

Program in Women's and Gender Studies

The MIT [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 and historically 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 interdisciplinary 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 and believes that such teaching makes a vital contribution to our ongoing research.

WGS provides programs that engage and challenge faculty, students, administration, 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, Students Advocating Against Violence, the Center for Health Promotion and Wellness at MIT Medical, the Student Activities Office, Residential Life, and LBGT@MIT (Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender at MIT) in on-campus events related to Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

The program's commitment to the study of women and gender extends beyond MIT and neighboring universities, and we collaborate with other gender-focused programs in the Boston area. WGS works closely with the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies (GCWS), a cross-institutional program hosted at MIT that fosters women's studies scholarship. GCWS consists of nine local universities (Boston College, Boston University, Brandeis University, Harvard University, MIT, Northeastern University, Simmons College, Tufts University, and the University of Massachusetts, Boston) whose faculty offer interdisciplinary team-taught graduate courses and a workshop for dissertation writers in women's and gender studies. Now in its eighth year at MIT, GCWS continues to add richness to the already strong women's and gender studies community on campus. The most substantial collaboration between WGS and GCWS is the planning and execution of "Women Take the Reel," the Women's History Month film festival.

Program Administration

In AY2013, professor Sally Haslanger (Linguistics and Philosophy) completed her fourth and final year as program director. Over the past year, Haslanger has worked to build a research profile for WGS that draws upon our faculty strengths. In 2011–2012, we established two new collaborative research projects, the Borders Research Initiative and the Gender and Technology Initiative. This past year we brought some of our work to fruition by hosting interdisciplinary workshops on both themes. Haslanger is also committed to WGS's ongoing mission of reaching out to undergraduates through teaching and programming. Her goals have been to strengthen new research initiatives and the sense of intellectual community within WGS and to attract new faculty affiliates.

The WGS program manager, Heidi González, continues working to increase the number of students enrolled in WGS courses as well 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 2013, she was recognized by the Latino Cultural Center for her contributions to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for Latino students at MIT.

The WGS committee structure consists of an interdisciplinary steering committee, a programming committee, an outreach committee, a curriculum committee, and a prize committee. In 2012–2013, the members of the steering committee were as follows:

Sally Haslanger (Linguistics and Philosophy), director

Ruth Perry (Literature), senior faculty representative

Manduhai Buyandelger (Anthropology), junior faculty representative

Andrea Walsh (Comparative Media Studies/Writing [CMS/Writing]), other academic teaching staff representative and prize committee chair

Mitali Thakor G (doctoral program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society [HASTS]), student representative

Helen Elaine Lee (CMS/Writing), curriculum committee chair

Emma Teng (Foreign Languages and Literatures [FLL] and History), programming committee chair

Kim Surkan (WGS), outreach committee chair

Elizabeth Wood (History), GCWS representative

Theresa Tobin (MIT Libraries), acting WGS librarian

Heidi González, WGS program manager

Faculty Development

As mentioned above, there are two collaborative research projects in WGS.

The Borders Research Initiative (BRI), launched in 2011, is an interdisciplinary research, teaching, and community engagement program based in WGS. BRI convenes faculty and graduate students across diverse disciplines to share research on the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, migration, and citizenship. In October 2012, BRI held an inaugural symposium at MIT with the theme "Border Crossing: Race, Gender, Citizenship." The highly successful two-day symposium brought together an interdisciplinary group of MIT faculty in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, along with graduate students and experts from outside the academy (including lawyers, community activists, and practitioners in the arts) to discuss issues related to border crossing and citizenship, especially as they intersect with gender, sexuality, family, race, ethnicity, class, and religion. The symposium featured two keynote speeches, several interdisciplinary panels, and informal discussion sessions and was well attended by members of the MIT community as well as faculty and students from local universities and members of the larger community. John Tirman (executive director of MIT's Center for International Studies) delivered the opening remarks. This tremendously successful event was covered by the [MIT News Office](#).

We have been working to build on the interdisciplinary connections established at the symposium to expand our community and extend our impact. BRI is planning to jointly convene a faculty workshop with PRESAGE (Programme de Recherche et d'Enseignement sur le Genre), the gender studies program of l'Institut d'études politiques de Paris (Sciences Po), the leading social science institution in France. This collaborative workshop will be held in Paris in June 2014 and will feature faculty participants from both MIT and Sciences Po. A follow-up event will be planned for the MIT campus in fall 2014.

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

Christopher Capozzola (History), coordinator
 Bruno Perreau (FLL), coordinator
 Emma Teng (FLL and History), coordinator
 Sana Aiyar (History)
 Azra Aksamija (MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology)
 Vivek Bald (CMS/Writing)
 Manduhai Buyandelger (Anthropology)
 Ian Condry (FLL, CMS, and Anthropology)
 Sasha Costanza-Chock (CMS/Writing)
 Frédérique Donovan (FLL)
 Lerna Eckmekcioglu (History and WGS)
 Malick W. Ghachem (History)

Sally Haslanger (Linguistics and Philosophy)
 Diana Henderson (Literature)
 Erica James (Anthropology)
 Hiromu Nagahara (History)
 Melissa Nobles (Political Science)
 Kym Ragusa (Writing and Humanistic Studies)
 Margery Resnick (Literature)
 Sarah Song (former Political Science faculty member)
 Chuong-Dai Vo (WGS visiting scholar)
 Tess Wise (MIT alumna)
 Elizabeth Wood (History)

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 October 2012, WGS collaborated with Anthropology, D-Lab (Development through Dialogue, Design, and Dissemination), and the Program in Science, Technology, and Society to host a daylong workshop, "[Gender, Technology, and Development](#)." This well-attended and vibrant workshop brought together feminist scholars and MIT engineers to discuss the ways in which gender is a factor in development—both for good and for ill. In the afternoon, a D-Lab class joined the workshop to do a hands-on project with the visiting and local scholars. The workshop was organized by Heather Paxson (Anthropology), Mitali Thakor G (HASTS), Nicole Labruto G (HASTS), Kendra Leith (D-Lab), Sally Haslanger (WGS), Heidy González (WGS), Amy Smith (D-Lab), and Kim Surkan (WGS).

WGS affiliates in Anthropology continue to work with D-Lab in developing curriculum, and we look forward to hosting more workshops on this theme. We anticipate additional collaborative efforts in the upcoming academic year. We are also working with D-Lab to develop an additional subject that will prepare students to be sensitive to the ways in which gender is enacted in different cultures globally. This pedagogical collaboration is stimulating new interdisciplinary research projects linking WGS, HASTS, D-Lab, and CoLab (Community Innovators Lab). In addition to issues concerning gender and technology in development, we are seeking to build collaborations with the newly reconfigured CMS/Writing unit to explore issues related to gender in media, gaming, and the digital humanities.

In April 2013, we hosted the "[MIT Workshop on Sex Trafficking + Technology](#)," cosponsored by HASTS. Organized by a committee that included Sally Haslanger, Manduhai Buyandelger, Kim Surkan, and Heidy González, and led by PhD student Mitali Thakor, the workshop featured academic, legal, and mental health experts as well as community service providers. The workshop was well attended and did much to promote linkages between academia and community service providers.

The Gender and Technology Initiative includes the following WGS participants and allies:

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

The WGS Intellectual Forum provides an opportunity for affiliated faculty members and visiting scholars to present their work in progress to colleagues and students. We hosted two successful forums in 2012–2013: “Making a Home of Her Own: Newport’s Architectural Patronesses, 1850–1940” (featuring WGS visiting scholar Catherine Zipf) and “Women, Work and Technology in Indian Coalmines” (featuring WGS visiting scholar Jyoti Sinha).

WGS also continues to support and mentor our junior faculty affiliates.

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 19 subjects during AY2013. 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 lecturer Kim Surkan). In keeping with our commitment to a globally oriented and diverse curriculum, we offered WGS.228 Psychology of Gender and Race (with an international focus) and continued to offer WGS.109 Women and Global Activism in Media and Politics, as well as nine other classes with international themes.

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. Many groups and programs also approach WGS, seeking

our administrative and financial cosponsorship. A sample of the interdisciplinary programming that WGS brought to the MIT community in the past year includes:

- Sexual Assault Awareness Month, during which WGS worked closely with Community Wellness at MIT Medical, the Program for Violence Prevention and Response, the Student Activities Office, the Office of Undergraduate Advising and Academic Programming, Residential Life Programs, and Graduate Women at MIT. One highlight was the return of the gallery exhibition *Project Unbreakable*, a powerful collection of photographs portraying survivors of sexual violence.
- A Planned Parenthood workshop on reproductive rights with the student group Feminists@MIT.
- “The Dynamics and Tactics of Partner Abuse in LGBTQ/T Relationships” with The Network/La Red (co-organized with Feminists@MIT).
- *Glow*, a book reading with MIT alum Jessica Marie Tuccelli.
- “4,000 Years for Choice,” an artist talk and presentation about abortion rights and reproductive justice by Heather Ault (cosponsored by History, Anthropology, Political Science, the Student Activities Office, and GCWS).
- “Queer Desires: Sex, Boundaries, and Negotiation,” a workshop with Ignacio Rivera (cosponsored by LBGT@MIT).
- “Strategic Networking: Keys to Ensuring Your Career,” a presentation by Juliette C. Meyers (cosponsored by the Student Activities Office, the Office of Minority Education, and the Black Women's Alliance).
- “Gender Identity in Children: Formulating a Dynamic, Developmental Model,” a lecture by Anne Fausto-Sterling (cosponsored by GCWS).
- “MIT Workshop on Sex Trafficking + Technology,” cosponsored by HASTS.
- The first annual Women's Herstory Month lunch lessons: Menses 101 with professor Chris Bobel, Feminist Sex 101 with Kate McCarthy of MIT Medical, and Feminism 101 with Heidi M. González (in collaboration with the Student Activities Office/Margaret Cheney Room).
- A fall registration day film screening of *Hysteria*, followed by a discussion with professor Andrea Walsh and Kate McCarthy.
- “Making (up) an Archive: Women's History in the Digital Mode,” the McMillan-Stewart lecture with professor Afsaneh Najmabadi.
- A spring registration day film screening of *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, followed by a discussion with Professor Walsh.

Given the success of previous Women's History Month film screenings, WGS again partnered with GCWS to produce Boston's third annual Women's History Month film festival, “Women Take the Reel.” Films were screened throughout the month of March at nine academic institutions: MIT, Tufts University, Northeastern University, Boston College, Boston University, Lesley University, Simmons College, Brandeis University, and Emerson College. Each institution hosted film screenings followed by discussions with the film's directors or producers, film protagonists, and/or faculty. MIT screened

four films: *Orchids: An Intersex Adventure*, an award-winning documentary that traces the voyage of self-discovery of an Australian intersex person; *Made in India: A Film About Surrogacy*, a documentary exploring the complex realities of medical tourism; *Love and Diane*, an examination of poverty, welfare, and drug rehabilitation in the United States; and *First Person Plural*, a poignant film about adoption, family, loss, and the reconciling of multiple identities.

WGS also continued to work on 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 are in the final stages of editing.

Research, Publications, and Service

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

Space

WGS continues to face a space deficit. Professor Haslanger worked for several years to reclaim a classroom (14E-311) across from the WGS office. The classroom was originally part of the WGS suite before being given to the Libraries to house the Women's Studies Reading Room, which provided a space for students and faculty to browse women's studies holdings during a period when interdisciplinary feminist work was relatively scarce and scattered across the Libraries. In 2009, the works held in the reading room were integrated into the main collection, and the Libraries converted the classroom into a group study space. The new study space was, however, underutilized and rarely used for group study.

This issue came to the attention of WGS because of the ongoing space shortage experienced by the program. The current WGS space is small and insufficient for meetings of more than four to five people. Given that our interdisciplinary faculty is dispersed across the MIT campus, WGS would greatly benefit from having a centralized space to host classes, programming, meetings, and other events. The 14E-311 classroom would provide a center of energy for WGS that would help sustain our community.

After consulting with the office of the dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Professor Haslanger approached the Libraries to determine whether something might be worked out regarding the space. Unfortunately, no agreement was reached. In fall 2012, Professor Haslanger brought the issue to the attention of the Humanities Visiting Committee, and it strongly supported WGS's proposal to reclaim the space. WGS subsequently submitted a proposal to the Committee for the Review of Space Planning to have the classroom doors to the Libraries sealed and the existing doors to the WGS corridor unsealed. In May 2013, WGS learned that the room would be divided in half, with one side open to the Libraries and the other side open to the WGS corridor. This compromise was a partial success. The program continues to have greater space needs, but we are extremely happy to regain access to this space that can accommodate small (8–10-student) classes and steering committee meetings. The work is due to be completed by fall 2013.

Affirmative Action Goals and Successes

The Program in Women's and Gender Studies remains committed to affirmative action in all that we do. The student staff continues to be 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 fellows and are always on the lookout for opportunities to bring Martin Luther King scholars to campus.

Each WGS class takes into account racial diversity as a key factor in examining gender. In AY2013, WGS offered a number of classes that directly addressed the issue of American racial politics: WGS.274 Images of Asian Women: Dragon Ladies and Lotus Blossoms; WGS.170 Identity and Difference; WGS.S10 Reproductive Politics in the U.S.; WGS.225 Science of Race, Sex, and Gender; WGS.228 Psychology of Gender and Race; and WGS.231 Writing About Race. In an effort to promote and sustain an international, comparative study of gender, we also offered WGS.109 Women and Global Activism in Media and Politics, WGS.272 Slavery and Human Trafficking in the 21st Century, and WGS.222 Women and War.

In our programming, we continue to 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

Incoming director Emma Teng plans to continue Professor Haslanger's efforts to widen faculty participation in the program across the Institute. She will extend outreach efforts among science and engineering faculty and students as well as faculty at the Sloan School of Management and in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Professor Teng has participated in diversity programming at Lincoln Laboratory and plans to make further outreach efforts among women there. She will work with the newly appointed Institute community and equity officer, as well as members of the Committee on Race and Diversity and the Council on Staff Diversity and Inclusion (of which program manager Heidi González is a member) in order to increase the community presence of WGS at MIT and enhance the program's participation in broader efforts to promote community, equity, and inclusion across the Institute. The program remains strongly committed to increasing its community presence, both on campus and beyond, and will continue to draw on the active involvement of undergraduate and graduate students in programming efforts. Professor Teng plans to work with the Student Activities Office and the Office of Minority Education to strengthen ties between the program's academic offerings and student programming across campus. She also will work to strengthen the sense of intellectual community among WGS faculty and visiting scholars. The program will continue to pay special attention to the global and comparative study of women and gender; to the intersectionality of race, gender, and class; and to the roles of women and minorities in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields—areas particularly appropriate to WGS.

Our primary efforts in 2013–2014 will be devoted to strengthening our faculty research initiatives and related programming. In addition to planning the BRI-PRESAGE faculty workshop, we will organize programming through the Gender and Technology Initiative, including an event with the Women's Global Toolkit project. We will also begin planning for an interdisciplinary conference on gender and food to be held in the 2014–2015 academic year. Building on past successes, we will continue other core WGS programming, including the McMillan-Stewart Lectures on Women in the Developing World, the Intellectual Forum faculty development series, the "Women Take the Reel" film festival, registration day film screenings, and Sexual Assault Awareness Month events. As agreed upon at a spring 2013 steering committee meeting, another undertaking will be to create a new WGS website to replace the current site, which needs updating.

Sally Haslanger
Director

Emma J. Teng
Incoming Director

Heidy M. González
Program Manager