

Program in Women's and Gender Studies

The [Program in Women's and Gender Studies](#) (WGS) continues to build on its success as an interdisciplinary undergraduate program and to provide a community for scholarly inquiry focusing on women and gender.

WGS subjects are designed to explore the full range of human inquiry, placing gender as the central category of analysis. Because gender is always experienced together with other social markers, WGS subjects investigate gender in relation to other identity categories such as race, nationality, sexuality, religion, and class. Exploring gender and related social categories cross-culturally, historically, and artistically enables MIT students to understand competing constructions of knowledge and value. This, in turn, makes possible a broad range of personal as well as intellectual discoveries.

In addition, the program is an important resource and support for faculty members who have an advanced knowledge of women's and gender studies within particular disciplines and who want to enrich their work by collaborating and studying across disciplinary lines. Reading groups, intellectual forums, and guest speakers bring the faculty community together for conversations on topics of shared concern. The core faculty in the program is dedicated to the continual development of undergraduate education that reaches beyond disciplinary boundaries.

WGS provides programs that engage and challenge faculty, students, and staff. Because our mission is broadly interdisciplinary and spans both theory and practice, we regularly partner with other departments, student groups, and organizations. This year WGS collaborated with the Program for Violence Prevention and Response (VPR), Students Advocating Against Violence, the Center for Health Promotion and Wellness at MIT Medical, the Student Activities Office, Residential Life, and LGBT@MIT (Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender) to provide the fifth annual Sexual Assault Awareness Month on the MIT campus.

WGS works closely with the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies (GCWS), a cross-institutional program fostering women's studies scholarship, hosted at MIT. The GCWS consists of nine local universities (Boston College, Boston University, Brandeis University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Northeastern University, Simmons College, Tufts University, and the University of Massachusetts Boston) whose faculties offer interdisciplinary team-taught graduate courses and a workshop for dissertation writers in women's and gender studies. Now in its seventh year at MIT, GCWS continues to add richness to the already strong women's and gender studies community on campus.

The program's commitment to the study of women and gender extends beyond MIT and neighboring universities to collaborate with other gender-focused programs in the Boston area. WGS and our community partner, Women in Film and Video/ New England, continued to cohost the Chicks Make Flicks film screening series and discussions with local female filmmakers. One highlight was the screening of *We Still Live Here*. The film documents the incredible story of cultural and language revival by

the Wampanoag of Southeastern Massachusetts. The film was followed by a discussion with director Anne Makepeace.

Program Administration

In AY2012, professor Sally Haslanger (Linguistics and Philosophy) completed her third year as program director. Over this past year, Haslanger has worked to build a research profile for WGS that draws upon our faculty strengths. This has resulted in two new collaborative research projects, the Borders Research Initiative, and the Gender and Technology Initiative (described further below). Haslanger is also committed to WGS's ongoing mission of reaching out to undergraduates through teaching and programming. Her current goals are to strengthen the new research initiatives and the sense of intellectual community within WGS, and to attract new faculty affiliates.

The WGS program coordinator, Heidi González, continues working to increase the number of students enrolled in WGS courses as well as the number of students pursuing WGS concentrations, minors, and majors. She is focused on creating and maintaining collaborative efforts within and outside of the MIT population that will increase the visibility of WGS on the MIT campus, in the neighboring Boston area, and in the national women's studies community. She is also committed to bringing attention to the voices of underrepresented populations. In 2012 she was the recipient of the MIT Excellence Award for Fostering Diversity and Inclusion.

The WGS committee structure consists of an interdisciplinary steering committee, a programming committee, an outreach committee, a curriculum committee, and a prize committee. In 2011–2012 the members of these committees were:

Steering Committee

Director: Sally Haslanger (Linguistics and Philosophy), director
 Ruth Perry (Literature), senior faculty representative
 Bruno Perreau (Foreign Languages and Literatures), junior faculty representative
 Andrea Walsh (Writing and Humanistic Studies), other academic teaching staff, Prize Committee chair and representative
 Mitali Thakor G (Science, Technology, and Society), student representative

Curriculum Committee

Curriculum Committee Chair: Elizabeth Wood (History), Curriculum Committee chair
 Emma Teng (Foreign Languages and Literatures, fall 2011) and Rebecca Faery (Writing and Humanistic Studies, spring 2012), Programming Committee chairs
 Abha Sur (WGS), Outreach Committee chair
 Rae Langton (Linguistics and Philosophy, fall 2011) and Elizabeth Wood (History, spring 2012), Graduate Consortium of Women's Studies representatives
 Marlene Mannoff (Library), WGS librarian
 Heidi González (WGS), WGS coordinator

Faculty Development

There are two new collaborative research projects in WGS.

The Borders Research Initiative brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, as well as experts from outside academia (including lawyers, activists, and artists) to examine issues of border crossing and citizenship, especially as they intersect with gender, sexuality, family, race, ethnicity, class, and religion. We seek to understand national borders and gain historical perspective on the multiple ways in which borders are crossed. We explore how concepts of citizenship, identity, gender, and race have evolved over time, and try to gain clarity on the contemporary manifestations of these issues.

Members of this initiative include the following WGS affiliates and allies:

Christopher Capozzola (History), coordinator
 Bruno Perreau (Foreign Languages and Literatures), coordinator
 Emma Teng (Foreign Languages and Literatures, History), coordinator
 Manduhai Buyandelger (Anthropology)
 Ian Condry (Foreign Languages and Literatures)
 Lerna Eckmekcioglu (History)
 Diana Henderson (Literature)
 Erica James (Anthropology)
 Kym Ragusa (Writing and Humanistic Studies)
 Margery Resnick (Foreign Languages and Literatures)
 Elizabeth Wood (History)

And the following WGS allies:

Azra Aksamija (Program in Art, Culture and Technology)
 Vivek Bald (Writing and Humanistic Studies)
 Shasha Costanza-Chock (Comparative Media Studies)
 Hiromu Nagahara (History)
 Melissa Nobles (Political Science)
 Haimanti Roy (former faculty in History)
 Sarah Song (former faculty in Political Science)

The Gender and Technology Initiative builds on and expands the project undertaken with our D'Arbeloff grant to create a subject on gender and technology. In addition to the subject we developed, we are now collaborating with D-Lab to host a workshop with panels on gender and labor, and gender and energy/environment. We are also working

with DLab to develop an additional subject that will prepare students to be sensitive to the ways that gender functions in different cultures. This pedagogical collaboration is stimulating new interdisciplinary research projects linking WGS, D-Lab, and Science, Technology, and Society (STS). In addition to issues concerning gender and technology in development, we are building collaborations with the program in Comparative Media Studies (CMS) to explore issues of gender in the digital humanities, gender and media, and gender and gaming.

Members of this initiative include the following WGS affiliates and allies:

Stefan Helmreich (Anthropology)
 Nicole Labruto G (STS)
 Libby McDonald (MIT CoLab)
 Susan Murcott (Civil and Environmental Engineering)
 Heather Paxson (Anthropology)
 Amy Smith (D-Lab)
 Abha Sur
 Kim Surkan
 Mitali Thakor G (STS)
 Chris Walley (Anthropology)

In fall 2011, WGS hosted a seminar series that brought three important feminist intellectuals to campus. They were Jane Mansbridge of the Harvard Kennedy School ("What You Didn't Know about Feminism, Class and Race"); Nancy Folbre, economist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst ("Greed, Lust and Gender"); and Cynthia Enloe of Clark University ("What do the IMF and Penn State Have in Common? Shining a Feminist Light on Institutions and Sexual Harassment").

All three women are public figures and intellectuals whose work extends beyond the academic community to the general public; all three are involved in feminist activism. Our faculty members were especially keen to hear how these women interpret the relationship between feminist activism and feminist scholarship.

The WGS Intellectual Forum provides an opportunity for affiliated faculty members to present their work in progress to colleagues and students. We hosted several forums in 2011–2012:

Elizabeth Wood, "Putin, Masculinity and Protests in 2011/2012: Why the Spectacle is Falling Apart"
 Chuong-Dai Vo, "Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq: War and Landscape Photography"
 Christopher Leighton, "Mah-Jongg to Marx: Chinese Housewives' Great Gamble, 1949–1956"

Vivik Bald, "Asian Inclusion Acts: South Asian Muslims in New Orleans and Harlem, 1890–1950"

Chris Capozzola, "Gender and Citizenship in the U.S. Supreme Court: The Historians' Brief in *Flores-Villar v. United States*"

Emma Teng, "Marital Expatriation, Marital Citizenship, Migration: Intersections of Race, Gender and Class during the Chinese Exclusion Era."

In addition to scholarly workshops, WGS hosted a faculty workshop focused on creating safer, nondiscriminatory classroom climates for all MIT students.

WGS faculty members continued to make active contributions to their individual fields as well as to the interdisciplinary field of women's and gender studies. Their accomplishments are listed in the reports of their home departments.

Curriculum

WGS offers an undergraduate curriculum consisting of core classes and cross-listed subjects from approximately 10 departments and sections. Students may concentrate, minor, and petition for a major (called a "major departure") in women's and gender studies. WGS offered 26 subjects during the 2011–2012 academic year. Approximately 300 students enrolled in women's and gender studies classes, the bulk of whom registered for core classes. In response to student demand, WGS again offered two sections of WGS.101 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, which allowed approximately 50 students to explore the field at the introductory level. In addition, we were able to offer WGS.110 Sexual and Gender Identities and WGS.111 Gender/Media Studies (taught by WGS lecturer Kim Surkan). In keeping with our commitment to a globally oriented curriculum, we taught WGS.228 Psychology of Gender and Race (with an international focus during the spring) and continued to offer WGS.221 Women in the Developing World, as well as seven other classes with international themes.

GCWS continued to offer a host of graduate-level classes. Working with professor Rae Langton in her role as the MIT representative to GCWS in the fall of 2011 and with Elizabeth Wood in the spring of 2012, coordinator Andrea Sutton produced several curricular and pedagogical development workshops. In addition, Professor Wood cotaught a seminar with Eileen McDonagh called "Gender, the State, and Women's Political Power." Fifteen students enrolled, representing Boston College, the University of Massachusetts Boston, Brandeis University, Northeastern University, Simmons College, and Boston University. Evaluations from the instructors and students show that it was a success.

Programming Highlights

WGS programming reflects the wide spectrum of academic disciplines and gender issues related to the field of women's and gender studies. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field and our commitment to cross-cultural collaboration, Women's and Gender Studies initiates work with groups around the MIT campus and the Cambridge community. A sample of the interdisciplinary programming that WGS brought to the MIT community in the past year includes:

- Chicks Make Flicks film screenings in collaboration with Women in Film and Video/New England. We screened *We Still Live Here*, followed by a discussion with director Anne Makepeace and film protagonists Norvin Richards, Jessie Little Doe Baird, and Nitana Hicks. We also screened *No Way Out But One*, followed by a discussion with director Garland Waller and film protagonist Holly Collins.
- Sexual Assault Awareness Month, during which WGS worked closely with MIT Medical Community Wellness, VPR, the Student Activities Office, the Office of Undergraduate Advising and Academic Programming, Residential Life Programs, and the Technology and Culture Forum. One highlight of the week was the gallery exhibition of "Project Unbreakable," a powerful collection of photographs portraying survivors of sexual violence.
- "Visions of War" (a one-day symposium on war, feminist activism, and visual culture), with guest speakers Marianne Hirsch and Andrea Geyer.
- "Women's Rights in Iran and the Islamic World," a lecture by Dr. Shirin Ebadi, winner of the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize. Sponsors included the Committee on Race and Diversity, the Council on Staff Diversity and Inclusion, the Department of Physics, the Muslim Students Association, and the Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Studies.
- Film screening of *Gun Hill Road*, followed by a discussion with director Rashaad Green, cosponsored by LBG@MIT, Spanish House, and the Gender Fluidity Group.
- *Dispersed Radiance: Caste, Gender, and Modern Science in India*, a book talk with Abha Sur, cosponsored by MIT-India and the Program in Science, Technology and Society.
- "Cambodian Dream: Rebuilding Cambodia by Empowering its Women," a lecture by Alan Lightman, cosponsored by the Program in Writing and Humanistic Studies, D-Lab, the Center for International Studies, and the Public Service Center.
- Fall Registration Day film screening of *The Perfect Vagina*, followed by a discussion with Andrea Walsh, MIT "sexpert" Kate McCarthy, and writer/aesthetician M. LaMarca.
- "Being Sexual in Iran: A Sometimes Contradictory History," the Geneviève McMillan/Reba Stewart Lecture on Women in the Developing World, with Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet of the University of Pennsylvania.
- Spring Registration Day film screening of *The Purity Myth: The Virginity Movement's War Against Women*, followed by a discussion with Andrea Walsh and VPR representatives.
- "The Role Religion Plays in Discrimination: the Intersectionality of Piety, Pulpits, Parishioners, and Pastors," a talk by reverend Irene Monroe that examines the role religion plays in discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people.

Given the success of previous Women's History Month film screenings, WGS again partnered with GCWS to produce Boston's second annual Women's History Month film festival: Women Take the Reel. Films were screened throughout the month of March at eight academic institutions: MIT, the University of Massachusetts Boston, Northeastern University, Boston College, Boston University, Lesley University, Simmons College, and Brandeis University. Each institution hosted film screenings followed by discussions with the film's directors or producers, film protagonists, and/or faculty. MIT screened six films: *Orgasm Inc.*, a documentary exploring the complex relationship between women's sexual health, the FDA, and pharmaceutical companies; *Ella es el Matador* (She is the Matador), a documentary that reveals the surprising history of female matadors; *!Women Art Revolution*, a film that chronicles how the feminist art movement of the 1970s fused free speech and politics into an art that radically transformed the art and culture of our times; *The Fat Body (In)visible*, a short film that highlights the lives of two fat acceptance activists; *The Hurt Locker*, an academy award-winning feature film chronicling the lives of members of the US military's bomb squad; and *Weapon of War*, a documentary film investigating the sexual violence against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In addition, WGS has undertaken two short film projects, one documenting the history of WGS at MIT, and the other illustrating a broad range of approaches to and understanding of feminism. Both films will be completed in 2012–2013.

Affirmative Action

The Program in Women's and Gender Studies remains committed to affirmative action in all that we do. The student staff is composed of a diverse group of MIT students. Because WGS does not have its own faculty, our participation in faculty searches is limited. We have been successful in sponsoring Martin Luther King Scholars, hosted Carl Paris (WGS and Music and Theater Arts) in fall 2009, and are always on the lookout for opportunities to bring more MLK Visiting Professors and Scholars to campus.

Every WGS class takes into account racial diversity as a key factor in examining gender. During the 2011–2012 academic year, WGS offered a number of classes that directly address the issue of American racial politics: WGS.190 Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies, WGS.170 Identity and Difference, WGS.237 Race and Gender in Asian America, and WGS.228 Psychology of Gender and Race. In an effort to promote and sustain an international, comparative study of gender, we also offered WGS.221 Women in the Developing World, WGS.220 Women and Gender in the Middle East and North Africa, and WGS.270 Violence, Human Rights, and Justice.

In our programming, we pay close attention to a variety of forms of diversity, prioritizing a rich schedule of multiracial speakers and events that address women's and gender studies issues at the intersections of race, class, nationality, sexuality, and gender expression.

Future Plans

Professor Haslanger is working to widen faculty participation in WGS programs across the Institute, especially from faculty members in science and engineering, and is seeking to strengthen the sense of intellectual community within WGS on campus. The program

is committed to increasing its presence within the MIT community and beyond, and will benefit from continued involvement of undergraduate and graduate students in programming efforts. We will continue to pay special attention to inquiries that focus on the international and comparative study of gender and on the roles of women and minorities in science and technology—areas particularly appropriate to WGS at MIT.

Our primary efforts in 2012–2013 will be devoted to strengthening our faculty research initiatives and building on the networks they provide. Drawing on past successes, we will continue to sponsor the Intellectual Forum faculty development series, the Geneviève McMillan/Reba Stewart Lectures on Women in the Developing World, the Women Take The Reel film festival, the Chicks Make Flicks film screenings and discussions with local female filmmakers, and our Sexual Assault Awareness Month collaboration.

Sally Haslanger
Director

Heidy M. González
Coordinator