

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. In AY2010, we celebrated our 25th year as a program at MIT.

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 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 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 are dedicated to the continual development of undergraduate education that reaches beyond disciplinary boundaries, and believe that such teaching makes a vital contribution to our ongoing research.

WGS provides academic and programmatic offerings that engage and challenge faculty, students, administrators, and staff. Because our mission is broadly interdisciplinary and spans both theory and practice, we persistently partner with other departments, student groups, and organizations. This year WGS collaborated with the Student Activities Office, Students Advocating Against Violence (SAAV), the Center for Health Promotion and Wellness at MIT Medical, and the Community Response Group (CRG) to provide the third annual full week of events for Sexual Assault Awareness Week 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. 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 fifth year at MIT, GCWS continues to add richness to the already strong women's and gender studies community on campus. This past year, it renewed its memorandum of agreement with the nine member schools. Even in this time of economic retrenchment, all nine institutions committed funds to cover the cost of the program for the next five years.

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 discussion with local female filmmakers. One highlight was the screening of *Subjectified: Nine Young Women Talk About Sex*. The film examines the diversity of sexual experiences from women around the country. The film was followed by a discussion with director Melissa Tapper Goldman.

Program Administration

In July 2010, professor Sally Haslanger (Linguistics and Philosophy) took over as program director. Haslanger is committed to WGS's ongoing mission of reaching out to undergraduates through teaching and programming. Her current goals are to strengthen the sense of intellectual community within WGS and to build bridges to new disciplines, especially to scholars outside of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS). There are many existing projects and initiatives around campus—for example, on water, on Haiti, on international development, and on new media—that have specific consequences for women, and these provide excellent opportunities for collaboration.

The WGS program administrator, Heidi M. 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 campus, in the neighboring Boston area, and in the national women's studies community. In 2010 she received a SHASS Infinite Mile Award for promoting diversity and inclusion.

The WGS Committee Structure consists of an interdisciplinary Steering Committee, Programming Committee, Outreach Committee, Curriculum Committee, and a Prize Committee. In 2009–2010 the members of these committees were:

Steering Committee

Sally Haslanger (Linguistics and Philosophy), director
 Jean Jackson (Anthropology), senior faculty representative
 Sandy Alexandre (Literature), junior faculty representative
 Rebecca Faery (Writing and Humanistic Studies), lecturer representative
 Julie Reardon '11, student representative
 Elizabeth Wood (History), Curriculum Committee chair
 Christopher Capozzola (History), Programming Committee chair
 Abha Sur (WGS) Outreach Committee chair
 Rae Langton (Linguistics and Philosophy), GCWS representative
 Marlene Mannoff (MIT Libraries), WGS librarian
 Heidi González (WGS), WGS coordinator

Curriculum Committee

Elizabeth Wood, chair
 Helen Elaine Lee (Writing and Humanistic Studies)
 Ian Condry (Foreign Literatures and Languages)

Outreach Committee

Abha Sur, chair
 Wyn Kelly (Literature)
 Stefan Helmreich (Anthropology)

Programming Committee

Christopher Capozzola, chair
 Rebecca Faery
 Emma Teng (Foreign Literatures and Languages)

Prize Committee

Arthur Bahr (Literature)
 Marlene Manoff
 Andrea Walsh (Writing and Humanistic Studies)

During 2009–2010, professor Isabelle de Courtivron (FLL), one of the program's founding members, retired. In addition, Mary Fuller (Literature) was promoted to full professor and Sandy Alexandre (Literature) was promoted to associate professor without tenure. A newly hired faculty member in the Foreign Languages and Literatures Section (FLL), assistant professor of French Bruno Perreau, will be joining us in fall 2010.

Curriculum and Faculty Development

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 18 subjects during AY2010. 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 SP.401 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 SP.400 Latina Voices and SP.414 Gender and Media Studies (taught by WGS lecturer Sarah E. King). In keeping with our commitment to a globally oriented curriculum, we taught SP.650J Psychology of Gender and Race with an international focus during the fall and spring and continued to offer SP.409 Women and Global Activism in Media and Politics, as well as four other courses with international themes.

The WGS Intellectual Forum continued this year in an experimental format in which faculty members discussed current affairs in the presence of their colleagues and invited students from WGS and other disciplines to attend. Visiting professor Geneviève Sellier hosted "Gender and French Film." Ruth Perry presented "The Printed Record of an Oral Tradition: Anna Gordon's Ballads."

In the fall of 2009, a group of WGS faculty (Elizabeth Wood, Beth Coleman, Abha Sur, Sally Haslanger, Kim Surkan, and Stefan Helmreich) applied for and received both D'Arbeloff funding and SHASS funding to develop a potential First Year Focus course addressing issues of gender and technology. The intention is to create an interdisciplinary course that will investigate the relevance of gender, race, class, and

sexuality to understanding technology and the development of new technologies. During the spring of 2010 the group met several times—including a day-long retreat—to discuss goals in more detail and to plan a syllabus. At this point the group aims to consider a wide range of questions, including: What role have women played in the development of technology, and how has technological change affected the roles of women and ideas of gender? How does technology offer possibilities for new social relations and how should we evaluate these possibilities? The course will involve multidisciplinary faculty from SHASS together with visiting faculty from the Schools of Science, Engineering, Management, and Architecture and Planning, and from the Program in Art, Culture and Technology. During AY2011 we will continue to meet as a planning group, will invite notable scholars in technology studies to campus to lead workshops with us, and in spring 2011 we will pilot a small version of the class.

GCWS continued to offer a host of graduate-level classes. Working with professor Rae Langton in his role as the MIT representative to GCWS, coordinator Andrea Sutton produced several curricular and pedagogical development workshops.

Programmatic Highlights

Each Registration Day, WGS invites the MIT community to explore different issues focusing on women and gender. In the fall we commemorated the life of the first female student to attend MIT with the screening of *The Life and Legacy of Ellen Swallow Richards*, followed by a discussion with Sally Haslanger. In the spring we screened *The Price of Pleasure: Pornography, Sexuality, & Relationships*, followed by a discussion with Professor Langton.

Our 25th anniversary celebration conference, *Futures of Science, Race, and Gender*, explored the presence of women scientists in research settings; the effects of emergent medical technologies on women in developing nations; and the impact of genetic testing on understandings of race. Three panels presented were: “Mentoring Women: Four Generations of Women Scientists at MIT,” “Racialized Bodies,” and “Race, Gender and IVF in Ecuador: A Reproductive Economy.”

The program also hosted an international conference, *Adoption: Secret Histories, Public Policies*, April 29–May 2, 2010. We hosted 85 speakers in the humanities, arts, and social sciences from eight countries, had over 200 registered attendees, and estimate that 300 people attended at least one of the sessions that were free to the public. We were successful in raising money from Mass Humanities, a state-based affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities; the University of New Hampshire Center for the Humanities, College of Liberal Arts, Philosophy Department, and Women's Studies Program; University of Pittsburgh English Department; and Rutgers-Camden English Department. Our cosponsors at MIT included the Office of the Dean of SHASS, Foreign Languages and Literatures, History, Linguistics and Philosophy, Literature, Political Science, and Writing and Humanistic Studies.

More important than numbers is the excitement that the conference created, testified to in emails from participants. For example, an attendee from Massachusetts called it “amazing, stimulating, and passionate”; another from Canada called it, “The best

conference I have attended for years." A participant from the UK wrote, "It was truly a life-changing few days for me—I've returned home with loads of new ideas and thoughts for my book project, with much to reflect upon as an adoptee, and having made some new friends (such as yourselves). I've been attending and speaking at conferences for over 16 years but I've never been to one as important as (y)ours." More information about the conference and program can be found at http://web.me.com/shaslang/ASAC_2010_Conference/.

WGS programming continually 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, WGS naturally continues to initiate work with groups around campus and in 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:

- Women's History Month film screenings of *Sisters of '77: The Spirit of Women*, *Made in L.A.*, *Chain of Love*, and *Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women*, and a discussion about violence against women in Punjab, Pakistan. The events were cosponsored by the Latino Cultural Center; the Program on Human Rights and Justice; the Center for International Studies; Women in Film and Video New England; Women, Action, and the Media!; the Foreign Languages and Literatures Section, the Department of Linguistics and the Philosophy, and the History and Literature Sections.
- "Democracy's Endgame?", a conversation with Arundhati Roy and Noam Chomsky, moderated by Amy Goodman, cosponsored by the Technology and Culture Forum at MIT and MIT South Asia Forum
- Women in Afghanistan screening of *View from a Grain of Sand*, followed by discussion with director Meena Nanji, cosponsored by the Center for International Studies and Amnesty International
- "LBGT Athletes: Film and Panel Discussion" cosponsored by LBGT@MIT and the Department of Athletics
- "The Food/Mood Connection for Students: How to Thrive During Exams" workshop with N. Dillan Giovanni, cosponsored by the Student Activities Office
- A reading by Merlinda Bobis from her new novel, *The Solemn Lantern Maker*, cosponsored by the Council for the Arts and the Program in Writing and Humanistic Studies
- Chicks Make Flicks film screenings and discussions with directors, including the screening of *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up*, featuring Academy Award-winner Debra Chasnoff, cosponsored by Women in Film and Video New England and LBGT@MIT
- Sexual Assault Awareness Week, during which WGS worked closely with MIT Medical, the Center for Health Promotion and Wellness, SAAV, CRG, and LBGT@MIT to promote sexual assault awareness and prevention on the MIT campus.

- One highlight of the week was the screening of *The Line: Sex. Power. Consent. Pleasure.*, followed by a discussion with director Nancy Schwartzman.
- QWOC WEEK 2009: *Lights, Camera, Activism*—film screening of *City of Borders and Society* in collaboration with Queer Women of Color and Friends, Boston

Research, Publications, and Service

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.

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. Because WGS does not hold any faculty lines, we are limited in our participation in searches. We have been successful in sponsoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Visiting Professors, and, together with Music and Theater Arts, hosted Carl Paris in fall 2009. We are always on the lookout for opportunities to bring MLK Visiting Scholars to campus. During AY2010, several WGS faculty were involved in the search to fill the McMillan-Stewart Chair for the Study of Women in the Developing World; however, the search did not yield an appointment. Elizabeth Wood (History) will chair the search in AY2011 and will be attentive to affirmative action considerations in the process.

In terms of the curriculum, each WGS class takes into account racial diversity as a key factor in looking at gender. In AY2010, WGS continued to offer a number of classes that directly addressed the issue of American racial politics: SP.400 *Latina Voices*, SP.417J *Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies*; SP.575J *Writing about Race*; and SP.650J *The Psychology of Gender and Race*. In an effort to promote and sustain an international, comparative study of gender, we again offered SP.409 *Women and Global Activism in Media and Politics* and SP.459J *Women in South Asia from 1800 to Present*. We also offered SP.448J *Gender and Representation of Asian Women*.

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, nation, sexuality, and gender expression.

Future Plans

Professor Haslanger is working to widen faculty participation in the program across the Institute, especially in the sciences and engineering fields, and will work to strengthen the sense of intellectual community within WGS on campus. The program is committed to increasing its community presence at MIT and beyond and will benefit from greater involvement of undergraduate and graduate students in programming efforts. The program will continue to pay special attention to the international comparative study of gender and to the roles of women and minorities in science and technology, areas

particularly appropriate to WGS at MIT. Towards this end, we are working on several initiatives:

- Panel discussions and workshops focused on gender, violence, and trauma in Haiti
- Faculty workshops focused on creating safer, nondiscriminatory classroom climates for all students
- Women's History Month film festival, celebrating the contributions of women to the global film industry
- A campus-wide invitation to faculty, students, administration, and staff to participate in Sticker Day, during which WGS allies wear "This is what a feminist looks like" stickers to commemorate International Women's Day.

Drawing on past successes, we will continue the Women's and Gender Studies Intellectual Forum faculty development series, the Geneviève McMillan–Reba Stewart Lectures on Women in the Developing World, the Chicks Make Flicks film screenings and discussions with local female filmmakers, and our Sexual Assault Awareness Week collaboration.

Heidy M. González
Program Coordinator

Sally Haslanger
Director

More information about the Program in Women's and Gender Studies can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/wgs/>.