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Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies

Spring 2015

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Newsletter Spring 2015

Sandra L. Faulkner Bowling Green State University, sandraf@bgsu.edu

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Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies



Spring 2015



We are in the final week of the semester here in Bowling Green, and it finally feels like Spring. This is a good time to reflect on the WGSS program accomplishments during a long and cold winter. I am happy to tell you that the weather was not a deterrent to student and faculty achievements. In this newsletter, I highlight our faculty and students' productivity and excellence in their scholarly pursuits. Dr. Ellen Berry, Professor of English and Affiliate Faculty in WGSS/American Culture Studies is retiring after many years at BGSU. Her students pay tribute to her influence and excellence in mentoring and teaching. You will enjoy reading interviews with Dinah Tetteh, Graduate Women's Studies Certificate student, and undergraduate Women's Studies Major, Kasie Durkit.

Dr. Sarah Smith Rainey and her students in CCS 3710 (Gender, Race, and Culture in Community-Based Practice) put on "Toss the Tiara," an alternative dress-up day where preschool girls and boys were able to dress up as and learn about women in underrepresented fields such as aviation, engineering, and chemistry. Dr. Rainey, undergraduate advisor in the School of Cultural and Critical Studies and WGSS Faculty, was also awarded the BGSU President's Award for Excellence in Advising.

In March, we had a successful Women's History Month celebrating Global Girl Culture. The culmination of Women's History Month is our annual WGSS research symposium that showcased the best of our undergraduate and graduate student work in five research and presentation panels. Jessica Blumerick, Women's Studies Major, won first place for her undergraduate research presentation "A Look at Honor Based Violence in the Middle East", and Viola Ratcliffe, Art History, won first place in the graduate research presentations for her work, "To be a Witness: Lynching and the Black Female Experience in Lashawnda Crow Storm's 'Her Name was Laura Nelson." We presented Feminist Falcon awards to Brianna Demkowicz as the best Introduction to Women's Studies student, Dr. Dafina-Lazarus Stewart for Women Mentoring Women, and Dr. Mary Krueger for Institutional Change. Jessica Broderson was awarded the WGSS scholarship. The Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) also generously endowed an essay-scholarship fund for BGSU students for research on women's issues. The WEAL award for first place undergraduate was given to Kasie Durkit for an essay titled "First Ladies Who Don't Play by the Rules: Feminism in the East Wing, and the first place graduate award was given to Mary Maxfield for an essay titled "History Retweeting Itself: Imperial Feminist Appropriations of 'Bring Back Our Girls."

We ended the symposium with a keynote presentation by Dr. Heather Switzer from Arizona State University in which she discussed "the girl" in international development discourse using her research in rural Maasai communities to highlight the limits and the possibilities of (and for) the global girl. Her talk provoked a lively discussion of how the intersecting dimensions of young girl's lives, such as that of gender, sexuality, and educational expectations, reveals the relevance of inequality in shaping their experiences. In addition, our second annual WGSS Silent Auction to raise money for student awards and scholarships was once again a success in raising \$350.00!

I am thrilled to see how our program continues to thrive and grow.

-Sandra Faulkner

Meet a Women's Studies Major: Kasie Durkit



"Being a WGSS student has been the single greatest academic decision of my life." Tell us a little about yourself. I am fourth year senior graduating in May of 2015, and I am originally from Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio—home of Cuyahoga Valley National Park. I love staying active. Being busy from sun up to sun down is something that has come to define my life: I am a group fitness instructor at the BGSU Rec Center, a Campus Tour Guide, the Speaker of the Senate for the Undergraduate Student Government, the Administrator for Honors Scholars, a research assistant for Dr. Melissa Miller, Dr. Neil Englehart, Dr. Russell Mills, and finally, an intern this semester at the Fair Housing Center in Toledo. My mother always had an extraordinary amount of energy and was incredibly deft at managing several things at once. I think she has certainly influenced me in this regard.

What are you studying, and what are your interests within that area? I am a History, Political Science and WGSS triple major. My friends constantly tease me about being a nerd. I embrace it! It would be very difficult for me to narrow down my interests for you because I cannot tell you one topic in my studies thus far that has *not* interested me. A delightful side

effect of my triple majoring, however, has been that my classes have created an overlap in some ways and have intensified my interests in certain areas. For example, the history of women in politics brings all of my majors together very neatly, and I have become incredibly engrossed in this topic area.

How did you get interested in women's, gender, and sexuality studies? The WGSS program seemed like a natural progression for me, growing up in a progressive family that was always discussing issues that I found were highlighted in the WGSS program. The ideals that my mother and father (both feminists) imparted on me definitely created my initial interest in the WGSS program. Both my mother and father believe everyone has equal merit, that everyone deserves justice, that everyone deserves to meet their highest potential, and that we need to commit our lives in some way to the benefit of others. To me, WGSS seemed like the perfect grounds to explore these ideals, expand them, modify them, and act on them. I only wanted to broaden what I knew about people unlike myself, who grew up in different back grounds, facing varying levels of oppression and socio-economic setbacks.

How has WGSS helped prepare you for the future? Being a WGSS student has been the single greatest academic decision of my life. No courses have broadened my worldview as much as WGSS classes have. I can frankly and candidly say I feel WGSS has made me a better person. After taking WGSS classes, participating in community service and social justice programs through WGSS, becoming cognizant of the way that sexism, racism, ableism, classism, heteronormativity, and ageism operate in everyday life, and working at the Toledo Fair Housing Center through the WGSS program—I feel and think and learn and speak so much differently.

You start walking around with this feeling of wanting to shake people by the shoulders and say "do you know about this? That people are facing this? Everywhere! Everyday! We need to do something about this!" and I have let that feeling drive my studies and future career. This coming fall I have been extremely fortunate to have been accepted as a student at Georgetown Law School, Class of 2018, and I will be a Public Interest Law Fellow. My decision to work for the public interest – to work for the DC public defender system, or to work for a non-profit organization in DC – is the direct result of the passion WGSS has inspired in me to do this work.

Toss the Tiara: 2nd Annual Alternative Dress-Up Day

This April, Dr. Sarah Rainey and her students in CCS 3710 (Gender, Race, and Culture in Community-Based Practice) hosted "Toss the Tiara," an alternative dress-up day for children aged 3-6. At Toss the Tiara, children visited stations related to careers, in which women and minorities are under-represented, such as chemists, farmers, artists, and athletes. At each station, children played dress-up, engaged in activities and games. In addition, each station provided information and resources about those careers for parents and caregivers.



Athlete Station



Engineer Station



Scientist Station



Astronaut Station



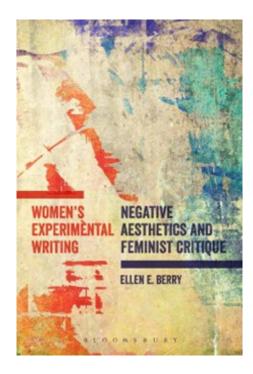
Firefighter Station

Looking Back & Looking Forward: Dr. Ellen Berry Retires

Dr. Ellen Berry, a professor in the Department of English and Communication, and affiliated faculty in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and the American Culture Studies program, is retiring this

spring. Below, Dr. Berry shares about her new book, *Women's Experimental Writing: Negative Aesthetics and Feminist Critique*, expected from Bloomsbury later this year.

Women's Experimental Writing: Negative Aesthetics and Feminist Critique analyzes work by six contemporary authors who use experimental methods and negative modes of critique to innovate in the forms of fiction and of feminism: Valerie Solanas, Kathy Acker, Theresa Cha, Chantel Chawaf, Jeanette Winterson, and Lynda Barry. The works I consider span the period 1967-1999, roughly the era during which contemporary Western feminisms emerged as a diverse set of political aspirations and practices, new knowledges and approaches to knowledge production, legal accomplishments, alternative institutions, oppositional discourses, critical theories, and complex cultural forms. The book traces one neglected tributary of this emergence by focusing on the nature of and rationales for these writers' strategies of literary negation in order to assess their feminist consequences and argue for the importance of negative literary, political, and philosophical critiques to the ongoing projects of feminist/gender studies.



Why did you want to write this book?

I've always been interested in the political possibilities of radical writing practices~my first book was on Gertrude Stein. The current book seemed like a way to call attention to the persistence of feminist avant-garde practices in a contemporary moment.

Recovering a history of this form of negative critique seems especially important in our current moment as accounts of contemporary feminism's forty-year legacy become increasingly consolidated into what Clare Hemmings calls "consensus narratives of progress, loss, and return" that limit the ways in which the past, present, and future of feminism may be thought. Such narratives, as Robyn Wiegman notes, consolidate, order, and fix feminism's "at times chaotic diversity of critical and political activities into set pieces," that flatten and distort its "various and incommensurable deployments" (55, 116). The texts I consider allow us to recover some of this "chaotic diversity" by acting as one counterweight to these dominant consensus narratives not by positing full-fledged alternatives but by using radical expressive forms to show the limits of the storytelling function itself.

What was the most interesting thing about the process of writing this book?

Most of the writers I cover have been read individually but not in relation to one another. A comparative reading has allowed me to demonstrate some surprising similarities among these writers. I've also been surprised by the degree to which my affects as a reader of these difficult texts have been at odds with my position as a feminist critic.

Student Reflections on Dr. Ellen Berry

"Dr. Ellen Berry is a deep thinker. She is professional and knows what she is doing, while being an open and friendly person. It's a pleasure to be in her class." - Venera Ikramovna Alibekova, Cross-Cultural and International Education

"Dr. Berry is a phenomenal scholar and human being. She is gentle, passionate, and dedicated to her students. If I am half the educator she is, I will consider myself blessed.

-Erika M. Behrmann, Media and Communication

"Professor Berry practices what she preaches. Her classroom was *never* about scholarly competition and *always* about building a scholarly community. Learning to reject competition as a motivational tool is by far the most important lesson I have learned in graduate school." - *Erin Mulligan, American Culture Studies*

"Dr. Berry has been one of the single most influential people I have ever met, and she has continued to awe me in her service to her students and her scholarship. She has been there to listen and to guide me, and for that I am eternally grateful." *Joanna Murphy, American Culture Studies*



Students celebrated Dr. Berry's work with a special cake in her (and Michel Foucault's) honor.

"Dr. Berry has made me better at each of the things that matters most to me: learning, teaching, activism, and the practice of compassion. She is a rare combination of deep intellect and genuine accessibility. I am deeply grateful to have learned from her and to carry her example forward in my own life and work. – *Mary Maxfield, American Culture Studies*

'It is an absolute delight to work with Dr. Berry; her patience, expertise, and enthusiasm for ideas make working with her a valuable experience. I wish all students had the chance to experience cultural theory with Dr. Berry at the helm!" *-Ludmila Polyakova, American Culture Studies*

"Professor Berry is one of the greatest professors who I have been fortunate to get acquainted with. She is very down to earth, and what I like most about her is that she practices what she preaches. As a teacher, she is very passionate about what she is doing and is capable of inspiring students through her teaching. She always makes you comfortable, both inside and outside of class and is very helpful and understanding. She is a great asset to our institution and I wish her all the best in her future years." - Bincy Abdul-Samad, American Culture Studies

Working with Dr. Berry for the last two years has been a particularly painful experience, painful because I know that our time together must come to an end. Yet, I can say that every moment of the pain is a blessing because Dr. Berry is a blessing. –*Tori Arthur, American Culture Studies*

Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Research Symposium Highlights

The 2015 Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Research Symposium held on March 30th showcased the best of our undergraduate and graduate students' work. We also honored members of the BGSU community with our Feminist Falcon Awards.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Heather Switzer

Dr. Switzer is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. In her keynote address, Dr. Switzer focused on "the girl" in international development discourse using her research in rural Maasai communities to highlight the limits and the possibilities of (and for) the global girl.

Based on her research on representations of "the girl" in international development discourse and her empirical research in rural Maasai communities in southern Kenya, Dr. Switzer's talk focused on bringing these two sets of data together to discuss the limits and the possibilities of (and for) the global girl. Heather Switzer's research is situated at intersections of girls' studies, African studies (with an on Sub-Saharan Africa, East Africa specifically), and critical develop-



Dr. Heather Switzer

ment studies. Her current book project, *School Girls: Developing Gender in Contemporary Kenya*, brings together analyses of Maasai primary schoolgirls' understandings of education and development in their daily lives with analyses of representations of schoolgirls in development discourse. Her empirical research with rural Maasai schoolgirls, their teachers and mothers, both supports and troubles the notion of adolescent female exceptionalism, a concept rooted in postfeminist ideas about 'girl power,' that characterizes current development discourse around "the girl." She is also a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Ethiopia '99.

Best Introduction to WS 2000 Student: Brianna Demkowicz

"Brianna was what I like to call a 'star student.' She engaged with the material from the course in a manner that showcased her deep critical thinking skills and her ability to recognize and analyze issues surrounding not only gender, but also race, class, sexuality, and ability. She continually incorporated intersections of identities into her work, recognizing that multiple identities must be considered when talking about dominance and oppression."

Women Mentoring Women: Dr. Dafina-Lazarus Stewart

"Dafina-Lazarus Stewart has worked tirelessly with her graduate students to be a model of what a feminist

Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Research Symposium Highlights

scholar can and should be through teaching, multiple publications and leadership in the department of higher education. Dafina-Lazarus is also very active mentoring undergraduate students, serving as founder and faculty sponsor of HUE, for LGBT persons of color, for discussions of spirituality, and for campus-wide discussions on "BlackLivesMatter."

Institutional Change: Dr. Mary Krueger

"Dr. Mary Krueger worked in changing BGSU's institutional approach to sexual assault reporting, counseling and prevention. She was one of the ten original recipients of a US Justice Department grant to establish a SAAFE Center for victims of sexual assault on this campus. She was the first and has been the only Director of The Women's Center, begun in 1998, and under her direction, has continued the SAAFE work. In addition, the Women's Center, under her direction, has founded the Cocoon Shelter, the first and only shelter for women injured by domestic violence in Wood County and started the NW OHIO Chapter of the Silent Witness Project to honor those slain by domestic violence, and is yearly attended by literally hundreds of people, including family members. She has mounted national conferences here on Title IX and women in sport, on domestic violence. Recently, she established a nursing room for breastfeeding mothers, the first ever here. This woman is a force of feminist nature and a great agent for institutional change."



WGSS Director Sandra Faulkner and WGSS Scholarship Recipient, Jessica Broderson.

WGSS Scholarship Recipient: Jessica Broderson

Jessica Broderson is pursuing a major in WGSS to educate herself about the lives and struggles of women and to apply her knowledge and degree towards the betterment of women's lives through research, service, and action.

Best Graduate Student Symposium Presentation: Viola Ratcliffe

Viola Ratcliffe, Art History, presented "To Be a Witness: Lynching and the Black Female Experience in Lashawnda-Crow Storm's 'Her Name was Laura Nelson."

Best Undergraduate Student Symposium Presentation: Jessica Blumerick

Jessica Blumerick, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality, Business Pre-Law, presented "A Look at Honor Based Violence in the Middle East."

Graduate Student Spotlight: Dinah Tetteh



Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Media and Communication and working on a graduate certificate in Women's Studies here at BGSU. I grew up in Ghana where I had my bachelor's degree and worked as copy editor for a major newspaper before moving to the U.S. to begin my graduate studies. I earned my master's degree in Communication Studies from East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, TN and started my doctorate at BGSU in 2012.

What research are you currently working on?

I am currently collecting data for my dissertation which uses a feminist lens to explore women's embodied experiences of ovarian cancer and social support. Additionally, one of my research projects examines how those affected by

ovarian cancer talk about the disease in online settings, and another discusses the impact of socio-cultural factors on breast cancer education and advocacy in sub-Saharan Africa and the implications for breast cancer diagnosis and management. I am also working on a research paper that looks at how traditional notions of the female body manifest in media discourse of women's health (specifically breast cancer) in Ghana.

What aspects of the WGSS program have you most enjoyed participating in?

I like the multidisciplinary nature of the WGSS program and the excellent faculty the program has. The Director of the program, Dr. Sandra Faulkner, does an amazing job at getting students involved and challenging them to reach their fullest potential. It is a great pleasure learning from everyone affiliated with the program. Also, I have enjoyed the classes offered in the program including the contemporary feminist theory class. My dissertation research was inspired by that class, among others.

It is also commendable that students in the WGSS certificate program can choose projects to work on for the Capstone Project. For my Capstone Project, I am designing a course on women's health integrating perspectives of communication and women's, gender and sexuality studies. Specifically, the course will explore socio-cultural factors that influence understanding of women's health in developing world contexts; it will also identify how women's health issues are communicated in society and how that affects how and what we know (or do not know) about women's health. Additionally, the course will explore how these issues enhance and/or undermine women's lived experiences of health and illness.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I would like to thank everyone who contributed in various ways to make the WGSS program what it is today. I did not know how women's, gender, and sexuality issues intersect with my personal and research interests until I enrolled in the WGSS program, and I am thankful for the opportunity.

2015 Women's History Month: Global Girls

Each March, WGSS partners with the Women's Center to host a series of events honoring Women's History Month. Check out highlights from this year's program on Global Girls.



International students from the Maumee Valley Country Day School, with Women's Center graduate assistant Kristen Bunner and moderator Joanna Murphy, following their panel discussion at the Women's Center.



Emily Monago, Terrie Cook, and Keisha Taylor speak on mothering African-American boys.



"Women Mentoring Women" award winner Dafina-Lazarus Stewart with WGSS director, Sandra Faulkner.



WGSS Research Symposium keynote speaker, Heather Switzer, with firstyear WGSS major, Kristen Hermann.



Honorees at the 17 Annual "Bring Your Favorite Female Professor/ Mentor to Lunch" event. Women's Center Director, Mary Krueger, greeting honored female professors.



Mary Krueger, Director of the Women's Center, greeting honored female professors/ mentors.

Faculty & Student Accomplishments

Awards

- April Conway received the 1st Place Award for paper presentations at the Charles E. Shanklin Colloquium.
- Kasie Durkitt received the 1st Place Undergraduate Award in the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) Essay Contest.
- Sandra Faulkner received the BGSU Faculty Senate Faculty Mentor Award at the 2015 Faculty Excellence Awards.
- Kristen Hermann received the 2nd Place Undergraduate Award in the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) Essay Contest.
- Johnanna Ganz received the 2nd Place Graduate Award in the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) Essay Contest.
- Vikki Krane was honored as a Professor of Teaching Excellence at the 2015 Faculty Excellence Awards.
- Mary Maxfield received 1st place, Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) Essay Contest.
- Joanna Murphy received the Alma J. Payne Scholarship for Nontraditional Students.



April Conway at the Charles E. Shanklin Colloquium.

- Sun-Yeon Park received the BGSU Faculty Senate Distinguished Service Award at the 2015 Faculty Excellence Awards.
- Sarah Smith Rainey received the BGSU President's Award for academic Advising, 2015 Faculty Excellence Awards.

Publications

- April Conway published "Digital Detroit: Rhetoric and Space in the Age of Network (Book Review) in *Computers and Compositions Online*, Fall 2014. http://casit.bgsu.edu/cconline/fall14/conway/
- Lee Nickoson and Kristine L. Blair (with Rhetoric & Writing Doctoral Program graduate students Laural Adams, Megan Adams, Pauline Baird, Estee Beck, April Conway, and Martha Schaffer) coauthored "In the Spaces In Between: Graduate Student-Faculty Collaboration.") Graduate Writing Across the Disciplines: Identifying, Teaching, and Supporting. Ed. Trixie Smith et al. WAC Clearinghouse. Forthcoming. Nickoson and Kristine L. Blair, Rhetoric & Writing Doctoral Program in the Department of English also co-edited (with Mary P. Sheridan, University of Louisville, and Tobi Jacobi, Colorado State University) a special issue of Feminist Teacher, Campus-Community Partnerships: Intersections and Interruptions. Forthcoming.

Faculty & Student Accomplishments

Presentations

- Mary Maxfield presented "History Retweeting Itself: Imperial Feminist Appropriations of 'Bring Back Our Girls,' SAGES Interdisciplinary Conference on Culture and Environment, Akron, OH. Maxfield also led "Dismantling Racism in LGBTQ Spaces," undergraduate LGBT Leadership Certificate Workshop, co-facilitated with Brock Webb.
- Erin Mulligan presented "Dismantling the Meat-Eating Patriarchy: Intersectionality in Vegan and Feminist Activism at the Ray Browne Conference on Cultural and Critical Studies, "Embodied Environmentalism: Veganism in American Culture" at SAGES Interdisciplinary Conference on Culture and Environment, and "Animal Rights for Women's Rights: Intersectionality in Contemporary Vegan Activism" at PCA/ ACA.
- ◆ Joanna Murphy facilitated "International Girls Take on Northwest Ohio" at the BGSU Women's Center. Murphy also presented on research practices to multiple undergraduate classes.



Dr. Krane and Dr. Faulkner at the Faculty Excellence Awards.

- Hillary Weiss presented "The AIWC: Feminist Actions Traditions and Global Feminism" at the WGSS Research Symposium. This presentation and paper explored the ambivalence that surrounds this group honoring Hindu traditions and the sacrifices that need to be made in order for global feminism to succeed. Perhaps the group's annual conferences and representatives as well as their sacrifices Environmentalism: Veganism in American Culture" at SAGES Interdisciplinary Conference on Culture and Environment, and "Animal Rights for Women's Rights: Intersectionality in Contemporary Vegan Activism" at PCA/ ACA.
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- Hillary Weiss presented "The AIWC: Feminist Actions Traditions and Global Feminism" at the WGSS Research Symposium. This presentation and paper explored the ambivalence that surrounds this group honoring Hindu traditions and the sacrifices that need to be made in order for global feminism to succeed. Perhaps the group's annual conferences and representatives as well as their sacrifices could be the key to global feminism.

Accomplishments

- Joanna Murphy successfully defended her thesis proposal to become a Ph.D. candidate.
- Hillary Weiss introduced the concept of feminism to GSW 1120 writing students. Weiss assigned roughly thirty different sources, which students examined and synthesized. Afterward, the class discussed the pros and cons of feminism.



228 Shatzel Hall Bowling Green, Ohio 43403

Phone: 419-372-7133 Fax: 419-372-0330

Sandra Faulkner, PhD Program Director and Graduate Coordinator 236 Shatzel Hall sandraf@bgsu.edu 419-372-1998 Sarah Rainey, PhD School of Cultural and Critical Studies Undergraduate Advisor 231 Shatzel Hall sasarah@bgsu.edu 419-372-6949

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