

## MIT Program in Women's and Gender Studies

Now in its 36th year, the [MIT Program in Women's and Gender Studies \(WGS\)](#) continues to build on its success as an interdisciplinary undergraduate program, providing a community for students, faculty, and staff to participate in scholarly inquiry focusing on women, gender, and sexuality. Through teaching, research, and programming, WGS provides a structural framework specifically focused on examining and analyzing the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. WGS faculty members engage in cutting-edge research on a range of subjects related to historical and contemporary questions of gender and sexuality in the United States and across the globe. The mission of WGS is to educate undergraduates on the importance of gender equity and to promote critical thinking about the role of gender across disciplines, not only in the humanities, arts, and social sciences but in science, engineering, and technology as well. WGS also plays an important role at the Institute in organizing rich and stimulating programming to support women students and to facilitate examination and discussion of gender and women's issues among faculty, students, staff, and the broader MIT community. In these various aspects of its educational mission, whether through teaching, research, or programming, WGS seeks to support the Institute's efforts to promote community, equity, and inclusion while preparing students for an increasingly diverse workplace.

As national attention to justice and activism regarding gender, race, and sexuality increases, WGS has been involved in fostering discussion of and engagement with these issues and has conducted outreach to women students of color and to queer and trans students through programming and collaboration with the Institute Community and Equity Office (ICEO), the Office of Minority Education (OME), and the Office of Multicultural Programs (OMP).

Student outreach and development of courses that meet students' needs and interests have been ongoing goals for the program. Interest and enrollments in WGS subjects continued to be high this year, with 448 enrollees in the 30 subjects offered. During the year, WGS had one active major, 29 active concentrators, and 10 active minors (four minors were awarded in May 2020).

Additional objectives for WGS as an interdisciplinary program are its service as an important resource and support for faculty members who have advanced knowledge of women's and gender studies within their areas of scholarship and its role in fostering intellectual and creative collaboration across disciplinary lines. The WGS Intellectual Forum, a monthly series in which faculty members, lecturers, predoctoral fellows, and local scholars and artists share work in progress, brings the WGS community together for interdisciplinary engagement on topics of shared concern and also allows for exchanges with presenters who bring new expertise and insights to the community. This year's series started with a talk by Pouya Alimagham (History) titled "The Limits of Empowerment: Women, Gender, and Revolution in Iran's Green Uprising." The next talk, "The Changing Status of Women Faculty in Science at MIT: 1999–2019," was given by Professor Emerita of Biology Nancy Hopkins. The final Intellectual Forum talk of the fall semester was "Negotiating Oppression: Women's Agency and Empowerment in Colombian Gold Mining Communities," presented by Libby McDonald, a new WGS affiliate and D-Lab lecturer who co-teaches WGS.277 Gender and Development with Sally Haslanger (Philosophy).

In February 2020, WGS hosted its first annual Intellectual Forum intended to highlight WGS lecturers' research and work beyond the classroom, *Lecturers' Perspectives*. The inaugural event featured the following lecturers: Jungmin Lee ("Between Private and Public: Nicolas Schöffer's Networked Technical Objects circa 1960"), Karl Surkan ("From e-Patient to BRCActivist: The Transformation of Social Media Health Support into Genomic Data Sharing Advocacy"), and Andrea Walsh ("Storytelling and the Personification of Oppression During U.S. Feminism's First Wave: The Infanticide Case of Hester Vaughn"). The remaining spring 2020 Intellectual Forum talks were canceled due to COVID-19.

Along with teaching and research, programming is essential to the WGS mission. WGS regularly collaborates with other academic units, student groups, and offices across the Institute to create events on myriad topics, such as the history and current status of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); gender equity; queer and transgender issues; racial inequality; global development and migration; medicine and health; harassment and violence prevention; and women's contributions to literature, arts, and the media. The goals of such programming are to foster crucial conversations on equity and issues related to gender, race, and sexuality; support students; build the WGS community; and attract students to WGS classes.

The WGS commitment to the study of women, gender, and sexuality extends beyond MIT to reach the broader Cambridge and Boston-area communities. In AY2020, WGS continued to work with the Consortium for Graduate Studies in Gender, Culture, Women, and Sexuality (GCWS), which is currently based at MIT. Founded in 1992, 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 members offer interdisciplinary, team-taught graduate courses. WGS affiliate professor Catherine D'Ignazio served as the MIT representative to the GCWS board in AY2020.

The current goals of WGS are to foster diversity within the program, extend outreach and support to underrepresented students, inspire engagement and activism regarding social justice issues, strengthen collaborative and interdisciplinary research initiatives, build on the success of the Intellectual Forum and WGS-sponsored programming to foster intellectual community across academic units at MIT, recruit new faculty affiliates, and continue to update and reinvigorate the WGS curriculum in alignment with current directions in the broader field of women's and gender studies (with special attention to underdeveloped areas of the curriculum such as gender and health, gender and public policy, gender and race/ethnicity, and gender and socioeconomic class). Another goal is to continue to collaborate with other units and offices such as OMP, OME, ICEO, the Student Affairs Office (including LBGTQ+ Services, the Social Justice Programming & Cross Cultural Engagement Intercultural Center, and the Cheney Room), the Office of Graduate Education, MindHandHeart, Violence Prevention and Response, the MIT Libraries, the Priscilla King Gray Public Service Center, D-Lab (Development Lab), the List Visual Arts Center, and the Accessing Resources at MIT (ARM) Coalition. WGS also collaborates with and supports student groups including the Black Student Union, the Black Women's Alliance, Class Awareness Support and Equality, Mujeres Latinas, Stop Our Silence (and the annual Valentine's Day production of the *Vagina Monologues*), the Black Graduate Student Association, and Graduate Women at MIT.

## Personnel

In AY2020, Professor Helen Elaine Lee returned from a yearlong sabbatical to serve the first year of a second three-year term as WGS director. Professor Lee serves as chair of the OME Faculty Advisory Committee. She is also a member of the Creative Arts Council and the editorial board of the Faculty Newsletter. She is a founding member of the Senior Women Faculty Council, established in fall 2019. She continues to chair the My Sister's Keeper (MSK) governing committee and to co-organize (with lecturer Joaquin Terrones) the gatherings for queer and transgender students and faculty members of color initiated in AY2017. She represented MIT at the National Women's Studies Conference in November 2019. She continues to be involved in the Women of Color in the Academy Conference and was scheduled to be the keynote speaker for its annual meeting in March 2020, which was canceled due to COVID-19. In addition, she was scheduled to attend the Oxford Women's Leadership Symposium in March, also canceled due to COVID-19.

WGS program manager Emily Neill resigned in September 2019. In April 2020, WGS program assistant Sophia Hasenfus was promoted to program administrator. As a result of COVID-19, WGS has not hired a new program assistant.

In her capacity as program administrator, Hasenfus manages the budget, daily finances, student staff, lecturer appointments, academic administration, and event planning for WGS. In addition to the work of managing the WGS program, Hasenfus was a member of the following committees in AY2020: WGS Steering Committee, My Sister's Keeper board, Hermanas Unidas (HU) board, Diversity Think Tank, ARM Coalition, and a committee to renovate the Margaret Cheney Room. She also provided administrative support for the Senior Women's Faculty Council.

WGS continued to employ an active group of lecturers this year. Karl Surkan offered WGS.181 Queer Cinema and Visual Culture, WGS.110J/21H.108J Sexual and Gender Identities, and WGS.111J/CMS.619J Gender and Media Studies. Brittany Charlton returned for a sixth year to teach her popular WGS.151 Gender, Medicine, and Public Health course. Elizabeth Janiak returned for a third year to teach WGS.224 Race, Gender and Social Inequality: Reproductive Health Care in the United States. Joaquin Terrones (who also teaches in Literature) offered WGS.245J/21L.480J Identities and Intersections: Queer Literatures for a third year and taught for the second time his newly developed subject (commissioned by WGS with funding from the provost), WGS.250 HIV/AIDS in American Culture. Jungmin Lee (2018 Harvard PhD graduate) was hired by interim WGS director Elizabeth Wood (History) to teach a new WGS class, WGS.118 Gender in the Visual Arts. Kym Ragusa (who also teaches in CMS/W) developed a popular new course, WGS.238J/21W.738J Intersectional Feminist Memoir, that was cross listed with CMS/W. Chivi Kapungu returned to teach WGS.228 The Psychology of Sex and Gender and WGS.229 Race, Culture and Gender in the U.S. and Beyond: A Psychological Perspective; Abha Sur taught WGS.225J/21A.103J/STS.046J The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender and WGS.226J/STS.023J Science, Gender and Social Inequality in the Developing World; and Andrea Walsh continued to teach WGS.101 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies.

WGS received funding from the Mellon Foundation to support Misty De Berry as a postdoctoral fellow, jointly with Literature, in AY2020. De Berry's work resides at the intersection of performance studies, Black feminist thought, Marxist theory, and art history. It interrogates the relationships among Black women, durational performance, and everyday practices in late capitalism. Her dissertation, "In Due Time: Performance, Debt, and Habitual Violence," explored how routine modes of debt and indebtedness restrict Black women's behavior across the everyday sphere and their subsequent engagement with both aesthetic and everyday performance to dismantle such routines. At MIT, Professor Diana Henderson (Literature) and Professor Lee jointly served as her mentors. De Berry was an active member of both the WGS and My Sister's Keeper communities. She was a guest lecturer in Professor Henderson's class and was involved in OME events. Her spring 2020 events, including a workshop with MSK on creative living and self-care for Black women in the academy and a series of programs culminating in a symposium titled Black Feminist Gestures, were canceled due to COVID-19. This summer she taught as part of OME's Interphase EDGE cohort. She will teach in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department at Dartmouth College in fall 2021.

The WGS committee structure consists of the Steering Committee, the Curriculum Committee, and the Committee for the Louis Kampf Writing Prize in Women's and Gender Studies. In AY2020, committee memberships were as follows.

### **Steering Committee**

- Director: Helen Elaine Lee (CMS/W)
- Senior faculty representative: Manduhai Buyandelger (Anthropology)
- Senior faculty representative: Edmund Bertschinger (Physics)
- Junior faculty representative: Justin Steil (Urban Studies and Planning)
- Lecturers' representative: Joaquin Terrones (Literature)
- Lecturers' representative: Abha Sur (Science, Technology, and Society)
- Graduate student representative: Emma Atherton (Linguistics and Philosophy)
- Jennifer Greenleaf (WGS liaison, MIT Libraries)
- WGS program administrator: Sophia Hasenfus (WGS)

### **Curriculum Committee**

- Helen Elaine Lee (CMS/W)
- Elizabeth Wood (History)
- Andrea Walsh (CMS/W)
- Abha Sur (Science, Technology, and Society)

## Kampf Prize Committee

Chair: Andrea Walsh (WGS and CMS/W)

Jennifer Greenleaf (MIT Libraries)

Kym Ragusa (WGS and CMS/W)

## Research Activities

WGS faculty affiliates conduct research on a broad range of topics, extending from theories of justice and feminist philosophy to the anthropology of reproduction, French adoption policy, the connections between STEM and literature, the implications of domestic de-industrialization and long-term unemployment, the politics of the production and consumption of food, women in Mongolian electoral politics, South Asian immigrant communities in the United States, gender and technology, Vladimir Putin and Russian masculinity, Taiwanese women politicians, the history of Turkish and Armenian feminism, and the changing cultural politics of nature and citizenship. Faculty affiliates 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.

## Teaching and Curriculum

WGS offered 30 subjects during AY2020, and enrolled a total of 411 students. Many of these subjects were cross listed with other units: Anthropology, CMS/W, D-Lab, Global Languages, History, Linguistics and Philosophy, Literature, and the Program in Science, Technology, and Society (STS). Students can concentrate, minor, and major in women's and gender studies. The women's and gender studies major is either a joint degree with science (21S) or engineering (21E) or a Course 21 humanities degree.

WGS subjects during AY2020 were as follows:

- WGS.101 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies
- WGS.110J/21H.108J Sexual and Gender Identities
- WGS.111J/CMS.619J Gender and Media Studies
- WGS.118 Gender in the Visual Arts
- WGS.125J/CMS.616J Games and Culture
- WGS.140/21L.504 Race and Identity in American Literature
- WGS.145J/21L.020J Globalization: The Good, the Bad and the In-between
- WGS.151 Gender, Medicine, and Public Health
- WGS.154J/21A.143J/21G.039J Gender and Japanese Popular Culture
- WGS.160J/STS.021J Science Activism: Gender, Race, and Power

- WGS.161J/21H.320J Gender and the Law in US History
- WGS.172J/21A.111J For Love and Money: Rethinking the Family
- WGS.181 Queer Cinema and Visual Culture
- WGS.190J/24.912J/21H.106J/21L.008J/21W.741J Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies
- WGS.222J/21H.381J Women and War
- WGS.224 Race, Gender and Social Inequality: Reproductive Health Care in the United States
- WGS.225J/21A.103J/STS.046J The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender
- WGS.226J/STS.023J Science, Gender and Social Inequality in the Developing World
- WGS.228 The Psychology of Sex and Gender
- WGS.229 Race, Culture and Gender in the U.S. and Beyond: A Psychological Perspective
- WGS.231J/21W.742J Writing About Race
- WGS.236J/21G.030 Introduction to East Asian Culture: From Zen to K-Pop
- WGS.238J/21W.738J Intersectional Feminist Memoir
- WGS.240J/21L.473J Jane Austen
- WGS.245J/21L.480J Identities and Intersections: Queer Literatures
- WGS.250 HIV/AIDS in American Culture
- WGS.274J/21A.141J/21G.048J Images of Asian Women: Dragon Ladies and Lotus Blossoms
- WGS.276J/21A.504J/STS.086J Cultures of Computing
- WGS.301J/17.007J/24.237J Feminist Thought

Three WGS classes were new in AY2020: WGS.118 Gender in the Visual Arts, WGS.238J Intersectional Feminist Memoir, and WGS.160J Science Activism: Gender, Race, and Power.

Three WGS courses include content that prepares students for application to medical school: WGS.224 Race, Gender and Social Inequality: Reproductive Health Care in the United States; WGS.250 HIV/AIDS in American Culture; and WGS.151 Gender, Medicine, and Public Health. In addition, two courses support the preparation of pre-health students for the Medical College Admission Test requirements on gender/race analysis instituted in AY2015: WGS.228 The Psychology of Sex and Gender and WGS.229 Race, Culture and Gender in the U.S. and Beyond: A Psychological Perspective. These five courses will all be offered again in AY2021.

## Program Highlights and Accomplishments

WGS programming addresses a wide spectrum of academic disciplines and issues related to the field of women's and gender studies and reflects the program's commitment to collaborative work with groups across the MIT campus and the Cambridge/Boston community. In AY2020, WGS collaborated with academic units including Anthropology, CMS/W, Global Languages, GCWS, History, Literature, the School of Architecture and Planning, and STS, as well as non-academic units such as OME, ICEO, OMP, Residential Life, LGBTQ+ Services and the Rainbow Lounge, the Media Lab, MindHandHeart, the Center for International Studies, and the Council for the Arts at MIT. WGS also worked with and supported the programming efforts of many student groups. Programming highlights from AY2020 are outlined below.

### McMillan-Stewart Lecture Series on Women in the Developing World

The biannual McMillan-Stewart Lecture Series on Women in the Developing World, curated by Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, continued to attract wide attention and attendance from across and beyond the Institute. The fall semester lecture was given by Hala Aldosari, Robert E. Wilhelm Fellow at the Center for International Studies and former *Washington Post* Jamal Khashoggi Fellow. Her talk was titled "Modernizing Saudi Arabia: The Politics of Gender." In addition to her lecture, she spoke to Professor Ekmekçioğlu's Women and War class. As Professor Ekmekçioğlu was on sabbatical in spring 2020, no McMillan-Stewart Lecture was held that semester.

### Women Take the Reel Film Festival

WGS partnered with GCWS to organize Boston's 11th Women Take the Reel Film Festival, held annually during Women's History Month. In this series, films are screened throughout the month of March at the 10 participating academic institutions, with screenings followed by discussions with film directors and producers, film protagonists, and/or faculty members. This year WGS was able to screen only one film before the campus was closed due to COVID-19. WGS partnered with the List Visual Arts Center to bring director Kimberly Rivers-Roberts to the campus to show and discuss her film *Fear No Gumbo*. Rivers-Roberts is known for her Academy Award-nominated documentary *Trouble the Water*, about the long-lasting effects of Hurricane Katrina. *Fear No Gumbo* provides a rare, behind-the-scenes look at how the residents of New Orleans are still trying to recover more than 10 years after the hurricane.

The Women Take the Reel Film Festival has been an important way for WGS to bring pertinent and difficult material to the campus in a setting that allows for open discussion and dialogue while providing exposure for women directors who are often ignored by the larger film industry. On average, each screening draws 50 to 75 people from across MIT and other participating schools, and the festival is highly anticipated by the communities that have come to rely on its screenings to expose them to new filmmakers and provide dialogues about challenging issues.

### My Sister's Keeper

My Sister's Keeper, established in 2015, is an organization of Black women students, faculty members, and staff members administered in WGS. It was initiated as a

collaborative effort of Professor Lee, OME director DiOnetta Jones Crayton, OMP director La-Tarri Canty, former counseling dean Ayida Mthembu, and former assistant dean for graduate education Ebony Hearn. In AY2020, it was governed by a board consisting of founding members, Acia Adams-Heath (Office of the Vice President for Finance), Suraiya Baluch (Office of Graduate Education), Dextina Booker (graduate student), Professor Amah Edoh (Anthropology), Daria Johnson (Literature staff member), Jennifer Nwenyi (undergraduate student), Dyan Madrey (Human Resources), and Sophia Hasenfus (WGS program administrator).

My Sister's Keeper was established to foster community among MIT's Black women and to support Black women students with social, professional, and mentoring relationships. MSK hopes to provide emotional and psychological support, foster kinship and community, strengthen academic performance, and cultivate engagement in social, political, and cultural matters beyond the classroom. Each year, MSK schedules four core events to which all of its members are invited. In AY2020, MSK continued the Spontaneous Sisters program to supplement its core events and provide ways for its members to gather casually and spontaneously to talk, get to know one another, and support each other at MIT. Through this program, members can gather for trips to museums, musical performances, and other cultural events.

In the fall, MSK hosted a welcome back BBQ to bring everyone together and an end-of-semester "winter break" gathering to relax and reconnect. Unfortunately, spring 2020 MSK events were cancelled due to COVID-19, including the career panel, which will be rescheduled with the same panelists in AY2021.

### **Hermanas Unidas**

Hermanas Unidas is an organization of Latina students, faculty, and staff members administered through WGS. It was established in 2017 by students who wanted to create an organization modeled on the structure of MSK to support Latinas at MIT. It is governed by a board composed of an undergraduate student (Diana Flores), graduate students (Erica Salazar and Sharon Jacqueline Velasquez), an administrative staff member (Beatriz Cantada), a lecturer (Nilma Dominique from Global Languages), and WGS program administrator Sophia Hasenfus. The goal of HU is to create a supportive, enduring, and inspiring community.

In September 2019, HU joined with the Latino Employee Resource Group to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with music, food, and dancing. HU co-sponsored MIT Reads in fall 2019, bringing author Daisy Hernández to discuss her book *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*. HU teamed up again with the Latino Employee Resource Group to sponsor a luncheon with Shayla Rivera (an aerospace engineer who worked at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration before becoming a stand-up comic) when she came to the campus for an Independent Activities Period event in January 2020.

In March 2020, HU started a monthly luncheon series titled Honoring Our Latina/x Role Models Through Food, Discussion, and Hermana Bonding. The monthly luncheons are designed to bring together MIT's Latinas and other interested community members to learn more about the Latina/x community and to discuss and celebrate Latina/x



historical figures or current role models. Although the monthly event was altered during COVID-19, HU did host one virtual event after the campus was closed and will continue virtually in AY2021.

HU received a MindHandHeart grant for a Latina author to give a talk in AY2021.

### **Additional Events**

- In September 2019, WGS collaborated with the MIT Communications Forum and MindHandHeart to host director and comedian Bo Burnham and screenwriter Jonny Sun for a screening of Burnham's film *Eight Grade*, followed by a moderated panel (Digital Anxieties) about social media and mental health.
- In October, WGS director Lee read from the manuscript of her new novel *Pomegranate*, now under contract to be published in 2021 by Atria Books, at the CMS/W Colloquium.
- WGS hosted director Rachel Carey in October to show and discuss her film *Ask for Jane*, based on a true story of students who started a secret network in 1969 for students to access safe and illegal abortions.
- WGS hosted an additional film event in October, a special screening of the award-winning documentary *Reason: The War Between Faith and Rationality* with director Anand Patwardhan and a panel of experts.
- In collaboration with the MIT Libraries and Hermanas Unidas, WGS co-sponsored #MITReads in fall 2019. The culmination of the event was a day with author Daisy Hernández, including a lunch conversation with students, dinner with collaborators, and a public talk titled "Intimate Resistance: Migration, Memoir, and Queer Latinidad."
- With the support of the De Florez Fund for Humor, WGS sponsored comedian Tig Notaro for a night of stand-up comedy in November.
- WGS co-sponsored the Starr Forum Digital Feminism in the Arab Gulf with Mona Eltahawy, American-Egyptian journalist, speaker, and author of *The Seven Necessary Sins for Women and Girls*, in November.
- Also in November, WGS worked with CMS/W to support the MIT Communications Forum in bringing climate reporters Kendra Pierre-Louis (*New York Times*) and Lisa Song (ProPublica) to the campus for their panel Can Journalists Save the Earth? with Beth Daley.
- In February 2020, WGS hosted a conversation with attorney Debra Katz, who represented Christine Blasey Ford and several witnesses in the Harvey Weinstein trial, to discuss her work as a lawyer on employment discrimination, sexual harassment, whistleblower, and Title IX matters.
- WGS co-sponsored (with CMS/W) the William Corbett Poetry Series in February, hosting a reading by Inupiaq poet Joan Naviyuk Kane, who was a 2018 Guggenheim Fellow in Poetry.

- In March, WGS co-sponsored (with GCWS) Brave Women of Color Academics, a panel discussion about the book *Counternarratives from Women of Color Academics: Bravery, Vulnerability, and Resistance*. The panelists were Eric Grollman (University of Richmond), Manya Whitaker (Colorado College), Alessandra Bazo Vienrich (Davidson College), and Robbin Chapman (Harvard University). The discussion was moderated by Saida Grundy (Boston University).
- WGS delayed its annual Kampf Writing Prize until fall 2020 due to COVID-19. Additionally, the following events were canceled: WGS Intellectual Forums with Jallicia Jolly, Catherine D'Ignazio, Karilyn Crockett, Tracy Slatyer, Daniela Rus, Rebecca Saxe, and Tamar Schapiro; a My Sister's Keeper and African, Black, American, Caribbean Employee Resource Group book talk and discussion with Aneeka Henderson, author of *Veil and Vow: Marriage Matters in Contemporary African American Culture*; and a panel with the Communications Forum on sexual harassment in academia.

## Administrative Initiatives

### Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Initiatives

As noted above, WGS continued to support My Sister's Keeper and Hermanas Unidas in addition to sponsoring postdoctoral fellow Misty De Berry. WGS worked with student groups, other units, MIT organizations, and members of the community beyond MIT on issues related to equity, inclusion, and diversity. In response to student requests, WGS also continued its outreach and programming for queer and trans communities.

Issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity are inextricable and foundational aspects of the WGS curriculum. Analysis of the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, and other identity categories is fundamental to the approach of WGS subjects. Examples of such courses during AY2020 include WGS.140J Race and Identity in American Literature; WGS.190J Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies; WGS.224 Race, Gender and Social Inequality: Reproductive Health Care in the United States; WGS.225 The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender; WGS.229 Race, Culture and Gender in the U.S. and Beyond: A Psychological Perspective; WGS.231J Writing About Race; WGS.238J Intersectional Feminist Memoir; and WGS.250 HIV/AIDS in American Culture.

### Reenvisioning and Reorganization

Since AY2016, WGS has been working to become more inclusive and to strengthen and broaden its community, as indicated above. It has reached out to underrepresented communities and both expanded and diversified its programming. It has created a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive place to attract faculty, students, and staff and build community. This work will continue and expand.

WGS plans to continue work with the CASE student organization and the ARM Coalition to support low-income and first-generation students at MIT. WGS also plans to develop a new course that addresses the intersections of gender, labor, and class politics.

## **Finances, Funding, and Space**

In addition to its base budget, WGS receives support from the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS) dean's office for classes, conferences, and other annual programming and for operational expenses. In AY2018, WGS received a five-year commitment of additional funding from the provost to develop the new course offerings discussed above, which are designed to meet the changing needs and interests of the student body. WGS also benefits from co-sponsoring programs with various units across MIT (as noted above). Another source of funding is the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation, which supports the McMillan-Stewart Professorship in the Study of Women in the Developing World and the McMillan-Stewart Lecture Series on Women in the Developing World. These initiatives were established in 1996 and endowed by Geneviève McMillan, a passionate believer in equal justice and opportunity. The McMillan-Stewart Chair is held by Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, who teaches two WGS courses (WGS.222J/21H.381J Women and War and WGS.220 Women in the Middle East and North Africa) and a graduate-level course (WGS.310 Gender: Historical Perspectives, with Elizabeth Wood). As chair, Professor Ekmekçioğlu organizes and curates the McMillan-Stewart Lecture Series.

WGS looks forward to continuing to work with the SHASS development office to identify potential donors and to help make the Capital Campaign a success. As noted, WGS received a five-year commitment from the provost for an additional two subjects per year so that it can develop new course offerings based on student interest and current social imperatives.

With its expanding curriculum, programming, and support for student organizations, WGS continues to advocate for including the salary of an administrative assistant in the program's base budget, notwithstanding the economic impacts of COVID-19.

WGS had discussions during AY2020 with the SHASS dean's office about moving to an expanded space on the second floor of Building 14 in connection with its renovation. If this plan does not become a reality and WGS remains in its current space, WGS would again be interested in discussing the possibility of converting the current small library space next to the program's conference room into a WGS office, in addition to or in exchange for the space on the second floor that is currently being used by six WGS lecturers and visiting scholars.

Finally, in AY2020 WGS worked with Leah Flynn Gallant, Gustavo Burkett, and David Friedrich to develop a plan for renovating and reconfiguring the Cheney Room as a women's resource center. WGS looks forward to continuing this effort when the construction that was halted because of COVID-19 resumes.

**Helen Elaine Lee**

**Director, MIT Program in Women's and Gender Studies**

**Professor, Comparative Media Studies/Writing**

