



# INTERSECTIONS: WGSS IN COMMUNITY

Macalester Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department Newsletter - Spring 2024

## The Intersecting Power of WGSS in Non Cross-Listed Courses

By Jizelle Villegas '26

The power that the WGSS department has to reach other disciplines' communities is admirable at Macalester, even if a course isn't cross-listed with WGSS. The integration of WGSS themes are welcomed by different professors in their classes, like the classes I took. Professor Daylanne English's course, Introduction to African American Literature, and Professor Coral Lumbley's class, Major British Authors: The Self and Society enhanced my WGSS lens of thinking in a literary context. Professor English specializes in African American literature and Professor Lumbley specializes in literature from the Middle Ages. These professors and students navigated vital, interdisciplinary topics related to WGSS in their texts and showed the importance of WGSS in various communities.

Both Lumbley and English expressed how important WGSS themes are for their classes. For Lumbley, as a scholar that likes to push the gender binary in her work, "the purpose of a kind of women, gender, sexuality studies is to really uncover narratives that have been hidden, or forbidden or underappreciated." In their class, female figures like Margery Kempe, Julien of Norwich, fictional protagonists like Judith and Grendel's Mother, and the queer coding of Sir Gawain were some of the things we talked about. Through discussions around gender and status, we were able to see these old texts in an applicable way to ourselves. When I talked to English, she said that WGSS themes "go beyond important...They're central" to the texts in her classes about African American literature. In her class, we read black female and black queer/non-binary authors, like Nella Larsen, James Baldwin, Danez Smith, and Janelle Monae. As a class community, we were exposed to ideas that made us think critically about the intersection(s) of race, class, sexuality and gender. The WGSS lens is prominent and necessary for these critical discussions.

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# The Intersecting Power of WGSS in Non Cross-listed Courses continued

Students creating community through shared understanding of texts showed the benefits of reading WGSS themes in an English classroom. Lumbley said that “Developing classrooms where we can talk really openly about gender politics and sexual politics is important in English.” By reading literature with WGSS themes, students can reject norms that have been imposed by the majority in past societies. Throughout the courses, a small community among the students formed, and each person came in with a different background. We started bonding over and/or challenging ways of thinking about how WGSS themes work within literature. In a more literary sense, English thinks that her students will “come to understand that an African American literary tradition means engaging with all those questions.” Those questions consist of issues about womanhood, queerness, sexuality, gender performance, racial identities, and class differences. Introducing students to diverse stories that include some or all of these intersections helps form a community. Insightful texts spanning from different eras unveil how there are intersections in the way our modern ideas of language, identity, gender, race and class have been reflected. Our central ideas in WGSS, like transformation, equity for voices, and visibility, have history, and it’s important to see the evolution of that change.

Dr. English said “I think sometimes the WGSS themes are a way to get us to joy...Joy is [sic] one of the most powerful because WGSS themes include love... one’s gender and sexuality can be about joy.” Within the WGSS Department, we embrace everyone and want to bring people together in this growing community. WGSS has the power to enter other disciplines and be embraced by professors and students, creating open dialogue to form a caring community in various classes.

# WGSS Co-Sponsored Events:

**A DIFFERENT TREK: RADICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF DEEP SPACE NINE**

**5<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 4:45 PM**  
HARMON ROOM | LIBRARY

**DAVID SEITZ**, TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY HARVEY BUDD COLLEGE

PLEASE JOIN US TO HEAR FROM AUTHOR, PROFESSOR, AND GEOGRAPHER DAVID SEITZ, TO ABOUT HIS NEW BOOK, *A DIFFERENT TREK: RADICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF DEEP SPACE NINE*, WHICH CRITICALLY EXAMINES THE WORLD IMAGINED IN DEEP SPACE NINE (DS9), THE STAR TREK TELEVISION SERIES THAT DEBUTED IN 1993.

MORE INFORMATION: [trudew@macalester.edu](mailto:trudew@macalester.edu)

SPONSORED BY: CRITICAL THEORY, GEOGRAPHY, MEDIA & CULTURAL STUDIES, AND WOMEN, GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH PRESENTS

**TSIONE WOLDE-MICHAEL '08**  
Historian, Curator, and Executive Director of President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities

**Thursday, March 28 6:15 pm | Weyerhaeuser Boardroom**  
Reception to follow

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) was established by White House Executive Order as an advisory body to the President on cultural policy.

Tsione's extensive work in the field of arts and public humanities has focused on developing innovative approaches to community engagement, collections management, cultural heritage, and exhibitions.

For more information and to RSVP for the reception please scan the QR code.

Co-Sponsors: Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Political Science, Art & Art History, American Studies, Macalester College Student Government

**Bio/WGSS Seminar**

**"Sex Variation in Science and Society"**

**Sam Sharp, PhD Candidate, Kansas State University**

**Thursday, Feb 1 Noon - 1:00 pm Campus Center - JBD**  
Refreshments Provided

Diversity is understood as inherent and foundational in biology, yet conceptualizations of sex are frequently presented as an assumed universal sex binary. This widespread presumption discounts the vast diversity of reproductive and developmental variations of sex across taxa and perpetuates the creation and expression of intersex variation in human populations. Human sex diversity beyond binary dimorphism has been largely disregarded or pathologized in biology and medicine, contributing to eugenic, surgical, and political attempts to eradicate and suppress sex trait variation. This harmful trend has been both facilitated by and furthered widespread ignorance of the biological, medical, and sociological realities of intersex individuals, who make up at least 2% of the global human population and are present across all demographics. As with many types of people, traits that sex variation does not exist or is psychosocially inferior to non-intersex phenotypes originated from cultural biases against sex differences, with supposed biological arguments subsequently developed to justify pre-existing prejudices. It is therefore essential to abandon the assumption of a universal sex binary and engage with the complex diversity and variation of sex in both science and society.

MACALESTER

**The Mahete of Our Bodies**  
Nā Mo'ōlalo Kupuna LGBTQ/Māhū

Engaging Native Pacific Islander Communities Speaker Series

The fight for same-sex marriage in Hawaii ran parallel with an emergent Hawaiian sovereignty movement in the 1990s. LGBTQ Māhū Kanaka Ōiwi struggled to find a place where they fully belonged.

Based on ten oral history interviews with LGBTQ Māhū Kanaka Ōiwi kupuna (elders), this presentation explores the everyday activism of kupuna who navigated the impacts of colonialism on Kanaka Ōiwi understandings of gender and sexuality and attendant widespread homophobia, in addition to their experiences of racism and classism within the LGBTQM community.

This presentation will explore how the interviewees negotiated their cultural responsibilities alongside their gender and sexuality to foster transacific networks of care, AIDS activism, early formations of "Indigenous feminism", and community recognition that laid the foundation for current discussions of queer indigeneity and alternate futures.

**THURSDAY MARCH 21 4:30-6PM**  
JBD LECTURE HALL/CAMPUS CENTER, MACALESTER COLLEGE

Stephanie Nohelani Teves is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa where she teaches courses on Indigenous feminisms and queer theory. Her articles have appeared in *American Quarterly*, the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, the *Asian American Review*, and the *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and was a recipient of the Ford Foundation Postdoctoral and Dissertation Fellowships and was a postdoctoral fellow at Yale University in 2017. Teves is author of "Ocean Feminism" and the forthcoming special issue of *American Quarterly* called "We Are Still Not Free." Most recently, Teves has been honored with an oral history with Kanaka Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) LGBTQ/Māhū (kupuna elders) and is a lead researcher on a National Science Foundation ADVANCE Catalyst grant. She lives with her ōhāna in Honolulu, Hawaii.

THIS LECTURE IS SPONSORED BY THE RACIAL JUSTICE FUND, THE MACALESTER PROGRAM BOARD, AMERICAN STUDIES & WOMEN, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES. PLEASE CONTACT HIRI SALLIATA, KSALLIAT@MACALESTER.EDU FOR MORE INFORMATION.

**Uncommon Goods: The Role of Higher Education in America**

PROFESSOR JULIA SCHLECK

author of *Dirty Knowledge: Academic Freedom in the Age of Neoliberalism*

**Thursday, February 1, 4:45 PM**  
Weyerhaeuser Boardroom

Co-Sponsored By Anthropology, Asian Languages & Cultures, Classical Mediterranean and Middle East, Critical Theory, Educational Studies, French and Francophone Studies, German & Russian Studies, International Studies,

Dr. Julia Schleck will examine the close links between academic freedom and the role of higher education in American society. She will challenge the definition of it as "a common

Voices on Mental Health & WGSS Present:

**March 19**

**WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH**

**ROUND TABLE TALK**

Join us in conversation centering the mental health of women and gender minorities!

**Old Main 4 4:30 - 6**  
\*Food and drinks provided\*



# Our WGSS Faculty Shout-Outs!



Professor Myrl Beam received tenure in Spring 2023!



## Professor Sonita Sarker:

Sonita Sarker received an Exceptional Performance Award in 2023. Sonita's essay "The Unsettling Times of Zitkala-Ša and Grazia Deledda" is a chapter in a volume titled *The Routledge Handbook of North American Indigenous Modernisms*, edited by Kirby Brown and Stephen Ross. Routledge Press, 2022, pp. 87-100, which was awarded the Edited Collection of the Year by the Modernist Studies Association, 2023.

## Professor Myrl Beam:

Myrl Beam is the recipient of the 2023 Arcus | Places Prize, which funds public scholarship about gender, sexuality and the built environment. The award will support a project that he'll be working on over the coming year called "The Long Fire at Lake and Minnehaha," which is a public history project exploring the history of race, gender, sexuality, and policing at the Lake/Minnehaha intersection in Minneapolis.

## Cross-listing Faculty by Department 2023-2024

<b>Art and Art History Department:</b> Professor Joanna Inglot	<b>International Studies:</b> Professor Jenna Rice Rahaim
<b>Asian Languages and Cultures:</b> Professor Xin Yang	<b>Philosophy Department:</b> Professor Rotem Herrmann
<b>Biology Department:</b> Professor Elizabeth Jansen	<b>Political Science Department:</b> Professor Della Zurick Professor Wendy Weber
<b>Classical Med. &amp; Middle East:</b> Prof. Beth Severy-Hoven	<b>Psychology Department:</b> Professor Rebecca Bigler Professor Joan Ostrove
<b>English Department:</b> Professor James Dawes Professor Rachel Gold	<b>Religious Studies Department:</b> Professor Susanna Drake
<b>History Department:</b> Professor Linda Sturtz Professor Amy Sullivan Professor Tara Hollies Professor Walter Greason	<b>Sociology Department:</b> Professor Erika Busse-Cardenas
	<b>Jan Serie Center:</b> Ebony Aya

We want to thank the cross-listing faculty for their contributions to WGSS

# Our WGSS Seniors and Reflections

## Anna Keefe (she/they)

WGSS Major and Studio Art Minor

WGSS is truly an interdisciplinary field. At Macalester, I have explored the WGSS curriculum in a variety of departments. Even in courses without an explicit connection to WGSS, the skills I have developed in critical analysis, historical theorizing, and identifying social positioning and structural injustice have been invaluable to my education. There have been many papers, projects, and presentations over the last four years, but I am most proud of the work done by my classmates and me in the 300-level course "Worlds Upside Down: Revolutions in Theories and Practices." Over the semester, we created a collaborative concept map that connects prominent theorists, activists, texts, structures of power, and paradigms in modern Queer studies. This project was impactful in our collective ability to tie together so much of the theoretical framework we have studied.

For my Capstone, I will explore visual art as a mode of public resistance, specifically in response to state-sanctioned violence and exposure to early death. I will examine how public art mediums and messages change as government power shifts from disciplinary to bio to discursive modes of operation. In conjunction with this discussion, I will examine the colonial and hierarchical system of curatory museums. I believe art reflects societal progress and values and that the tactical curation of high art has contributed to the suppression and erasure of many folks' lived experiences. I will frame my discussion as a critical comparative analysis of the values and messages portrayed in curated versus public art pieces.



## Penelope Ahlfeld (she/her)

WGSS Major

Taking WGSS as a major has allowed me the freedom to bring my perspective into topics, and with that inject them with a little heart and soul. As a discipline we're able to connect our studies to real world issues in direct and honest ways. This felt especially true when my WGSS classes allowed me the opportunity to work with the Tretter Archive and conduct an oral history with representative Leigh Finke. It was wonderful to connect with something so active in the fight for trans rights during a time when I felt more pessimistic than ever about where this country was headed.

For my Capstone project I will be looking at early trans history in the United States with the spectacle of Christine Jorgensen's transition as a way to look at how modern conceptions of sex and gender norms as well as trans identity are formed and enforced.





# Our WGSS Seniors and Reflections



## Ruben Schneiderman (they/them)

WGSS and Classical Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Languages Double Major

Ruben's Honors Project Title: "Queering Storytelling: Challenging Obscuring Storytelling Methodology and Building a Queer Approach to Filmmaking."

My honors project investigates the storytelling methodology filmmakers and oral historians employ in memory projects that attempt to archive LGBTQ memories. I seek to show how certain filmmaking and archival strategies can further obscure the realities of marginalized stories that do not reach an "archive." I additionally explore how filmmakers deal with loss and grief through their methodology and to what extent their method seeks closure with death or instead sees mourning as an ongoing part of their work and activism. Alongside my paper, I am directing a short documentary that hopes to implement some of the methodologies I argue for in the paper. The film follows my journey to learn of Queer Memories in my hometown through interviews with several residents.

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## Lauren Schenk (she/they)

WGSS and Sociology Double Major and Political Science Minor

I came to Macalester with my heart set on joining the WGSS community. One of my first classes at Mac was Intro to WGSS with Prof. Myrl Beam and I just remember knowing that I made the right choice in my college decision because of that class. Through my WGSS classes, I have learned how to see the world through a feminist and queer lens, which has provided me with so much depth. I always joke that I take WGSS with me everywhere. No matter what class or department I'm in, my work and contributions are always WGSS-focused. This has led me to write papers about topics like Dolly Parton and the women's liberation movement in a music class and about queer Catholics in a social science research methods class.

For my capstone, I am taking the work that I have been doing for the past 5 years within the Free The Pill movement and understanding the current political standing of contraceptive access in the face of the loss of reproductive rights in America. This past summer, the FDA approved the sale of the first over-the-counter birth control pill called Opill. This is a huge victory for reproductive justice in America, however, many loudly pro-life voices have also celebrated this victory. I will look at how public opinion and government officials have shaped this victory and study what work is still being done surrounding the affordability and accessibility of the birth control pill.



We are very proud of our seniors and we wish them all the best for their very bright futures.

## 2023-2024 WGSS Steering Committee



From left to right: Erika Busse-Cardenas, Morgan Sleeper, Myrll Beam, Sonita Sarker, Liz Jansen, Juliette Rogers, Jan Beebe and Jaine Strauss

## 2023-2024 WGSS Student Workers



From left to right: Sabrina Hinton '26, Willow Albano '26, Jizelle Villegas '26, and Lauren Schenk '24

# Community Building in Classrooms

By Willow Albano '26

In November 2023, Professor Ebony Aya's WGSS course, *Endarkened Feminist Epistemologies: A Black Feminist Ethic*, participated in the Classroom Community & Connectedness (CC&C) initiative, a project co-sponsored by Macalester's Jan Serie Center and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. The purpose of the project is to gauge the feeling of community within classrooms and understand, from students' perspectives, what both students and professors can do to ensure that everyone in the classroom feels engaged and included. After the activity finished in Professor Aya's course, there was overwhelming positivity about how community is built in class. It was abundantly clear how invested Dr. Aya was in cultivating a welcoming environment.

Dr. Aya's in-class practices to promote community materialize as playing a song at the beginning of class while people get settled into the space, responding to a check-in question, and singing or other somatic ways of expression to build relationships. For example, the most common question in her check-ins were variations of "What are you bringing into this space?" Students communicated how they would show up in class and hear how other people answered, which allowed them to relate. Dr. Aya was inspired to start these practices after she noticed how lacking relationships within the classroom could negatively affect performance while taking classes at the University of Minnesota. By jumping into dense and important material without support from classmates or professors, students were not given the opportunity to prepare themselves for the learning environment. So, at Mac, the check-in rituals at the beginning of Dr. Aya's class build relationships that prepare individuals to engage and feel comfortable speaking their minds. When asked what community building means to her, Dr. Aya responded:

"A level of intimacy where it's not transactional, not a one-off: we are building towards something greater and something bigger. Sometimes in our classrooms it can feel transactional, but within a department when you're there for four years, the level of community and intimacy that can be cultivated is phenomenal."

A welcoming space that includes everyone can break down barriers in education. Without this space, students don't have the support they need to thrive in an academic environment. Strong relationships are known to lessen mental and physical stress, and the absence of such relationships in academia results in more stress for all students.

Community classroom building is essential for fostering an accessible space where every student feels comfortable and empowered to do their best work. By revolutionizing the way in which class is conducted and conceptualized, it curates a kinder future for those after us. Community building is vital for celebrating everyone's humanity inside of a classroom. As Dr. Aya says, "Liberation inside of academia."



# WGSS Alumni: Keeping WGSS With You Always

By Lauren Schenk '24

What is learned is WGSS here at Macalester is not constricted to the walls of a classroom or the four years spent here. The lessons and ideas learned through WGSS carry on after leaving Macalester. We were so thankful to have two WGSS alumni answer some questions about their relationship with WGSS while they were here at Macalester and in their lives afterward to help demonstrate how what they learned shaped their time as a student as well as helped shape who they became after Macalester. Emma Cohen, class of 2012, and Nola Pastor, class of 2014, shared their thoughts, memories, and lives before and after their time in WGSS.

The biggest thread running between Emma and Nola was how they expressed their love for the study of WGSS and how it helped shape them in and out of the classroom. When asked why they chose to study WGSS, Emma responded that “the WGSS classes were the ones that challenged me most to reconsider my assumptions and understandings of myself, the world, and the way things worked.” Nola’s response was similar: “I felt like those were the spaces that were asking the questions I was interested in and the conversations where I felt the most alive, where I saw the most connections between theory and lived experience, and that aligned most with the way my mind works.” What both of these alumni took away from their WGSS classes goes so much beyond just the classroom; as Emma stated, “My WGSS classes taught me about taking an inquiry stance, being truly empathetic, and that I was not alone in my hopes for a safer and more just world.” Nola goes as far as to say, “I really feel like my WGSS degree is just part of me.”

Since leaving Macalester, both of these grads have taken what they have learned from their WGSS classes, beyond the theory and history. What has stuck with them is how it helps them view the world. Nola described how “[WGSS] did give me an intellectual container for validating just how real, alive, political, and visceral micro- and macro-love is - and an aspirational tenderness to soften the sharp and inevitable blade of failing each other, individual and collectively.” Emma talked about how her WGSS degree plays such a major role in her work today: “WGSS classes at Macalester helps me contextualize interpersonal violence within larger systems of structural violence and inequity, helps me understand and support queer and trans students who have experienced harm, and helps me think about centering equity and antiracism.”

Within WGSS, these grads, and many students at Mac today, have found a similar solace. Emma declared how she “felt so seen, challenged, and held accountable” in WGSS classes. Nola stated it best when thinking about being a part of the WGSS community with how “WGSS felt like home.”



**Nola Pastor '14**



**Emma Cohen '12**



**Fall 2023  
Alumni Panel  
featuring alums:  
Kate Gallagher '16  
Riley Church '23  
Josh Groven '23**

We want to thank our alums for their ongoing support and contributions to WGSS

# WGSS in other parts of the world

## Finding Queer Community Across the World

By Lauren Schenk '24



I was so honored to take what I have learned from the WGSS department here at Macalester abroad with me when I studied away in Derry, Northern Ireland, and got a front-row seat to the queer activism and love in the country. The first group of people in Northern Ireland to ever integrate was the queer community. Northern Ireland is a country that has been brutalized by years of conflicts between Irish/Catholics and British/Protestants which led to a deeply sectarian and segregated country. One of the only things that both sides could agree on was homophobia. Because of this, queer people who identified as both Catholic and Protestant came together in secret because they had no community within their nationality during the conflict. Today, the queer community in Northern Ireland still surpasses these national divides to create their own community, which I was honored to witness during my time working at The Rainbow Project in Derry, Northern Ireland.

The Rainbow Project is the only LGBTQ+ community-centered organization in the country, with a focus on health through mental and physical health. Throughout my time there I was able to bear witness to and at times join the beautiful community they created. I was a leader of their weekly youth group which helped me to understand the similarities and differences of being queer in America versus Northern Ireland. I also had the immense privilege of going to schools, companies, and organizations around Derry and helping run Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity training to try and put an end to the homophobia and transphobia that is still prevalent in the country.

The queer community in Northern Ireland has learned how to survive in a society that actively sought to harm and at times kill them for over 30 years. What is so inspiring about this is how they survived was not by just hiding and running away, but through the community they found in each other. The LGBTQIA+ community in America is facing so much hate and discrimination, specifically our trans siblings, and today I see so much division within the community. Working with the Rainbow Project helped me to understand how truly powerful a community can be in the face of hate and violence. The most powerful thing you can do in the face of everything else is to be with one another. Queer love, queer joy, and queer strength will always be stronger than the hate from outside.

We want to thank the WGSS student workers for their work on this newsletter and their contributions to the WGSS community