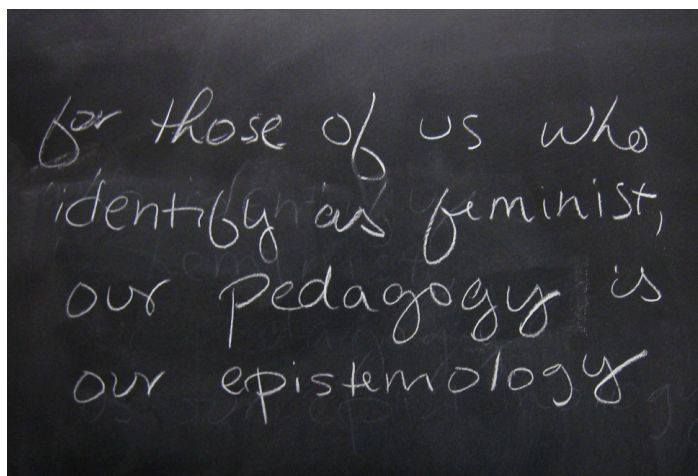


rewrote a key mythological moment from the Hindu epic, Mahabharata. So for the first assignment for my Social Justice course, the students could choose to go beyond literary analyses of fiction and actually rewrite sections of prominent short stories, novels, fables and so forth, in order to make the stories more socially 'just'!

You'd be surprised at the creative responses the students came up with. I got a Cinderella who chose books and education over the Prince, a wife from a Guy de Maupassant short story who stood up to her husband's abuse, an upper-class white woman from an Alice Walker novel who protested loudly against slavery, a Vietnamese immigrant who was able to transform from an angel child to a dragon child to handle the taunts and ridiculing by her racist classmates, and so forth.

**What is it like teaching in an interdisciplinary department? As Professor Busia puts, you are in many ways the first of a new generation of scholars for whom interdisciplinarity is the expectation and the norm; even so, is it still a constant challenge to teach in an interdisciplinary manner?**

Perhaps surprisingly, it is not at all a challenge for me to teach in an interdisciplinary manner. As you point out, I am among a new generation of scholars for whom interdisciplinarity is the norm. I would find it challenging to confine myself to a discipline. Instead, it is very productive to be able to transcend traditional disciplinary borders, and to engage students from a variety of perspectives.



**Has there been a particular course at Rutgers that shaped or influenced your ideas about undergraduate teaching?**

I don't know if there was any one particular course. Instead,

what I had were some excellent teachers and role models. Prof. Josephine Diamond with her vast, in-depth knowledge of feminist theory, her profound and unconventional intellect, as well as her empathy and kindness for students; Prof. Ed Cohen and Prof. Jasbir Puar for their sheer brilliance, and for setting high targets for the classroom; Prof. Abena Busia for her creativity, intensity and inspiring ability to connect with the course material not just intellectually but also emotionally; Prof. Anna Sampaio, for her insistence that in order to challenge disciplinary boundaries and deconstruct traditional epistemologies, a knowledge of those disciplines and epistemologies is very necessary; Prof. Carlos Decena, for his infectious enthusiasm and constant, nurturing guidance...I have had so much to learn from these and other teachers at Rutgers.

**Can you say a few words about balancing the research aspect of academia with the teaching aspect? In other words, what is the mission of a WGS professor when it comes to teaching?**

Yes, I suppose it will always be a challenge to balance the research aspects of academia with the teaching aspect. As theorists, we have to put our work out there. I am very passionate about my research, have given papers at conferences worldwide, and do have publications forthcoming. But teaching is also a very important part of my resume, and I am quite sure that the range of 100, 200 and 300-level courses I have taught at Rutgers will aid me greatly in my job search.

At the same time, I think the issue of teaching goes much beyond the logistics of a job search, promotion, tenure and so forth. For those of us who identify as feminist, our pedagogy is our epistemology. We are at our most powerful when we teach, and are able to convey knowledge in a meaningful, life-altering way. In fact, many of the most talented theorists I know are also talented teachers, and that is the happy balance I would want to strike.

**To learn more about our undergraduate courses, as well as additional information about the undergraduate WGS program, please visit:**

<http://womens-studies.rutgers.edu/undergraduate>.

# POST DOCTORATE PROFILE

## Aren Aizura

The Women's and Gender Studies Department and the Institute for Research on Women are delighted to welcome Dr. Aren Aizura as the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Postdoctoral Associate for 2011-2013. Dr. Aizura received his PhD from Melbourne University, Australia in 2009. His research interests focus on the ways that biopolitical technologies of race, gender, transnationality, medicalization and political economy shape and are shaped by transgender and queer bodies. He is particularly interested in how geographical location and histories of colonialism have fostered or subtended different gender variant and queer subjectivities. His research to date has focused on diverse sites: the political economies of travel for gender reassignment surgery; tracing circuits of affective labor within trans and queer migration; writing about whiteness as a shifting ideal within transnational economies of body modification in Thailand; and interrogating concepts of homonationalism, biopolitics and necropolitics as they relate to gender variant life.



He grew up in Melbourne, Australia and received a BA from the University of Melbourne. He worked as a media activist and editor at the height of the no borders and counter-capitalist protests of the early 2000s before pursuing doctoral research. He moved to the United States in June 2009 when he became a post-doctoral fellow in gender studies at Indian University, Bloomington.

Now at Rutgers, Dr. Aizura is relishing the opportunity to spend time not only in the WGS department, but also in the Institute for Research on Women (IRW) where weekly workshops and seminars allow an incredible cross-pollination of ideas and concepts. Beyond just intellectual life, Dr. Aizura highlighted the rarity of the community at Rutgers. He is similarly impressed with his undergraduate students in his class "Transnational Sexualities." He approaches class as an opportunity for a deep conversation not only from teacher to student, but between the students as well. The students, he says, have responded to the challenge.

Dr. Aizura will remain an important presence in the department next year when the IRW theme switches to "Trans Studies: Beyond Hetero/Homo Normativities." His work pushes the limits of gender studies, queer theory and trans theory.

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## Spring Graduate Course Preview

988:525 Live Thinking with Professor Ed Cohen

Declarative? Imperative? Interrogative? The title of this course gestures towards the complication—if not the confusion—that the conjunction of living and thinking inspire. In the introduction to the *Use of Pleasure*, the second volume of the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault explains his decision to diverge from his earlier itinerary by avowing:

"There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. . . . In what does [philosophy today] consist if not in the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known?"

What relation does life bear to/on thought and thought to/on life? And (how) does thinking differently entail living differently and vice versa? In order to ruminate on these questions in a lively way, this course will engage some key moments in the philosophical reflections on the relations between life and thought that have appeared since the beginning of the 20th century. Texts include: Francois Jullien, *Vital Nourishment*; Georges Canguilhem, *Knowledge of Life*; Michel Foucault, *The Government of the Self and Others* and *The Courage of Truth*; Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract* and *Malfeasance*; Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign, I & II*; Peter Sloterdijk, *Bubbles*; Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* and *For a New Critique of Political Economy*.

## Caroline Wigginton



The Women's and Gender Studies Department also welcomed Caroline Wigginton to the department, in conjunction with the American Studies Department, as the ACLS/Mellon New Faculty Fellow for 2011-2013. Dr. Wigginton received her PhD in English from the University of Texas-Austin in 2010. Her work on early American and Native American literature has been published in such journals as *Studies in American Indian Literatures and Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*. She is currently at work on a book entitled *Epistolary Neighborhoods: Intimacy, Women's Writing, and Circulation in Eighteenth-Century North America* which considers how women's writing in colonial America staged radical interventions into public life through the language of personal intimacy.

Dr. Wigginton's path to working on early American literature was unique. As an undergraduate at Ohio State University, she began on a pre-medicine path, ending up with a degree in biochemistry along with her English degree. After a short stint in the private sector, she decided to resume her undergraduate research by joining the English department at UT-Austin to work on contemporary literature and queer theory. She slowly lost interest in graduate school as writing productivity waned, rehashing the same ideas

from earlier work. One formative semester, however, reoriented her academic trajectory and illuminated the incredible possibility of interdisciplinary frameworks. That semester, she took one class on Native American writing, one on performance studies, and one on the black culture industry. The confluence of these classes transformed her research. Now she brings a rigorous interdisciplinary framework to bear on early American texts, which are generally outside of more conventional literary productions like novels. As she puts it, people then were not isolated by disciplinary limits, so to understand the historical context of an interdisciplinary world requires a diverse set of tools.

Now, as Dr. Wigginton straddles two interdisciplinary departments here at Rutgers, she is working to pass on these critical skills to her undergraduate classes. In the Fall she taught "New World Desires," a course about gender and sexuality in colonial American writings and imagery and in the Spring she is teaching a class on transatlantic feminisms in the age of revolutions. Just as she was influenced by an unexpected and formative semester that opened up new intellectual pathways, we look forward to seeing the many unexpected trajectories she will surely inspire.

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### Spring Graduate Course Preview

988:587 Feminist Pedagogies with Professor Mary Gossy

We will read texts from the fields of feminist theory, psychoanalysis, biography and autobiography, psychology and pedagogy, as well as poetry and other texts chosen by students. Through close reading and discussion we will develop a conversation across the many disciplines and interests in the class. An attempt will be made to integrate our experiences of teaching and learning with the theoretical work and analysis. Students who are teaching this semester, or who have taught, may bring their interests and concerns to the seminar table for discussion, analysis and study. We will study your classes, and we will study our own.

To see more courses for the Spring 2012 semester, visit:  
<http://womens-studies.rutgers.edu/component/content/article/469>.



## Stephanie Clare



*Stephanie Clare completed her Ph.D. in Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers in May 2011. Her dissertation "Earthly Encounters: Readings in Poststructuralism, Feminist Theory, and Canadian Settler Colonialism", touches upon feminist, queer, and postcolonial theory, twentieth-century French philosophy, and settler colonial studies.*

"I'm a Jersey girl," I found myself asserting last night. It was a sentence I never thought I'd say. But being at Oxford has made me especially proud to have been trained at a state university. I am proud to have worked with and learned from Rutgers' diverse undergraduate students. I am proud of having been taught by our dedicated, creative and feisty professors, and I am proud of the wonderful research produced at the crossroads of Route 18 and Route 1. Scholarship does not require medieval architecture. Highways are just fine.

This October, I began a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at Oxford University. I am teaching in the women's studies masters program, I am affiliated with the philosophy faculty, and I am housed at St. Hilda's College. Although Oxford is a thousand years old, I have the first paid post in the university's history in women's studies. And while many members of my college are supportive of feminist work, it is clear that many departments are not. I have met people very happy to ask whether I agree that our women's studies masters students are weak thinkers, failures in their "own disciplines" and hence seeking refuge. The question is depressing and absurd. It comes from those who have never interacted with our students. Wait until they hear what my PhD is in!

This term, I am teaching two graduate seminars, one on feminist theory and the other on biopolitics. My students are wonderful; they come prepared and curious. My own preparation requires that I often return to texts I haven't read in a while. I keep noticing new things in these texts, which makes me aware over and over again just how much I learned as a PhD student at Rutgers. I also feel extremely lucky; I can't believe I'm getting paid to read Spivak, Foucault, Beauvoir, Fanon. For the moment, the job feels like an amazing trick I've found in the system. Being paid! For this! What privilege. My research is currently focused on the place of sensation in theories of biopolitics, sovereign power, and necropolitics. I'm wondering whether sensation could be understood as a locus of resistance against power's framing of life and death.

I am hoping that these two years will lead to a permanent academic position in North America. I'll keep applying, but for the moment, I will teach, read, think, and write feminist work at Oxford. WGS, we're infiltrating.



*Agatha Beins*

*Agatha Beins completed her PhD. in Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers in May 2011. She has accepted a tenure-track position at the Texas Woman's University. Agatha is a coeditor of the anthology Women's Studies for the Future. Her dissertation explores the production and consumption of U.S. feminist periodicals published in the 1970s.*

I can no longer giggle when someone calls me Dr. Beins, which was my reflexive reaction—at least in my mind—when someone, usually an undergraduate student in a class I was teaching, presumed that I must have a PhD. I think more about what clothes I wear if I know I'll be on campus. I comb my hair more frequently while I spend time with graduate students less frequently, though most of my closest friends are graduate students. There is a button-down jacket hanging

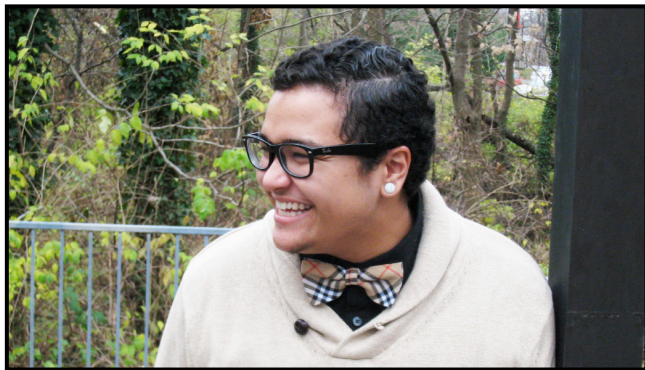
from the the hook on the back of my office door, just in case I have an emergency professional appearance to make. Oh. I have my own office. With a window!

Transitioning from student to faculty has been difficult to navigate partly because it hasn't been as difficult to navigate as I thought it would be. By this I mean that the mechanics of being a faculty member—tightrope walking the teaching/research/service triad—are what I find myself doing with less anxiety than I expected. I explain this in two ways: First, I recognize the decisions my new department chair has made to ease my transition as well as the many levels of support provided by other faculty and staff in the department. They have all been incredibly welcoming, available, and responsive to my questions and concerns. Second—and this took me a little longer to see—my work at Rutgers really did prepare me to be an assistant professor. In addition to the chance to teach classes and make my own syllabi, working with the Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Association, participating in seminars at the Institute for Research on Women and the Center for Historical Analysis, attending lectures and talks by amazing, thoughtful scholars, navigating (with seemingly boundless assistance from Joanne Givand and Suzy Kiefer, of course) the bureaucratic minutiae of a large university, and figuring out this thing we call a dissertation all accumulated to turn me into someone who could reproduce the field of women's studies as a faculty member, albeit without me realizing it. The work it has taken to manage the psychic transition, though, reminds me how unripe I am in this position. The impact my decisions and words now have, while not necessarily greater, feel different. For example, I've read applications from students seeking admission to the M.A. program and what I think about those statements of purpose will become a part of the map of someone's life in ways that are new to me.

Perhaps more banal (I wonder if all y'all faculty out there reading this will nod knowingly?), along with the ways I still have to actively narrate my daily motions as those of an assistant professor, a significant change has been the amount of time and energy I put into departmental service. I've started working with the chair on the MA program, which has involved contacting prospective students, reviewing a self-study of the program, advising MA students, and working on the MA student orientation. There are the workshops and trainings, which I imagine will only increase in quantity as I am here longer. There are meetings and more meetings. There is the work of being a visible part of the department to the rest of the university. While this labor is not terribly difficult, nor is it undesirable—I like learning about the university, making connections with people, and working with students and faculty—I can see the need to develop time management skills specifically related to service and, of course, to figure out how (and when) to politely, diplomatically say no.

It's terribly delightful, nonetheless, to be in a place where saying yes is so much fun. The university has been a welcoming space, and I feel surrounded by people who want to be here. And moving six weeks before the start of the fall semester allowed me to explore the area's sweet spots. I volunteer at a small farm just outside the city, hang out with long-time locals at a Saturday-morning Tai Chi group, and have started work on making Denton's bicycle coop a stronger presence at the university. This, too, is what I learned at Rutgers: how to start building the kind of community that makes a strange city into a home.

## Abraham Weil



As a Gender Studies undergraduate, much of my fieldwork was focused on organizing and programming for women, queer communities, youth, and communities of color. My academic work supplemented this activism with a philosophical focus on the experience of these communities and how to end the cycle of oppression. This work awakened a desire for a theoretical understanding of language, power, the production of minority and majority populations and how these marginalized identities have been sustained over time. I have been able to work toward exactly that understanding here at Rutgers.

My intellectual community here has far exceeded my expectations, both in and out of the classroom. The diversity of faculty and students creates a multiplicity of ways in which to engage with the graduate experience. The Ruth Dill Johnson Crocket building has become a second home to me, which I certainly did not anticipate when moving from sunny California to a more temperamental New Jersey. Our lower level classroom has been home to a vast range of courses that have expanded my scope of feminist knowledge. One floor up, the conference room—where I first sat at orientation—has become a much frequented space for conferences, talks, meetings, and gatherings of Rutgers’ amazing Gender Studies community. On the second floor, the Gender Studies department is constantly buzzing with friendly faces and stimulating conversation. Up the stairs, on the third floor, I spend my time working at the Institute for Women’s Leadership where I have grown both personally and professionally and had the opportunity to network with and learn from the units in our Women’s Leadership Consortium. From top to bottom, the Ruth Dill Johnson Crocket building has made my time in New Jersey unforgettable. As I move forward with my work, I know the foundation I have gained here will support me as a teacher, as a student, and as a feminist.

## Jordan Greenstein



During my time as an undergraduate student at University of Florida, I studied abroad in India where I lived on Vandana Shiva’s farm and learned about women in India. I also went on the Har-Ki-Doon pilgrimage in the Himalayas. I later studied in Florence, Italy where I learned Italian. I became interested in Women’s Studies while abroad after witnessing first hand the impact that globalization and privatization had on women—particularly in India. At Rutgers, I have found an amazing environment in which to continue my studies.

In addition to school, I work as a Graduate Assistant at the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL). I help with the programming and administrative aspects of the center. I have been using my time at CWGL to build a foundation in women’s human rights advocacy, and in my short time already, have been able to learn about the United Nations, food rights, and water access. I hope that my time spent at the center, and at Rutgers, will help me in my future women’s rights work and possibly in the pursuit of a doctorate.

The decision to attend Rutgers was difficult. I was born and raised in Miami, Florida, and have never lived outside of the state for an extended period of time. However, I have found a wonderful family and support system, in addition to educational opportunities that have been invaluable to my growth as a feminist. I have loved New Jersey since my arrival, and look forward to many years spent in the northeast.

**To learn more about the MA Program, visit:**

<http://womens-studies.rutgers.edu/graduate-program/ma-program>

**To read more profiles of current Master’s students, visit:**

<http://womens-studies.rutgers.edu/graduate-program/student-profiles/ma-students>



## Genevieve Cato & Mary Hawkesworth

*Genevieve Cato is a WGS MA Student who will defend her thesis, entitled, "Fears of Futurity: A Critical Analysis of Anchor Baby Discourse," in May 2012.*



### Activism and the Academy Conference hosted by Barnard Center for Research on Women by Genevieve Cato

In honor of its fortieth anniversary, the Barnard Center for Research on Women hosted the Activism and the Academy conference. The panels were packed with a great variety of scholars, activists, and many who blurred the distinctions between activism and the academic professions. The first panel I attended was Writing, New Media, and Feminist Activism. Courtney Martin, one of my favorite young feminist authors, moderated a panel of four women whose careers involved social media, writing, and activism. I was pleased to hear Mandy Van Deven (Author of *Hey, Shorty!*) and Veronica Pinto (from Hollaback!) discuss the opportunities created by new media sources to combat street harassment in our public schools and across the world. Susanna Horng (Girls Write Now) and Ileana Jimenez (FeministTeacher.com) spoke to the possibilities of feminist learning spaces and the difficulties they have encountered in creating those spaces along with the rewards of successfully incorporating feminism into their pedagogical methods.

I also got the opportunity to hear scholars from Rutgers on the Transnational Feminisms Across the Americas panel, moderated by Dr. Temma Kaplan. Ariella Rotramel, Anahi Russo Garrido, and Sasha Taner spoke about aspects of their research that ranged from studying leadership models, community organizing around hazardous waste, to non-monogamous lesbian communes in Mexico. I personally enjoyed hearing about Ariella, Anahi, and Sasha's work on this Rutgers-dominated panel.

The conference was certainly thought-provoking as it posed questions about how far we have come, and challenged us as gender scholars to imagine where we will go. I came away confident that the division between activism and academics, which sometimes seems so solid, can be blurred successfully in the political project that is Women's and Gender Studies. Further, given the incorporation of new media tools, I believe this is the shape of our future.

### The Politics of Visuality: Innovative Feminist Approaches to Race/Gender/Sexualities in Visual Culture and Social Media hosted by Rutgers Women's and Gender Studies

by Mary Hawkesworth

On January 20, 2012, the Department of Women's and Gender Studies hosted a one-day workshop on the politics of visibility. Organized to explore pathbreaking research that investigates epistemic and sociospatial possibilities enabled by new media, particularly involving hierarchies of power structured by race, ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, sexuality, and geopolitics, the workshop featured six innovative scholars whose work addresses complex issues pertaining to visibility and the production of subjectivities in national, transnational, and virtual domains.

The featured scholars included: Jafari Sinclair Allen, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and African American Studies at Yale University; Maria Cotera, Associate Professor of American Culture and Women's Studies and Director of Latina/o Studies Program at the University of Michigan; Kara Keeling, Associate Professor of Critical Studies in the School of Cinematic Arts and of African American Studies in the Department of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California; Krista Geneviève Lynes, Assistant Professor in Communication Studies at Concordia University; Lisa Nakamura, the Director of the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and Professor of Criticism and Interpretive Theory, Gender and Women's Studies, and Media and Cinema Studies in the Institute of Communication Research; and L. Ayu Saraswati, Assistant Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa.



*Maria Cotera (right) presents her paper as fellow speaker, Jafari Allen (middle), and moderator Carlos Decena (left) watch.*

# HONORS, AWARDS & PUBLICATIONS

Under Professor Busia's leadership, the Women's and Gender Studies department at Rutgers is poised to continue its academic, professional, and activist leadership. As always, this year saw our faculty and graduate students honored by their peers in various ways. **Professor Busia** was honored by the National Theatre, Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Pan African Writers' Association for her contribution, distinguished works, and achievement and support of the arts in Africa. **Radhika Balakrishnan** co-edited, with Diane Elson, a new anthology titled *Economic Policy and Human Rights: Holding Governments to Account*, published by Zed Books. **Ethel Brooks** was awarded a prestigious Fulbright-University of the Arts London Distinguished Chair Award. She will spend 2011-2012 at TrAIN, the University of the Arts Research Centre for Transnational Art, Identity, and Nation. While in London, she is working on her project, "Visual Practices, Cultural Production and the Right to the City: Romani Gypsies as Cosmopolitan Others." **Judith Gerson** spent the Fall semester as a visiting professor in gender studies at the University of Utrecht. After a productive and successful sabbatical year in Graz, Austria, **Mary Hawkesworth's** new book (see next page) will be featured in a special "author meets critics" session at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association in Portland, Oregon, March 22-24. She also continued her duties as editor-in-chief of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, helping work through a record-breaking number of submissions. **Jasbir Puar** co-edited special editions of *Social Text* and *Women's Studies Quarterly* on themes of Interspecies and the Viral, respectively. **Julie Rajan** co-edited the anthology *Myth and Violence in the Contemporary Female Text: New Cassandras* with Ashgate Press. **Suzy Kiefer** and **Jasbir Puar** were selected to receive the 2010-2011 Graduate Staff and Teaching Award by the Graduate School-New Brunswick, respectively, for their outstanding contributions to the success of our graduate program. **Joanna Regulska** was appointed Vice President for International and Global Affairs on July 1, 2011. In her new position, Dr. Regulska works with faculty, students, and staff to deepen and expand the university's global engagements, and to enlarge the presence of international culture at Rutgers. Her efforts have been recognized by the Tbilisi State University (Georgia) Academic Council which awarded her the title of Doctor Honoris Causa (Dr. h.c.) for her outstanding contribution in the development of teaching, research, expertise and internationalization of disciplines.

## GRADUATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Yurika Tamura** is awarded the RCHA seminar fellowship 2011-2012. Her interview footage in which she comments on minority issues in Japan was also included in "Other Japan," a documentary project that is in production by Third World Newsreel based in NYC. **Debotri Dhar** (see pages 3-4) presented her paper "Beyond the Binary: Rape, Suicide and the State in Contemporary India" at the Modern South Asia Conference, Yale University. She also presented her paper "Death, Masculinity and the Nation in the Writings of Rabindranath Tagore" at the Princeton University Gender and Sexuality Graduate Colloquium. Finally, she published a paper on sexual violence and South Asian cultures with the New Jersey based NGO Manavi. The paper was funded by a grant from the Office of Violence Against Women, United States Department of Justice.

Congratulations to **Abraham Weil** and **A.J. Barks** for completing their Masters' in December, successfully defending their respective theses, "In-Between Bodies: Transitional Space and Feminist Politics" and "Repetition, Alignment, and Curvature."

## JOB PLACEMENTS

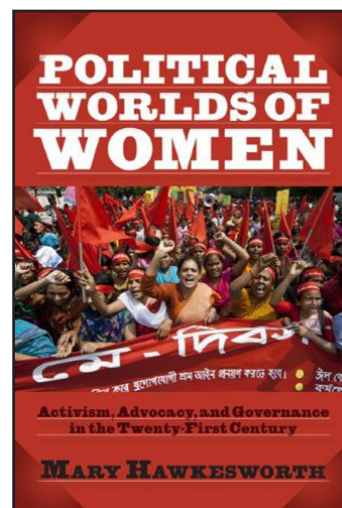
**Agatha Beins** accepted a tenure-track position in Women's Studies at Texas Women's University where she began teaching in Fall 2011 (see page 8). **Stephanie Clare** accepted a two-year fellowship at Oxford University (UK) teaching courses on feminist theory in the Women's Studies Program as well as in philosophy (see page 7).



# RECENT FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

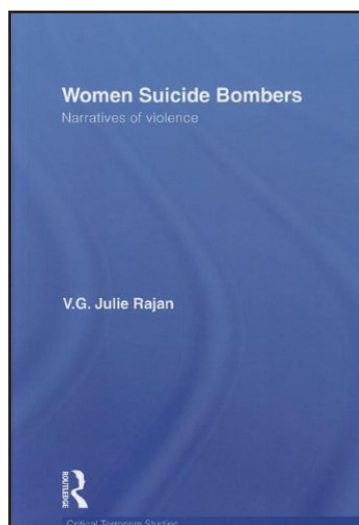
## *Political Worlds of Women: Activism, Advocacy and Governance in the Twenty-First Century* by Mary Hawkesworth

*Political Worlds of Women* provides a comprehensive overview of women's political activism, comparing formal and informal channels of power from official institutions of state to grassroots mobilizations and Internet campaigns. Illuminating the politics of identity enmeshed in local, national, and global gender orders, this book explores women's creation of new political spaces and innovative political strategies to secure full citizenship and equal access to political power.



## *Tacit Subjects: Belonging and Same-Sex Desire Among Dominican Immigrant Men* by Carlos Decena

*Tacit Subjects* is a pioneering analysis of how gay immigrant men of color negotiate race, sexuality, and power in their daily lives. Drawing on ethnographic research with Dominicans in New York City, Carlos Ulises Decena explains that while the men who shared their life stories with him may self-identify as gay, they are not the liberated figures of traditional gay migration narratives.



## *Women Suicide Bombers: Narratives of Violence* by V.G. Julie Rajan

This book offers an evaluation of female suicide bombers through postcolonial, Third World, feminist, and human-rights framework, drawing on case studies from conflicts in Palestine, Sri Lanka, and Chechnya, among others.

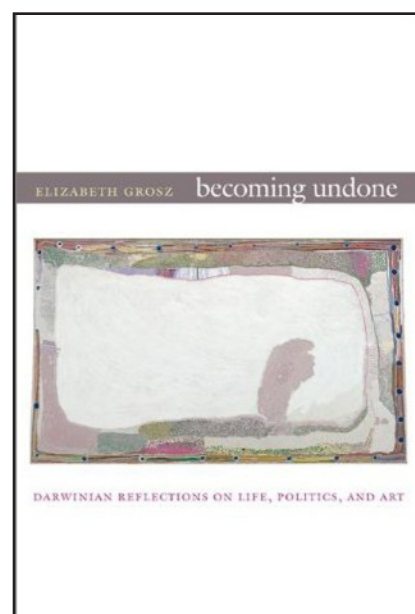
## *Maternal Employment and Child Health: Global Issues and Policy Solutions* by Yana Rodgers

As women's labor force participation has risen around the globe, scholarly and policy discourse on the ramifications of this employment growth has intensified. This book explores the links between maternal employment and child health using an international perspective that is grounded in economic theory and rigorous empirical methods.

## *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics and Art* by Elizabeth Grosz

In *Becoming Undone*, Elizabeth Grosz addresses three related concepts—life, politics, and art—by exploring the implications of Charles Darwin's account of the evolution of species.

Challenging characterizations of Darwin's work as a form of genetic determinism, Grosz shows that his writing reveals an insistence on the difference between natural selection and sexual selection, the principles that regulate survival and attractiveness, respectively. Sexual selection complicates natural selection by introducing aesthetic factors and the expression of individual will, desire, or pleasure. Grosz explores how Darwin's theory of sexual selection transforms philosophy, our understanding of humanity in its male and female forms, our ideas of political relations, and our concepts of art. Connecting the naturalist's work to the writings of Bergson, Deleuze, and Irigaray, she outlines a postmodern Darwinism that understands all of life as forms of competing and coordinating modes of openness.



For a more complete list of recent faculty publications visit:  
<http://womens-studies.rutgers.edu/faculty/faculty-publications>

# HONORING JOANNE GIVAND



## *Administrator and Community-Builder Extraordinaire*

by Mary Hawkesworth

“A brilliant administrator,” “an inveterate community builder,” “the heart and the soul of Women’s and Gender Studies at Rutgers,” are just a few of the terms used to describe Joanne Givand when department faculty, staff, students, and alumnae gathered to celebrate seventeen years of Joanne’s impeccable service.

When Joanne joined WGS in 1994, the program was housed in the basement of Voorhees chapel and Joanne was entrusted with the administrative responsibility for the Graduate Certificate Program and the fledgling M.A. program. As Joanne has moved from the position of Graduate Secretary to Department Administrator, she has helped transform every aspect of department operations from budget and financial management to course scheduling and student advisement, from grants administration to events planning, from hiring and supervision of administrative assistants and work-study students to tenure and promotion of department faculty. Her work has played a central role in the transition of an interdisciplinary program into an academic department with 32 core faculty, an undergraduate major and three minors, and flourishing M.A. and Ph.D. programs. Known for her meticulous attention to detail as well as for her talents in interior design, Joanne selected the furnishings and oversaw the move from the Voorhees basement to the Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett building in 1998—and then when the department needed additional office space, she supervised the renovation and refurbishing of the Chapel basement in 2005.

Joanne’s routine responsibilities are vital and numerous: she supervises work study students and staff, initiates personnel appointments for teaching assistants and part time lecturers (teaching an average of 25 courses each semester), controls the budget and monitors accounting and computer functions for the department, schedules all WGS events, handles the logistics for special programs, such as the Future of Feminist Theory Conference and the Affective Tendencies Conference, organizes visas for international students and faculty, records minutes at all Executive Committee and faculty meetings, and orchestrates numerous day to day tasks that enable the basic operations of the department.

During her 17 years in the department, Joanne has earned a reputation as a “fixer,” as one who can rise to any challenge, negotiate any crisis, and work out successful solutions. She has honed her diplomatic skills, liaising with other campus units from catering and facilities to the President’s Office. Indeed, so legendary is her ability to “make Rutgers work” that she has been sought out to train administrative staff in other SAS units. In recognition of her outstanding performance, Joanne received the President’s Award for Excellence in Service in 2007.

Beyond her superb administrative abilities, Joanne is also known for her extraordinary wit, resourcefulness, and generosity of spirit. She is friend, mentor, and sanity-saver of WGS faculty, students, and staff. On November 14, 2011, the Department paid tribute to Joanne, expressing profound appreciation for all she has done to enrich our program and our lives. Joanne is planning to retire on February 1, 2012.

*Pictured (top to bottom and left to right): Joanne Givand; Prof. Temma Kaplan, Prof. Mary Hawkesworth, and Prof. Kyla Schuller; former WGS chairs Prof. Leslie Fishbein and Prof. Harriet Davidson; WGS chair Abena Busea and Joanne Givand.*





## *Undergraduate Honors Theses*

“Speaking Birth Control: The Impact of Birth Control Discourses and Oral Contraception Policy in the United States” by Kyrie Graziosi

“Rutgers University Promotes Equality; or Does It? An Examination of the Gendered Politics of Athletics” by Jessica Kerley

“The Politics of Gender and Sexuality during British Colonial Rule (1857 – 1947) of Present-day India” by Megha Vyas

“Haiti: Women and Poverty” by Wislande Guillaume

“Media Advertisements: Shaping Women’s Perceptions and Consumption in Modern American Society” by GlenisLaurel Perez

“The Marked Woman: An Evaluation of the Modern Tattooed Female” by Caitlyn McClelland

## *Undergraduate Awards - May 2011*

Recipient of the Dorothy Hamilton Balliet Award for Outstanding Research  
**JOLIE GRALICK**

Recipient of the Eleanor Brilliant Award for Outstanding Senior in Women’s and Gender Studies  
**RACHEL BOGAN**

Recipient of the Henry Rutgers Scholars Award  
**RACHEL BOGAN**

Recipient of the Dee Garrison Award for Peacemaking in Women’s and Gender Studies  
**GENNA AYRES & MARISOL CONDE-HERNANDEZ**

Recipient of the Gilda Morales Award for Outstanding Women’s and Gender Studies Student Activist  
**ALEXANDRA ANASTASIA**

Recipient of the Douglass Alumnae Prize in Women’s and Gender Studies  
**HALLA A. ELBELEIDY**

Women's and Gender Studies  
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*Chair* Abena Busia

*Department Administrator* Joanne Givand

*Undergraduate Director* Carlos Decena

*PhD. Program Director* Yana Rodgers

*MA Program Director* Julie Rajan

*Administrative Assistant* M. Suzy Kiefer

*Newsletter Coordination* Max Hantel, WGS PhD Candidate

*Newsletter Design* A.J. Barks, WGS MA

## *To support our work...*



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- ☐ Undergraduate Education through Transformative Learning (international internship, community partnership, advanced research, honors)
- ☐ Graduate Summer School in Dubrovnik
- ☐ Graduate Education through fostering International Feminist Networks (international MA practicum, research fund for international field work, travel fund).

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