

Spring 2023 Newsletter

Greetings from the [Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies \(WGSS\)](#)!

It is hard to believe that spring is already here and Commencement is just around the corner. We're very proud of what we accomplished this year and pleased to share highlights with you!

Reproductive justice continues to be at the forefront of our discussions in WGSS. Last semester, we hosted a screening of the HBO documentary, *The Janes*. [Abby Pariser](#), one of the original Janes and a Long Island resident, joined us for a Q&A after the viewing. Students, faculty, staff, and community members packed the room for this event, eager to learn more about this important history.

This semester, WGSS launched a new internship program for undergraduate majors and minors. Our "WGSS Ambassadors" are helping us build community among current WGSS students while also increasing the visibility of our department. In addition to honing their professional communication skills – have you seen our [Instagram](#) lately?! – our ambassadors are organizing events, doing community outreach, and designing WGSS swag. I hope you'll enjoy learning more about our spring team of ambassadors in this newsletter.

Our graduate students have continued making a huge impact on our campus and beyond. Last semester, we hosted two excellent dissertation defenses where we celebrated our newest PhD graduates. In November, two of our current PhD students and one of our recent PhD alums presented their research at the National Women's Studies Association's annual conference. Two of our PhD candidates, Ashley Barry and Jade Kai, were selected for the College of Arts and Sciences [IDEA \(Inclusion, Diversity, Equality, and Access\) Grads](#) program where they've led initiatives advancing racial, gender, and disability justice on campus.



First-year PhD student Kara Pernicano was awarded a Carceral Research and Teaching Fellowship to work with the "[Writing Beyond Prison](#)" project to amplify the writings of incarcerated people.

Our Department participated in SBU's recent Giving Day fundraiser; our efforts featured the [Terry Alexander Award Fund](#). Thanks to the generosity of the Alexander family, WGSS bestows this award each year upon a graduating senior preparing to enter a career in healthcare or health advocacy. Read more in the pages that follow.

As the semester winds to a close, the WGSS community looks back at a few events. Professor Nancy Hiemstra continued a tradition started by Professor Lisa Diedrich and organized a "Pedagogy Slam" where faculty and grad instructors shared how they bring feminist praxes into their classrooms. We hosted a series of events highlighting trans activism and scholarship. We also celebrated the recent and forthcoming releases of Professor Ritch Calvin's books on queer science fiction. I hope you'll enjoy the interview one of our ambassadors did with Ritch about his new work!

Wishing you a wonderful summer,

Liz Montegary
Associate Professor and Chair

The Janes Screening

The National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Departments of History and WGSS co-hosted a viewing of the HBO documentary, *The Janes*, which tells the story of seven Chicago women who were arrested for being members of an underground network that provided safe, affordable, and illegal abortions to over 11,000 women in the years before *Roe v. Wade*. Using the code word "Jane," the collective provided an alternative to desperate women whose only other recourse was a brutal underground system run by the Mob. The documentary was followed by a Q&A with a former "Jane," Abby Pariser of Port Jefferson, NY.



News and Announcements

Congratulations to Dr. Stephanie Bonvissuto and Shruti Mukherjee! Stephanie and Shruti successfully defended their dissertations this past fall.

- Stephanie's dissertation, [Making Room for Queer Spatiality: Discursive Designs of All-Gender Spaces](#), was defended on September 9, 2022. Stephanie is currently teaching Women's and Gender Studies at Hunter College in New York.
- Shruti's dissertation, [Living with Militarization: The Politics of Refusal and Loss in Manipur](#), was defended on December 9, 2022.

Shruti Mukherjee

"I am currently based out of Toronto and working at Canada Life as a UX Researcher since July 2022 as part of a Digital Experience team. I collaborate with designers and developers in making healthcare services easier to use and accessible. As part of my work, I conduct qualitative research studies, analyze findings, and present actionable insights to our stakeholders. One of my goals for the year is to mature the research practices at Canada Life and establish a research archive for easier information dissemination among my peers. Currently, some of the projects I am excited about are with the federal government and I am grateful to my colleagues who have supported me in the transition from academia into the industry."



Women's History Month

Two WGSS PhD students were featured in the University Library's Women's History Month Speaker Series. On March 2, 2023, **Jade Kai** and **José Flores Sanchez** shared research from their co-authored article "Coloniality and Contagion: COVID-19 and the Disposability of Women of Color in Feminized Labor Sectors," published in *Gender, Work, and Organization*.



Jade Kai



José Flores Sanchez

WGSS at National Women's Studies Association



From left to right: Desi Self, AJ Castle, Val Moyer catch up, debrief panels, and, of course, enjoy a tasty beverage at the conference.

WGSS had a great showing at the National Women's Studies Association's 2022 conference, held in Minnesota last October. Two current students, one recent alum, and one faculty member presented their work at the premier conference for gender and sexuality studies.

- **Desi Self, WGSS PhD candidate:**
"Building an Upper-Level Undergraduate Black Queer Feminist Methods Course as a Black Queer Graduate Instructor"
- **Val Moyer, PhD alum:**
"Challenging Testosterone Thresholds as 'Female Eligibility' in Women's Sport"
- **AJ Castle, PhD student:**
"Maiden, Mother, Crone: Aging and the Only Girl at the Apocalypse"
- **Liz Montegary, associate professor and chair:**
"Beyond Grading: How Can We Challenge Grades in the Feminist Classroom?"



2022 NWSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

KILLING RAGE:
Resistance on the
Other Side of Freedom

NOVEMBER 10-13, 2022 | MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Meet the WGSS Undergraduate Program Ambassadors

These four amazing WGSS students are completing a for-credit internship with the Department as our program ambassadors. They have been enhancing our social media presence (follow us on [Instagram](#) @wgsstonybrookuniversity), hosting events so WGSS majors and minors can build community together, and helping us get the word out about majoring and minoring in WGSS.

Julianna Busseno



Julianna is currently a senior double majoring in Psychology and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Her ambassador projects include revitalizing the Department's social media, collaborating with other departments for educational programs, and student outreach. Her research interests include U.S. prison systems/treatment of incarcerated women and she is currently working on her senior research paper on sex and sexual assault in women's prisons. After graduating in May, she plans on going into social work to work with incarcerated women and eventually on to graduate school to further her education and research.

Athena Wilkinson

Athena is currently a sophomore double majoring in Music and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Her ambassador projects include social media, other department collaborations, and student outreach to garner as much interest and participation in our WGSS program as possible. Athena is interested in creating standardized music education that does not erase the existence of Black LGBTQ+ composers for both her research and future career.



Brianna Chavez



Brianna is currently a sophomore double majoring in Mass Communication and Sociology with a minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Her ambassador projects include Menstrual Product Drive throughout the Mendelsohn community in collaboration with CPO, CampusRez, Undergraduate College of Social Justice, Ethics, and Equity, and Hall Councils, and the WGSS Department. She is working towards getting into a graduate program and enjoys developing her critical thinking skills and challenging herself, so she thinks that going further in higher education will be a great fit for her!

Anya Reinhart

Anya is currently a sophomore majoring in Health Science with a minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Her ambassador projects include design and sticker production for the Department as well as the period product drive for Women's History Month in the Mendelsohn community in collaboration with Brianna. Anya is interested in pursuing a career within the healthcare administration field in order to implement more expansive and equitable care policies that support underrepresented LGBTQ+ and POC (people of color) patients.



Trans Studies & Politics

WGSS collaborated with other centers and institutes on campus on a series of events to celebrate groundbreaking trans activism and showcase new developments in trans studies scholarship.

“Transfer Points: Trans Migrants and Immigration Detention”

Lecture by **Tristan Josephson**, associate professor of WGSS at Sacramento State University

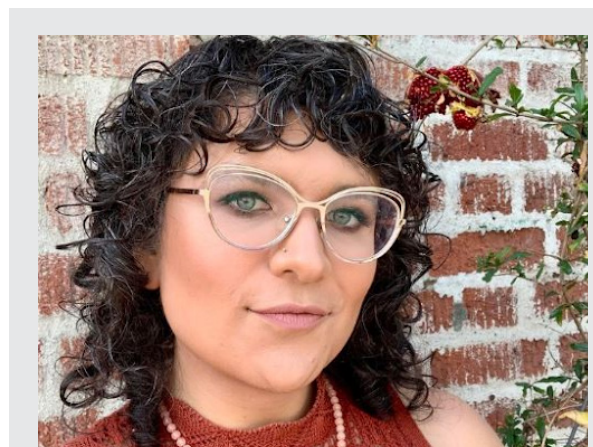
In this talk, Josephson conducted a close reading of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) official detention standards to explore how state institutions respond to critiques of their own anti-trans violence by incorporating discourses of the vulnerable trans subject.



“DIY as Trans Method”

Lecture by **Jules Gill-Peterson**, Johns Hopkins University

Part of the Humanities Institute “Pressing Matters” lecture series. Gill-Peterson is the author of *Histories of the Transgender Child*, which uncovers a previously unknown 20th-century history of transgender children. Using archival research, she reconstructs a record of the medicalization and racialization of children’s bodies.



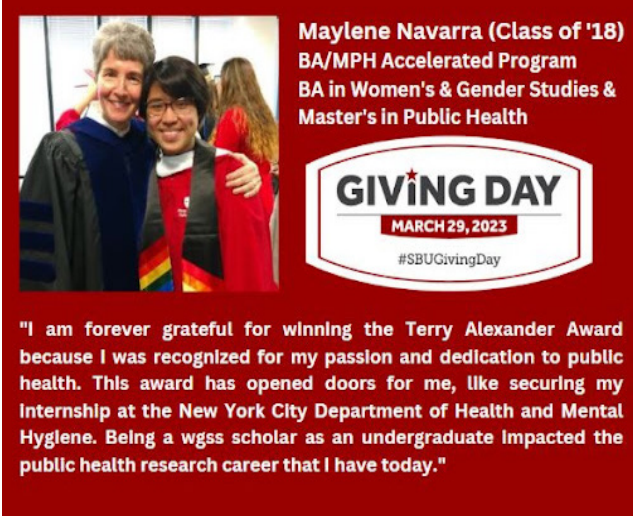
Porpora! at the Center for Italian Studies

Since the 1970s, Italian trans activist, writer and actress Porpora has been committed to the Italian LGBT+ movement. Currently, she is one of the most influential and dynamic activists for the rights of the trans community around the world. Elected in 2021 as city councilor of the Municipality of Bologna, she is the first trans woman nominated as president of the Equality and Equal Opportunities Commission.

Giving Day 2023: Terry Alexander Fund

Every year an undergraduate receives the [Terry Alexander Award Fund](#), created in honor of Terry Alexander, the mother of alumna Courtney Alexander '06, Women's Studies major. Terry was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1982, and worked to raise awareness about the disease until her death in 2006. This award is given annually to a graduating senior who has studied the connections between health, gender, and sexuality in preparation for a career in healthcare or health advocacy. Please consider making a donation to the amazing [Terry Alexander Fund](#) to help WGSS students launch their health-focused careers. There is still time to give!

To view testimonies from past Terry Alexander Award winners, [view our Instagram feed](#).



Maylene Navarra (Class of '18)
BA/MPH Accelerated Program
BA in Women's & Gender Studies &
Master's in Public Health

GIVING DAY
MARCH 29, 2023
#SBUGivingDay

"I am forever grateful for winning the Terry Alexander Award because I was recognized for my passion and dedication to public health. This award has opened doors for me, like securing my Internship at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Being a wgss scholar as an undergraduate impacted the public health research career that I have today."

Nancy Hiemstra Receives the John S. Toll Endowed Award for Teaching Excellence

Congratulations to Associate Professor Nancy Hiemstra, selected for the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) John S. Toll Endowed Award for Teaching Excellence! Each year, this award is presented to a CAS faculty member based on their exceptional teaching and passion for their field of study, as well as for the mentorship of students. Recipients are selected by the College's Dean's Student Advisory Council among current and previous years' recipients of the Godfrey Excellence in Teaching Awards. Last spring, Professor Hiemstra received a Godfrey Excellence in Teaching Award, Humanities.



Professor Hiemstra receives the Godfrey Excellence in Teaching Award in Spring 2022.
Left to right: Alum Zarya Shaikh '22, Professor Hiemstra and Dean Nicole Sampson

Interview with Associate Professor Ritch Calvin

By Athena Wilkinson, WGSS Undergraduate Ambassador



Professor Ritch Calvin's new book [Queering SF](#) was published in May 2022 by Aqueduct Press, a cutting-edge press entirely dedicated to publishing feminist science fiction (SF) literature and criticism.

In *Queering SF*, Prof. Calvin explains how queer science fiction not only challenges our ideas about SF as a genre but can actually inspire us to imagine new realities. By allowing readers to spend time in imaginary bodies, families, and societies, queer SF invites us to think seriously about how we might do gender and sexuality differently now and in the future.

AW: What inspired you to write *Queering SF*?

I got the idea for this book after teaching undergraduate classes on the topic. The first time I taught the class, I called it "Queer Science Fiction." It was my first time putting together a syllabus like this, so some of the texts didn't work as well as others. But the bigger challenge was that students weren't familiar with the topic before enrolling in the class.

A few semesters later, I tried teaching a different version of the class, called "Non-Binary Science Fiction." This time, the students' relationship to the topic was completely different. Even though not that much time had passed, something had shifted. Students walked into class already familiar with queer and non-binary science fiction and ready to think critically about the assigned texts. They really enjoyed the class and were excited about our discussions.

At the end of that semester, I looked back at all the notes I had - I tend to over-prepare when I'm teaching new material, so I had extensive notes - and I got the idea for putting them together in the shape of a book.

AW: How did your project evolve as you were working on it? Did your view of queer SF change from your original notes?

*I'm not sure that I changed my opinions or fundamentally changed my readings of the texts I discuss in this book. But the process of assembling *Queering SF* - which consists of 36 separate essays - required figuring out how to put all the different pieces in conversation with each other. I had to decide what order to arrange them in and how to deepen the ties between them. I wanted to make sure the essays at the end of the book talked back to the earlier essays.*

I will say that not all of the queer SF texts I discuss in the book went over well in my classes. There were a couple that were fairly controversial among students. But that didn't change my ideas about the texts. People have different concerns about and interpretations of stories. That's what I want a text to do, right? Texts should be provocative - in the sense of provoking you to think. Sometimes being made uncomfortable is an important thing. Not liking a text can be even better. In future projects, I might include even more uncomfortable stories.

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AW: What does "queer" mean in your work?

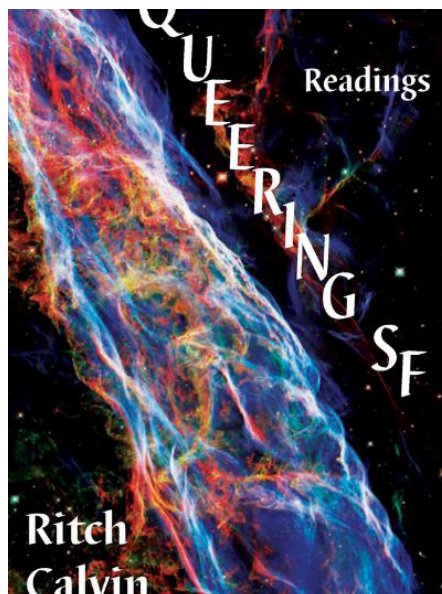
There's a bunch of ways to talk about "queer" - as an identity, as a practice, as a theoretical method. I focus on the way queer writers and queer science fiction queers science fiction as a genre. Take, for example, Merc Fenn Wolfmoor's "The Frequency of Compassion." The fact that the character is queer, non-binary, and autistic is kinda central to the story. But it also says we can't do science fiction the way we used to do it. In Rivers Solomon's novel, The Unkindness of Ghosts, the main character's autism is also central. This changes the rules of science fiction. We can't continue to do the same stuff. We have to rethink it. So, for me, that's the really important thing: the fundamental way in which it changes the genre as a genre.

AW: Okay, a weird question (but maybe not so weird coming from a double WGSS/Music major). Are there any songs that you associate with Queering SF?

The last chapter, "Who You Lookin' At?, or How Young Adult SF Became Intersectional?," is about Alechia Dow's book The Sound of Stars. Dow did this really interesting thing of creating a soundtrack for the novel. She made a Spotify playlist that you can listen to as you read the book.

AW: What are you working on now?

Queering SF focuses on short fiction and a few novels. My next book, which I've finished writing and am now doing the edits on, focuses on queer SF comics. After that, I'm thinking of doing another book on queering SF film. In all of these projects, my interest is in the queering of these genres: how queer SF comics queer comics and how queer SF film queers film.who wants something better, who seeks change in itself, is enough. Back away from the thoughts that make you feel you could be doing more to achieve the societal goals you are after. Many students don't identify themselves as feminist or activists because they have yet to cross some imaginary finish line. The smallest of achievements matter.



We Appreciate Your Support

The Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies depends on the support of our alumni and friends so we may continue to offer undergraduate scholarships, financial assistance to our graduate students for research and other expenses, as well as to support programming and other departmental initiatives for the benefit of our amazing students!

I hope you'll consider investing in our students and faculty by [making a gift](#) today or speaking with [Micheal D'Ambrosio](#), director of development, at (631) 632-4061.

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