

Intersections

From the Chair

Joan Ostrove



It's my pleasure to write for the WGSS newsletter as the new department chair. As an interdiscipline that integrates theory and practice, interrogates everything from identity to public policy, and includes ideas and experiences from everywhere in the world, WGSS is well-positioned

not only to engage with all aspects of Macalester's mission but also to encourage us – as individuals and as a community – to think in new directions. It's been both daunting and enjoyable to take on this job. Why daunting? Well, for one thing, as you all know, I am preceded in this position by Sonita Sarker, who has led this department capably and passionately for the last 8 years. For another, it's an interesting (and daunting!) challenge to chair a department of which I am not even officially a member! Sometimes Olin-Rice feels a bit far away from Old Main and reminds me that being affiliated with a department – as I have been, often quite closely, with WGSS for the past seven years – does not fully prepare you for learning all of the intimate details of the budget, the curriculum, and the range of other issues that we face. Thank you all for being patient with me during this transition. And enough with the daunting part, and on to the enjoyable! I've loved working closely with our fantastic department coordinator, Betsy Salvatore, whose organizational skills and efficient work style make everything seem easy and do-able. We have a terrific (and large!) steering committee and I think we'll get to have fun together this year as we strategize the work of the department. I've gotten to meet quite a few dedicated, smart, and engaging WGSS majors and minors. One of the main reasons I was pleased to accept the job was the opportunity to work more closely with Sonita and Scott, our two fantastic "official" department members. Doing so has been a pleasure so far, and I'm looking forward to more.

Also on the enjoyable front, I'm pleased to report that our two major programs so far this fall were a big success. We had an open house in September that was well attended by students, staff, and faculty, and I was particularly pleased to meet so many new people on campus who are engaged with and interested in the work of WGSS. I look forward to getting to know all of you (and those who couldn't attend the open house but wanted to!) much better as the year progresses. In October, in conjunction with Disability Awareness Month, we sponsored a visit by feminist disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson from Emory University. Her visit was marked by dinners and a breakfast full of fun and interesting conversation, an engaging faculty workshop attended by 10 faculty and staff from a wide variety of departments who are interested in integrating disability into our work, and a public talk. Her talk, "Seeing the disabled: Disability in popular photography," examined not only images of disability, but also the ways in which these images are seen (stared at, gazed on, etc.) by viewers. Her analyses of images used by a breast cancer awareness campaign in San Francisco and of the doll Becky (Barbie's career-minded, sensible-shoe-wearing friend who uses a wheelchair) were particularly compelling examples of the utility of feminist disability studies. We had an almost-full house in the Weyerhauser Boardroom, and the whole event was wonderfully successful. Thanks to all of you who have participated in our programs so far.

I'm looking forward to a decreasingly daunting and increasingly enjoyable remainder of the semester – and year – as WGSS department chair. Do feel free to stop by and visit me in Olin-Rice, or send me an e-mail (ostrove@macalester.edu).

*Inside:
Faculty
and
student
insight*

Engaging Transnational Activism at the International AIDS Conference

Scott Morgensen

INTERSECTIONS
Fall 2006

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Mireille Lee - Assistant Professor, Classics
Sara Buck - student '07
Tinbete Ermyas - student '08
Liz Kamerer - student '07
Allison MacWilliams-Brooks - student '08
Alissa Ridenour - student '07
Kristen Stoeckeler - student '07

This past August I attended the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto, Canada, as part of developing a new project on transnational HIV/AIDS organizing. While this was my first visit to the conference, I have known for many years about the dynamic ways HIV/AIDS activists adapt it to their work. Despite its roots as a professional meeting for medical researchers, which also links pharmaceutical corporations, policy analysts, and public health bodies, over time HIV/AIDS activists have made it a key platform for articulating their demands for social change.

Today, activist perspectives are part of the knowledge produced at the IAC. In Toronto, one saw this physically in spaces devoted to activists coordinating their work at the edges of the conference. One large hall of the convention center, titled by organizers the "Global Village," housed scores of booths representing autonomous movements, NGO's, and cultural workers from around the world. The space buzzed with representatives displaying their organizing and creating or affirming relationships, including with members of the public who could enter this hall without paying registration. Both here and in the formal conference, I made new links with activists, health workers, and NGO and academic researchers, who shared my interest in how HIV/AIDS movements are newly theorizing the global dimensions of the pandemic.

While the worldwide extent of HIV/AIDS has been evident for many years, clarifying how global power relations structure the pandemic still cries out for discussion. How do histories of colonization, or their legacies in postcolonial nationalisms, international relations, and economic globalization, shape people's experiences of pandemic? How is knowledge about pandemic produced globally, from official discourses in international health organizations (including the IAC) to unofficial claims by non-state movements of people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS? I engage such questions by listening to how people worldwide are forming HIV/AIDS social movements while grounded in local knowledges that uniquely theorize the global power relations structuring their lives.

At the conference, I met activists from southern Africa, southeast Asia, the Pacific, and Canada who are challenging colonial and neo-colonial states, multinational corporations, and international "free trade" regulations in the textual and visual media they create for HIV prevention and policy campaigns. Sharing claims through media is one way activists are linking beyond national identities or state borders, and forming a new and distinctly transnational political culture, with a power to alter official knowledge of sexuality, gender, internationalism, global capitalism, and HIV/AIDS. By studying their representations and the cultural contexts in which they arose, I intend to work collaboratively with activists in raising awareness of their theories and organizing - both in the transnational networks where we met, and beyond - in order to highlight their integrity and insights while continuing to transform official discourses on AIDS.

For extended commentary on these topics, check out Scott Morgensen's podcast in the Macalester Faculty Talks series: <<http://www.macalester.edu/whats happening/audio/facultytalks/>>



International Drag King Community Extravaganza

Liz Kamerer, Mik Kinkead, Kristen Stoeckeler - class of 2007



Who knew the two-step was so sexy? In October, we had the opportunity to discover this and a few other things in Austin, Texas at the 8th annual International Drag King Community Extravaganza (IDKE) with the support of the WGSS Department. The three of us have been stepping on-stage to perform gender together since last spring, and have often found ourselves inspired by our coursework in WGSS, as well as challenged to create complex, accountable performances that incorporate our multiple identities. IDKE offered us the opportunity to join in discussion of these issues with older, more experienced artist/activist/scholars through a three-day conference composed of panels, discussions, films, an art show, and performances that aims to bring together and make visible drag king communities and cultures. We attended two amazing performances (and performed in one of them) as well as a number of presentations about race and gender identity in performance.

Negotiating race, both in our communities and in our performances, was a central theme in many of the presentations we attended. The use of costumes, music, and movement in drag has the potential to reify or complicate racial narratives and we discussed historical occasions and current examples of this. One of these discussions was lead by ThisWay/ThatWay from Washington D.C., who later performed a piece drawing parallels between Saartje Bartman and contemporary representations of black women in popular culture.

Mik Kinkead, Kristen Stoeckeler, Liz Kamerer and conference keynote speaker, Leslie Feinberg.

A number of presentations also dealt with the various gender identities that different members of the IDKE community bring to performances. Specifically, separate panels were held on butch, femme, and male identities that performers may occupy on and off the stage. Discussions were held on the intersections of feminist and queer identities and questions of accountability when portraying gender identities that may be under-represented and/or stereotyped, such as silent femme characters. The first presentation on gender identity we attended was facilitated by Faux King Blowtorch from Vancouver who later appeared in his own performance-poetry piece on “passing” as a man and issues of accountability to trans communities.

These performances were often where the most holistic learning happened. After lectures and discussions and presentations on accountability, visibility, and creativity in performance we were able to see how these concepts were realized by performers from across the U.S., Canada, and Germany. For activists organizing around art and artistry seeing concepts made real was often the most inspiring part, through other performers’ examples we could visualize our own transformations towards anti-racist, gender fluid, politically motivated and feminist drag.

W/G/S Collaborations at Liberal Arts Colleges: ACM Workshop Report

Scott Morgensen

WGSS recently participated in an Associated Colleges of the Midwest workshop entitled “Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: Vital to the Mission and Key to Survival.” Organized by Catherine Orr and the Women’s and Gender Studies faculty at Beloit College, the workshop over fall break gathered over thirty faculty in women’s, gender, and/or sexuality studies to inspire each other’s work. Participants shared stories of struggles around teaching W/G/S studies, from student hostility, to lack of respect of their mission from other faculty, to inadequate administrative support. Yet we also shared successes, including growth in affiliated faculty, successful promotions of feminism at religious colleges, and hiring faculty lines in W/G/S programs. I spoke on a “Successes” panel about Macalester’s achievement of full departmental status, and our naming of sexuality alongside women’s and gender studies as core to our mission.

A major truth the workshop brought home for me is the material privilege our department inhabits relative to the security or growth of W/G/S programs at other Midwestern colleges. From our start in the early 1990’s as a cross-listed program, we grew under Sonita Sarker’s leadership into a program with a core curriculum, and finally a department grounded in two full-time faculty lines. Most participants at the workshop still operated as we did fifteen years ago, with cross-listed majors or, often, only minors. A few - including many workshop leaders who help facilitate faculty development for the National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA) - are similar to our program in the late 1990’s, being run by one full or, at times, two jointly-appointed faculty. Yet Macalester appears to be the only W/G/S unit at a Midwestern liberal arts college to have become a department, and was the only one at the workshop to have two full faculty lines. This reminded me that the process of becoming a W/G/S department is arduous and not guaranteed; but even more so it inspired me to keep examining the rarified position we occupy in the class structure of liberal arts colleges. After mindfully studying it at home, we can use and challenge it at once by collaborating with those who share our struggles but occupy different locations. Breaking the artificial boundaries set by the market competition of (neo-) liberal

arts education may help us accomplish more, together, by linking our resources, skills, and successes.

Workshop participants also showed interest in our name change, which made us the first historically women’s or gender studies unit at a Midwestern college to include sexuality in its title. Many participants traced their interest to their ongoing conversations with students about their interest and need to teach queer and LGBT studies, which led them to reflect on how their women’s or gender studies work already teaches or could do more to teach sexuality. My contribution emphasized that in our case, while our name change was inspired in part by having integrated queer and LGBT studies throughout the core curriculum, we pitched it to mark that sexuality was already necessarily part of how we did women’s and gender studies. In turn, our commitment has been to study LGBT identity politics as part of broader feminist and queer questions about sexuality. For example, I noted how my queer feminist stakes often lead me to teach sexuality around a cross-cutting issue, such as HIV/AIDS, or sex work. By framing sexuality to open a myriad of topics that force us to think beyond our identities, we confront how it is structured by multiple forms of difference before returning to ask how this informs our particular lives. My sense is that many more women’s and gender studies programs will soon integrate LGBT and queer studies and discuss taking on a new name, and I hope as they consider methods and approaches for such changes that WGSS will remain in conversation.

We ended the workshop with great brainstorming on how to keep coordinating our work. Plans are being discussed for further regional gatherings, and organizers have set up a workshop at the 2007 NWSA Meetings to spark national dialogue on women’s, gender, and sexuality studies at liberal arts colleges. I look forward to finding ways with you to keep us linked to these growing collaborations.



Re-envisioning the Women's Resource Center

Alissa Ridenour '07

Ask anyone on campus where the Women's Resource Center is located, and you'll likely be met with a question in response: "We have a Women's Resource Center?" Yes, indeed we do, but sadly due to a lack of access the Center is currently not much of a resource. This year the student organizations, Feminists in Action (FIA) and Students Together Against Rape and Sexual Assault (STARSA) are working to remedy this problem. With the support of several campus departments the hope is to renovate the space, acquire new resources, increase the hours the Center is open, and introduce new campus programming in the Center.

For those of you still wondering, the Women's Resource Center (WRC) is located in the basement of Kirk, on the north end. You'll need your Macalester ID to get into the Kirk basement. In recent years the Center has only been open for FIA/STARSA meetings, but FIA/STARSA has been working to expand its usage and visibility through monthly teach-ins. This past month Karla Benson Rutten, of the Lealtad-Suzuki Center, helped participants explore cultural definitions of womanhood. On November 17th we will feature Joan Ostrove, who will lead a discussion about doing community service related to gender equality. We hope to continue to expand the programming offered by the center and welcome its usage by individuals from all across campus. Additionally the WRC houses a large collection of books, including many of the essential texts of the second wave and third wave feminist movements. In the near future we hope to serve as a clearing-house for information on community resources, such as health clinics, support groups, and upcoming Twin Cities events. Please stop by to peruse these resources or simply hang out. Weekly office hours will be publicized shortly.

If you are interested in holding an event in the WRC or would like to volunteer at the WRC, contact Alissa, aridenour@macalester.edu.

⌘ Upcoming Events ⌘

Look for more information to follow

Coming up ... Sharon Day, executive director of the Indigenous People's Task Force, the leading HIV/AIDS service provider for Native peoples in Minnesota, will speak as part of Native American Awareness Month and World AIDS Day events. (Time/place TBA) Sponsored by PIPE, the Civic Engagement Center, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Lealtad-Suzuki Center.

WGSS Annual Retreat

Saturday ~ February 10, 2007
Macalester Alumni House
9:00 am - 2:30 pm



In the works ... WGSS is currently coordinating plans for a one-day conference of students scholarship in queer and LGBT studies, to be held in early spring. The event will spotlight work in queer and LGBT studies by students from across campus, and will include response by a distinguished visiting professor in these fields. Stay tuned for the invitation for submissions and details on participants!

SPRING 2007 COURSES

Course #	Professor	Course Name
WGSS 100.01	Scott Morgensen	Race/Class in American Feminism
WGSS 110.01	Scott Morgensen	Sex, Race, Nation: Intro to LGBT
WGSS 200.01	Scott Morgensen	Feminist/Queer Theory/Methodologies
WGSS 310.01	Sonita Sarker	Gender/Sociopolitical Activism (Same as ENGL 352.01)
WGSS 394.01	Dianna Shandy	Gender and Power in Africa (Same as ANTH 394.03)
WGSS 400.01	Sonita Sarker	Senior Seminar: Linking Theory and Practice
WGSS 405.01	Joan Ostrove	Lives in Context: Psychology and Social Structure (Same as PSYC 488.01)
Crosslistings - Approved for WGSS Credit		
AMST 294.23	Tamla Adams	Black Queer Positionality: Narration/Negotiation/Identity
BIOL 117.01	Liz Jensen	Women, Health, and Reproduction
ENGL 383.01	Natasha Hurley	Intro 20th Cent Gay/Lesbian Literature
FREN 410.01	Cybelle Wilkens	Art & Ideas in French Culture (Same as HMCS 410-01)
HISP 494.03	Teresa Mesa	US Latina Literature and Visual Culture.
HIST 294.17	Andrea Robertson	Colonial Encounters: Religion, Race, Sexuality in Develop Early Am Soc
HIST 294.19	Andrea Robertson	Gender and Sexuality in Colonial American and the Early Republic
HMCS 488.01	Vincent Doyle	Advanced Queer Media
POLI 294.03	Wendy Weber	Gender & International Politics
RELI 294.01	Paul Capetz	Gender, Sexuality, and Religion
SOCI 240.01	Mahnaz Kousha	Images of Women in the Middle East
THDA 262.01	Beth Cleary	Feminist Theatre(s)

Women's, Gender,
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