Interview with Linda Villarosa

*Under the Skin: The Hidden Toll of Racism on American Lives and on the Health of Our Nation*

Linda Villarosa is a journalist, educator, and contributing writer to *The New York Times Magazine*. She covers the intersection of health and medicine and social justice. She is a journalist in residence and associate professor at the Craig Newmark School of Journalism at CUNY and teaches journalism and Black Studies at the City College of New York.

Your book claims that while poverty is an important element of healthy living, it is not the only determinant. Race has historically been overlooked as a health determinant in favor of poverty. Would you explain the 3-pronged model you develop for how health is affected by structural racism in the United States?

In the past, the assumption was that black people had different bodies that were genetically inferior to white people. That was a myth founded in slavery to justify the cruel institution of slavery. There was a second myth, that there was something wrong with black culture: that black people were poor because of their own fault, and that black people became sick because of poverty and lack of education. Essence magazine's self-help methodology followed this second myth. The self-help model assumed that if black woman just knew how to care for themselves properly, they would be healthier. However, during my years reporting on maternal and infant mortality at *Essence*, I finally realized that even educated black parents still had higher levels of preterm birth and infant mortality. Even when education was matched, black people still had worse health outcomes than white people, especially at the higher income bracket. I finally concluded that at no time in America have black people had equal health as white people, or as other people of color. And the reason is 3-pronged: racism or racial discrimination, the social determinants of health (environment, housing, healthy food, education), and discrimination in the health care system itself.

Could you talk more about Dr. Arline Geronimus' concept “weathering.” I am thinking in particular of the compounding effect of toxic stress on pregnant bodies, and on the dual definition that you articulate in Chapter 4 (on pg. 80) as “weathering” being both “to wear down” and “to withstand.”

For a long time, our society believed that race was a factor for poor health, but now it is widely accepted that it is not race but racism which effects health outcomes. Harvard Prof. David Williams looked at everyday discrimination in many different categories: microaggressions, for example at a restaurant, and at real racism, at work, by the police, in education. People who reported this kind of discrimination also reported worse health. Dr. Geronimus has popularized the idea of “weathering,” that is the hard effort of coping with discrimination that takes a toll on anyone who is discriminated against. That was her theory, that the body of people who must deal with this day-in day-out are “weathered.” They have to undergo the fight or flight mechanism so often that it effects the health of their bodies.

(Continued on Page 5)
Since 1977, the Center for the Study of Women and Society has promoted interdisciplinary feminist scholarship. The center’s research agenda focuses on the intersectional study of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and transnational engagement with justice. The Center co-sponsors the Women’s Studies Certificate Program and most notably, hosts the only stand-alone Women’s and Gender Studies Master’s Program in New York City.
We are happy to welcome the new WGS MA students who enter the program at a time fraught with assaults on justice at every turn—from the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe v. Wade; to the atrocities perpetuated against people in Ukraine; to the proliferation of white nationalism. Yet, as Angela Davis said, “You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.” So, in the face of these challenging times, we remind our incoming class and our current students to remember it is possible to engage in radical transformation.

We must not let loss defeat us. While the passing of Prof. Brianne Waychoff, who we honor on page 4, has left a hole in our hearts, Brianne’s strength and commitment to gender studies and our program exemplifies how we too might strengthen our resolve. Maybe one way to do so is to bask in the successes that have been achieved. Let us take a moment to celebrate good things. In that regard we invite you to learn about the new students who are joining us this semester on page 16 - 18. Then, you can read about the paths some of our graduates have taken on page 15. We ask that you join us in applauding the amazing work of our faculty whose accomplishments can be found on page 10 - 13. And finally, we ask that you make time to learn from the exciting roundup of speakers that we are presenting this fall, including Grace M. Cho, author of Tastes Like War; Paisley Currah, author of Sex Is as Sex Does: Governing Transgender Identity; and Toni Bond, theologian and one of the founding mothers of Reproductive Justice.

Our vision is to ensure that justice is the logical conclusion of what we do through the Center’s programs and projects. Please join us as we continue to work toward radical transformation.

In Solidarity,

[Signature]
We at the Center for the Study of Women and Society are saddened to share that our colleague, Dr. Brianne Waychoff, passed away from 9/11-related kidney cancer on Monday, July 25. She was 43. Dr. Waychoff was a brilliant professor, colleague, scholar, artist, performer, and activist, an interdisciplinary powerhouse and all-around incredible change-maker in the world.

Dr. Brianne Waychoff was Associate Professor of Communication and the Co-Coordinator of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies at the Borough of Manhattan Community College of the City University of New York (BMCC). Her B.A. was in Theatre and her M.A. was in Women's and Gender Studies from the University of Northern Iowa. She earned a Ph.D. in Communication Studies with an emphasis in Performance Studies and a minor in Women's and Gender Studies from Louisiana State University. Dr. Waychoff published in a range of scholarly journals, including Text and Performance Quarterly, The Journal of Pacific Affairs, Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies. They were Co-Editor of Women's Studies Quarterly with Dr. Red Washburn.

Dr. Waychoff’s commitment to gender justice was acknowledged nationally when she was invited by the White House to participate in the United State of Women Summit in 2016, celebrating the accomplishments of women and girls and making plans for the future. She opened doors for CUNY students and faculty to do feminist, LGBTQIA+ and social justice work. Even during a pandemic and with stage IV cancer, Brianne was an intellectual rockstar. She worked so hard and with so much love for the sake of feminist scholarship, even when she was unwell and receiving care at Sloan Kettering.

We will miss Brianne, her brilliance, her light and her commitment. Rest in power.
In a post-Roe era, has individual action and individual vigilance become more necessary in the face of the government breakdown of abortion protections, which will particularly affect poor women of color (Black women) in the South and West?

I had a very meaty part of the book about reproductive justice, but I had to trim it way down. I looked at it three weeks ago when I was invited to write about Roe v. Wade and put it right in that essay! I interviewed Loretta Ross (one of the founders of reproductive justice) while she was teaching at Hampshire College, and I asked her why and how she came up with this framework. And what she said was, “I came up with it because black women have never had reproductive justice. So when black women in the ‘90s were seeing that the movement was only for reproductive rights, they were saying ‘No.’ Reproductive justice and reproductive rights are not only about access to abortion. It’s got to be more. A person has a right to have a baby; a person has a right not to have a baby. And if someone does decide to have a baby, then they have a right to raise that baby in a healthy, safe environment.” And that’s reproductive justice. And when the Dobbs decision went down, neither of us were surprised—black women weren’t surprised. Black people have never had reproductive justice in our society; it’s always been a Handmaid’s Tale. I saw people on Twitter talking about forced labor, and that’s exactly right. Black women under slavery were forced to have children to support the society with free labor.

It’s not lost on me and other people that Dobbs came down in Mississippi. Mississippi is the poorest state. It is also, I think, the blackest state. And it also has the highest rates of infant and maternal mortality. And it also has the highest level of child death and poverty. So Mississippi didn’t have reproductive justice in the first place. By taking away the only abortion clinic in Jackson, they are taking away other reproductive health measures, including contraception. And where Mississippi goes, the rest of the south goes. So I think it’s important now to think about the black-led reproductive movement, and to think about this broader past of the anti-abortion movement.

20 years removed from your work at Essence magazine writing “self-health” articles, what do you think is the role of self-help books and articles today? Is there one? Can the model of self-help / self-health be replaced with a model that shifts the focus from the individual to the community?

My first publication was a self-help book, but more political. Self-health and self-help has its limitations, but people still want and need it. However, it can’t be the only resource; it puts too much responsibility on each individual. Having more time with people, nurses, doctors, and physicians, who have the time and can provide details on your condition, as well as more time to care for yourself, really matters. And there are really good systems out there that are helping with this, like patient navigator systems.

As an accomplished journalist, researcher, and interviewer, do you have any research advice for our students?

Well, as a journalist my research is different than the research your students will be doing. However, what I do is get mainstream scientific studies that are relevant and read them really carefully, especially the footnotes and the acknowledgements. Get really nerdy with the footnotes! Then, with interviews, prepare heavily: read everything that person has written. It’s important when interviewing to start by asking how someone got into the work they did, to get personal, to know who they are and not only what their current career is. Make yourself part of the interview! Always maintain eye contact and make a personal connection. Don’t just go in with questions, come up with new questions based on identifiers in the background and on answers. And finally, always express kindness, compassion, and patience.

Now that you have finished this book, what are your next steps?

For now I will continue teaching at the CUNY school of journalism, and working with pre-med and medical students at the CUNY medical school on narrative medicine, which allows them to be creative and to tell their own stories.
Congratulations!
2022 Graduates
M.A. in Women and Gender Studies

Clarisa Gonzalez  
ADVISOR: Dána-Ain Davis

Shadley Hobour  
THESIS: "Lactating Justice: Constructing a Society Economically Focused on Optimizing Health through Human Lactation"  
ADVISOR: Dána-Ain Davis

Amy M. Iafrate  
INTERNSHIP: "An Overview and Assessment of the Editorial Assistant Position at Women's Studies Quarterly"  
ADVISOR: Red Washburn

Jessica Lin  
THESIS: "A Qualitative Exploration of Discourses in Fan Community, /r/boyslove"  
ADVISOR: Matt Brim

Jennifer Rossberg  
THESIS: "My Favorite Thing is Monster Theory: Horror Comics and deMONSTRating Difference in Emil Ferris's 'My Favorite Thing is Monsters"  
ADVISOR: Nancy K. Miller

Jillian M. (Silvia) Miranda  
THESIS: "Exploring the Boundaries of Queerness from Academia to Activism"  
ADVISOR: Matt Brim
Congratulations!
2022 Graduates
Women Studies Certificate Program

Naomi Podber, Ph.D. in Social Psychology
DISSERTATION: The Relationship Between Arts Education and Beliefs about Equality and Social Action
ADVISOR: Michelle Fine

Rachel Bogan, Ph.D. in Sociology
DISSERTATION: Food-as-Medicine: An Everyday Strategy of Health
ADVISOR: Barbara Katz Rothman

Sophie Riemenschneider, Ph.D. in English Language and Literature
DISSERTATION: “Never Forget”: Embodied Absence and Extended Relations of Care After 9/11
ADVISOR: Nancy K. Miller

Brenna McCaffrey, Ph.D. in Anthropology
DISSERTATION: All Aboard the Abortion Pill Train: Activism, Medicine, and Reproductive Technologies in the Republic of Ireland
ADVISOR: Dána-Ain Davis

Michelle Duguay, Ph.D. in Music Theory
DISSERTATION: Gendering the Virtual Space: Sonic Femininities and Masculinities in Contemporary Top 40 Music
ADVISOR: Johanna Devaney

Kalle Westerling, Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance
DISSERTATION: Gay Boy and Playboy Revues: Constructing U.S. Queer Collectivities in Networks of Peripatetic Burlesque and Nightclub Drag Performers, 1933–1939
ADVISOR: James F. Wilson
Awards & Prizes
2021-2022

Carolyn G. Heilbrun Dissertation Prize

Dr. Lynne Beckenstein, Ph.D. in English
Dissertation: Committed to the Fragment: Feminist Literature and the Promise of Wellness

Abstract: In our therapeutic age, to establish oneself as one of neoliberalism’s winners requires performing a healthist form of psychic well-being—one that overlaps with Enlightenment ideals of autonomy and rationality. This dissertation explores contemporary American literature that rejects psychological self-possession as a privilege of bourgeois liberalism and a panacea for heteronormativity’s discontents. These feminist texts turn to emergent genres and forms to refigure wellness as a generative relation to difference—a relation that is always bound up with the pain of others. Specifically, I read Audre Lorde’s genre-bending memoir The Cancer Journals; the post-2016 genre of self-care comedy; and autotheory about the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) as texts that interrogate how sexist, racist, and ableist ideals of wellness have imposed fraught and contradictory demands on the feminist subject. These texts invite us to consider the writing process itself as a site for imagining a subject who is unimpeded by these demands, and whose creative work eludes the medicalized norms that structure writing cultures, academic and otherwise. Writing appears across a range of genres—memoir; fiction; cultural criticism; and autotheory—as a practice that identifies illness, wellness, and aesthetics as pressingly concerned with gender and power.

Sue Rosenberg Zalk Endowed Fund Award

Ariel G. Mekler, Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science
Dissertation Proposal: “Queer Consequences: An Examination of International LGBTIQ+ Mainstreaming”

Abstract: Since the passing of the first ever sexual orientation and gender identity resolution by the Human Rights Council in 2011, the realization of international LGBTIQ+ rights at the United Nations remains controversial at best. On the one hand, numerous entities across the UN system from the UN Development Program to UN Women have incorporated LGBTIQ+ rights in their respective work. On the other hand,
anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ+ actors have politicized the issue through member state delegations, making it extremely difficult to undo the damage done in multilateral spaces. Given this cyclical advancement and pushback, my dissertation is driven by a desire to understand how LGBTIQ+ mainstreaming by transnational advocacy networks impacts UN policy formation and program initiatives. I propose that the growing salience of LGBTIQ+ mainstreaming by member states, UN staff, and civil society organizations is driven by an ad-hoc inclusivity politic that embraces longstanding international LGBTIQ+ rights discourse alongside emancipatory understandings of sexual diversity and gender expansiveness. This inclusivity politic is the result of two interrelated mechanisms: a belief that the fundamental rights of LGBTIQ+ people are an already established international norm and a hyper recognition of the state-sponsored homo-transphobic backlash that seeks to uphold structures of power that produce and maintain hetero-cis-normative institutions.

Koonja Mitchell Memorial Prize

Madeline LaFuse, Ph.D. Candidate in History
Dissertation: "Poison in Marie Laveau’s New Orleans: A Cultural History of Slavery and Violence, 1769-1900"

Abstract: My dissertation exposes and interrogates an assumption that runs through previous scholarship: the automatic relationship between poison, panic and violence. Portrayed as a mutually-reinforcing “cycle of violence” in Caribbean poison scares, the absence of such scares, paranoia or executions in nineteenth-century New Orleans demands explanation, particularly since some recent scholarship explicitly argues for New Orleans’ Caribbean nature. Questions arise about how culture makes meaning out of violence in the context of slavery. Why did New Orleanians, and especially White creoles and Americans, invoke enslaved poisoners so often? What is the relationship between these cultural productions and the policing of enslaved people? How did the cultural diversity of this nineteenth-century slave society influence thinking about poison? What happens when food is the point of departure for an analysis of poison? Why did Marie Laveau transition so dramatically from a respected figure to an infamous poisoner in the late nineteenth century? Why did poison become a gendered and sexualized crime, and what were the implications of this development?
Jean Halley


The Roads to Hillbrow tells the diverse stories of domestic and transnational migrants who have made their way to this South African community following war, economic dislocation, and the social trauma of apartheid. Authors Ron Nerio and Jean Halley weave history, memoir, sociology, and queer studies with over one hundred personal interviews, including NGO volunteers, small business owners, social workers, tenants, and role models for young people. Topics cover the provision of support for migrants who are unaccompanied minors, possibilities for queer expression, creating safe parks for children, reaching out to neighbors, surviving high levels of crime and violence, and the challenges of living without documents. Current residents of Hillbrow also discuss how they cope with extremely high levels of unemployment, inequality, xenophobia, the harsh effects of Covid-19 on their community, and how they build connections through family networks, religious organizations, and social interaction.


Seeing White: An Introduction to White Privilege and Race, Second Edition, is an interdisciplinary supplemental textbook for undergraduates that challenges students to see race as everyone’s issue. By beginning with an understanding of privilege and power, the text engages all readers to explore white supremacy and racism historically and today in the United States.
Because every government agency in the United States has the authority to make its own rules for sex classification, many transgender people find themselves in the bizarre situation of having different sex classifications on different documents. Whether you can change your legal sex to “F” or “M” (or more recently “X”) depends on what state you live in and what government agency you’re dealing with. In Sex Is as Sex Does, noted transgender advocate and scholar Paisley Currah explores this deeply flawed system.

Providing examples from different states, government agencies, and court cases, Currah explains how transgender people struggle to navigate this confusing and contradictory web of legal rules, definitions, and classifications. Setting aside questions about what sex and gender “really mean,” Currah examines what the category of “sex” does for governments. Why do prisons have very different rules than Departments of Motor Vehicles? Why is there such resistance to people changing their sex designation? Or to dropping it from identity documents altogether?

Ultimately, Currah demonstrates that, because the difficulties transgender people face are not just the result of transphobia but also stem from larger injustices, an identity-based transgender rights movement will not, by itself, be up to the task of resolving them.

Matt Brim

Queer Sharing in the Marketized University. Matt Brim, Churnjeet Mahn and Yvette Taylor. Forthcoming, Routledge, Fall 2022.

This collection contributes to an understanding of queer theory as a "queer share," addressing the urgent need to redistribute resources in a university world characterized by stark material disparities and embedded gendered, racial, national, and class inequities. Queer Sharing is for readers seeking to better understand the broad class-based knowledge project that has become a defining feature of the field of queer studies.

Dána-Ain Davis

co-authored an article with Karen A. Scott, "Destigmatizing and Democratizing Postpartum Care: A Black Woman-Person First' Approach," which will be published in the September 2022 issue of Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology, Respectful, Equitable, and Supportive Postpartum Care.
Alyson Cole delivered a keynote speech in March 2022 called, “Vulnerabilities of the Concept of Vulnerability,” at the Cendeac Cuartel de Artilleria, Ayuntamiento de Murcia and Universidad de Murcia, and delivered a lecture called “Revisiting Vulnerability,” at the Department for Cultural Theory and History / Gender Studies / Historical Sciences at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Linda Martin Alcoff gave the Adorno Lectures in Frankfurt Germany, a set of 3 lectures on the topic of race, cultural racism, and white nationalism that will be published as a book. She also gave several talks at the University of Houston, the University of Seville, Penn State, and elsewhere. In Spring 2023, she will hold the Spinoza Chair at the University of Amsterdam and will also be named an ARC Fellow at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Matt Brim was named Co-Director of Transformative Learning in the Humanities (TLH) in spring 2022, a three-year initiative supported by the Mellon Foundation. In October 2022, he will give the Annual Queer Theory Lecture at Duke University, which honors Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and is hosted by the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies.

In May, Dana-Ain Davis gave a keynote speech, "Reproductive Injustice: A Grammar of Obstetric Racism," at University College of London's Centre for Gender, Health and Social Justice, the Department of Anthropology and The Sarah Parker Remond Centre. Paul Gilroy, Director of UCL's Sarah Parker Remond Centre, was the discussant for the talk.
**Accomplishments**

**Student News**

**Andrew Shapiro**, WSCP and Sociology PhD candidate, wrote an article, "On Power's Doorstep: Gays, Jews, and Liminal Complicity in Reproducing Masculine Domination," published in *Men and Masculinities*. His article explores how Jewish men, gay men, and other men caught between power and powerlessness often navigate their "in-between-ness" by embracing masculine ideals while disavowing femininity in themselves and others. Through "liminal complicity," historically oppressed men attempt to bolster their status and escape their painful stigmatization in ways that ultimately reproduce broader systems of oppression.

**Marcelle Karp**, M.A. Student in Women and Gender Studies, wrote a personal essay for the Huffington Post, "I Got Laid Off At 51. It Took Me 6 Years To Find A New Job—Here's What It Was Like." It is an essay about how a woman in her fifties endured relentless discrimination in her search for a staff job has a happy ending...plus some tips on how corporations can pre-empt ageism in its hiring practices.

Karp also published a Young Adult novel in April 2022 from Penguin Random House, *Getting Over Max Cooper*.

**Book Synopsis:**

Jazz Jacobson has spent fourteen of her sixteen summers on Fire Island. It's just an hour from Manhattan but feels like a world away, where Jazz thrives in the absence of the social hierarchies and pressures of high school. Most of all, it's the place where she's reunited with her best friend, Macy Whelan.

This summer starts out strong when the cute new boy on the island seems to like Jazz (hello, first boyfriend?). But it's hard to focus on her own crush when Macy's still obsessing over her hookup from last summer, Max Cooper.

Jazz can't believe how cold and mean Max is to Macy. But when Macy starts to seriously act out, Jazz begins to see that she knows only one side of the story . . . and that she has to help her friend before something terrible happens.

Boundaries are crossed and the edge of sanity is tested in Marcelle Karp's debut novel, which celebrates the complicated dynamics of female friendship and the heartbreaking ache of first love.
Naoko Ohri ’19 teaches English and Academic Writing at Hitotsubashi University and Women's & Gender Studies at Showa Pharmaceutical University in Tokyo, Japan. This May, Ohri published the paper, "Fifty Years of Endurance: Dementia, the Abandonment of Memory, and the Possibility of Archive for a Life-long Violence Victim" at BP international. It is based on a presentation Ohri gave at a regular meeting of the Tokyo American Literature Society on January 30, 2021. This article is dedicated to Ohri’s aunt Eiko, whose difficult life was the subject of her research in the article.

Jyun-Jie Yang is thrilled to join the University of California, Davis Sociology doctoral program for the Fall of 2022.

Jennifer (Jenny) Rossberg ’22 started a new job as a publicity manager at NYU Press.

Alex Stamson ’21 has started a new job as an adjunct professor of Philosophy at SUNY Purchase. She will start a Ph.D. in Philosophy at the University of Connecticut this fall.

Kayla Reece ’21 is currently an editorial assistant intern for the Women Studies Quarterly.

Charlie Ferguson ’20 received a full scholarship to UPENN law school alongside a MS in Social Policy.

Yelena Dzhanova ’22 is a news reporter at Business Insider. Her coverage focuses on the White House, politics, and women’s issues.

JuWon Jun ’21 is events manager for the Center for the Humanities and Special Publicity advisor for Women Studies Quarterly.
Emma Banks is a freelance journalist primarily reporting on queer culture, activism, and all forms of DIY. Previously she was a writer at Refinery29 and before that, the Editorial Director at Milk. Her research focuses on queer ecology, environmental justice, queer domesticity, and more broadly the relationship between power and place. In her free time she sews clothing and quilts out of recycled textile scraps. She was born in Glasgow, Scotland, raised in Dallas, Texas, and currently lives in Park Slope.

**If finances and time were not an issue, what hobby would you adopt (or be able to do, finally!) and why?**

I've always wanted to learn how to play the drums. I come from a very musical family but sadly don't know how to play any instruments!

Nicolette Bull graduated in 2020 with a BA in The Arts in Context from Eugene Lang College at The New School, where she worked as a research assistant and teaching fellow, performed in cabaret and experimental theater, and became involved in education and advocacy in New York's women's prisons. Nicolette is here to study women's labor history, gender and class in Early Modern Europe, proletarianization and the commons, folk practices and peasant cultures, social reproduction, the political history of sex work, and the impact of women's confinement to unpaid reproductive labor on the whole of the working class.

**If finances and time were not an issue, what hobby would you adopt (or be able to do, finally!) and why?**

If finances and time were no issue, I'd finally take up burlesque. I'd dance to Kate Bush. It would all be incredibly lavish.
Becki Fernandez is a short and angry lesbian, albeit angry for a good reason. They want to use their anger to change the world. Becki is a longtime reproductive justice and queer rights advocate, and wishes to use their experience to address the issues facing their communities. They lived in North Carolina prior to moving to NYC, and was active with pro-abortion organizations in NC like Carolina Abortion Fund and Pro-Choice North Carolina. Since moving to New York, Becki has enjoyed exploring the city parks and admiring all the fat squirrels. In their spare time, they like to cuddle with their emotional support demon cat and listen to records.

If finances and time were not an issue, what hobby would you adopt (or be able to do, finally!) and why?

Becki Fernandez: If finances and time were not an issue, I would get back into playing music and songwriting more regularly. I was in an all girls queer feminist punk band in high school and college, and it was the time of my life. I would do that again in a heartbeat if I could.

Gagan Kaur has nearly a decade of experience working in public health and politics. She worked at the New York City’s Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit, with a focus on engaging South Asian communities in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Gagan worked with the newly established Civic Engagement Commission, where she developed the methodology for determining which languages and poll sites are provided interpretation services during local elections, based on the US Census Data and voter rolls. Gagan also worked with the Mayor’s Office of Data Analytics to develop a Language Data Map of NYC that illustrates the most commonly spoken languages broken down by community districts and census tracts. Gagan recently worked with the Mama Glow Foundation, a reproductive justice organization. There, she helped design the service delivery process for the Citywide Doula Initiative, which provides no-cost doula care to birthing people in NYC. Gagan is also a trained doula working on her certification and enjoys playing the dilruba and painting in her free time.

If finances and time were not an issue, what hobby would you adopt (or be able to do, finally!) and why?

Gagan Kaur: If finances and time were not a limitation, I would learn pottery and ceramics and focus on visual and digital art full time.
New Students

Welcome!

Maithreyi Rajeshkumar is Sri Lankan/British and is thrilled to be moving from London to join the WGS community. Her undergraduate degree was in English Literature and Philosophy and since graduating in 2008, she has worked in small grassroots organizations campaigning around social justice, race equality, gender, criminal justice, disability and human rights. With a background in policy, communications, campaigning, research and youth engagement, she also has been an Editor of a two-volume book on war and conflict in Sri Lanka. She is looking forward to returning to studying and is particularly interested in local and transnational feminist movements and how they build power and mobilize for change. In her downtime, she loves the theatre, dancing and generally hanging and eating in busy cities (although she’s discovered a recent love of nature)!

If finances and time were not an issue, what hobby would you adopt (or be able to do, finally!) and why?

I would love to learn how to play football (soccer) really well. I always loved it growing up and played it when I was very young but have zero skills now! I would love to be coached by someone really good and join a team.

Alex Tydings (she/they) is an actress, writer, director, and intimacy coordinator for film and television. She graduated from Brown University, where she was an undergrad fellow at the Pembroke Seminar focusing on film and feminist theory. She then worked as an actress in film and TV, and played a series regular on Xena Warrior Princess for six years. She later returned to writing and directing, creating The Trial of Hanna Porn, a multimedia performance that won Best of Fringe at the Charm City Fringe Festival. She won the 2019 DC Council Fellowship for the Arts and Humanities for Interdisciplinary Artists, and wrote and directed The Thaw, an experimental play exploring the aftermath of sexual assault through the Medusa myth, starring Weinstein silence breaker Katherine Kendall. In 2021, she became a certified Intimacy Coordinator and has worked in film and tv productions for independent filmmakers, Showtime, Amazon and Apple TV.

If finances and time were not an issue, what hobby would you adopt (or be able to do, finally!) and why?

I would dance. I grew up dancing, and remember the intense joy in moving through space with music. I would love to explore from the inside out how bodies in motion hold and create meaning.

Maithreyi Rajeshkumar is Sri Lankan/British and is thrilled to be moving from London to join the WGS community. Her undergraduate degree was in English Literature and Philosophy and since graduating in 2008, she has worked in small grassroots organizations campaigning around social justice, race equality, gender, criminal justice, disability and human rights. With a background in policy, communications, campaigning, research and youth engagement, she also has been an Editor of a two-volume book on war and conflict in Sri Lanka. She is looking forward to returning to studying and is particularly interested in local and transnational feminist movements and how they build power and mobilize for change. In her downtime, she loves the theatre, dancing and generally hanging and eating in busy cities (although she’s discovered a recent love of nature)!

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The seminar will explore feminist texts from a range of genres that all bear witness to violence, injustice, and the aggressions of everyday life. Memoir, poetry, essay, or fiction, in each case the “I” records circumstances that are not simply singular, but also collective. What literary strategies do these writers deploy to make connections between “I” and “we,” story and life, aesthetics and politics, trauma and testimony? Readings include: Anzaldúa, Brison, Delbo, Ernaux, Hartman, Jacobs, Menchú, Lorde, Nestle, Rich, Una, Williams.

With the rise of authoritarian regimes around the world, what insights do feminist movements and theorizing offer? What are the fault lines between different forms of feminisms? How do liberal feminist ideals and principles intertwine with an imperial agenda? What are the links and divergences between Islamophobia and racism? Who should be the arbiter of “equality,” “fairness,” and “human rights”? What ethical questions shape the practices of feminism and feminist politics both domestically and internationally? What is the relationship between modes of production, political economy, and gender politics? What are the possibilities and limits of a transnational feminist politics? What are the material conditions/structural factors which enable and/or undermine transnational feminist solidarity? This course grapples with some of these questions in the wake of rapid world altering changes.
Upcoming Events

**Tastes Like War: Grace M. Cho in conversation with Hosu Kim**

Wednesday, September 28th, 6:00-7:30 PM,
In-Person: CUNY Graduate Center, The Skylight Room

Part food memoir, part sociological investigation, *Tastes Like War* is a hybrid text about a daughter's search through intimate and global history for the roots of her mother's schizophrenia. In her mother's final years, Grace M. Cho learned to cook dishes from her mother's childhood in order to invite the past into the present, and to hold space for her mother's multiple voices at the table. And through careful listening over these shared meals, Cho discovered not only the things that broke the brilliant, complicated woman who raised her—but also the things that kept her alive.

**Women Writing Women's Lives Dorothy O. Helly Lecture:**

**Ava Chin on "The Way to Mott Street"**

Thursday, October 13th, 4:00-5:30 PM, on Zoom Webinar

In this talk, Ava Chin will address the challenges she faced in writing her forthcoming memoir, *Mott Street*—challenges that included the impact of the Chinese Exclusion laws on four generations of her family in NYC's Chinatown, and the task of how to thread a narrative together where the historical scope includes many eras and generations. How does one write a nonfiction book when the official record is a kind of fiction, heavily biased against one's subjects, or simply nonexistent due to negligence, discrimination, or a combination of both? How does the author weave nearly five decades of research into a single narrative? What are the criteria for inclusions and exclusions? Chin will also address how the changing political climate in America, including the recent attacks on Asian Americans, affected her writing.

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Upcoming Events

BOOK SALON

**Sex is as Sex Does: Governing Transgender Identity**

Paisley Currah in conversation with Red Washburn and Joshua Sealy-Harrington

Tuesday, October 25th, 6:00-7:30 PM, on Zoom Webinar

*Sex Is as Sex Does* (NYU Press 2022) reveals the hidden logics that have governed sex classification policies in the United States and shows what the regulation of transgender identity can tell us about society’s approach to sex and gender writ large. (For more information, see page 11.)

**Paisley Currah** is a Professor of Political Science and Women’s & Gender Studies at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Currah will be in conversation with **Red Washburn**, Professor of English and Director of Women’s and Gender Studies at CUNY Kingsborough, as well as **Joshua Sealy-Harrington**, Assistant Professor at the Lincoln Alexander School of Law at Toronto Metropolitan University and doctoral candidate at Columbia Law School.

**Toni Bond**

**Loosening Our Tongues: Black Women, Sexuality, and the Black Church**

Tuesday, November 15th, 6:00-7:30 PM, on Zoom Webinar

Black women have been the backbone of the Black church. Yet, the Black church has played a pivotal role in promoting oppressive theological teachings that stigmatize reproductive and sexual freedom and bodily autonomy. In this talk, **Toni Bond** will discuss the findings from her research about the reproductive and sexual experiences of Black Christian women and how oppressive theological teachings have impacted their lives. **Toni Bond** is one of the founding mothers of Reproductive Justice and teaches at the Claremont School of Theology (CST).

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Upcoming Events

Society for the Study of Women in the Renaissance

Paula Glatzer: *King Lear in Performance: A Variorum Life*
September 15th, 6:00-7:30 PM, on Zoom Webinar

In this talk, Paula Glatzer will discuss her decades of work on the theatrical history of *King Lear*. She will describe her two Variorum essays — "The Text on the Stage" and "King Lear in Performance" — and try to explain why it took so long. She will also share the joys of seeing so many productions and handling so many rare books.

Noémie Ndiaye: *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance, Culture and the Making of Race*
Wednesday, October 19th, 6:00-7:30 PM, on Zoom Webinar

Noémie Ndiaye presents her monograph, *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race* (Penn Press 2022), which shows how the early modern mass media of theatre and performance culture at large helped turn blackness into a racial category. The book explores within a comparative and transnational framework the techniques of impersonation used by white performers to represent Afro-diasporic people in England, France, and Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this talk, Ndiaye focuses on some of the scripts of blackness that were specifically attached to Black female characters, in an attempt to grasp, through the lens of gender dynamics, the stories that Western Europeans told themselves through performative blackness, and the effects of those fictions on early modern Afro-diasporic subjects.

Nadine Akkerman: *Elizabeth Stuart: Queen Hearts*
Thursday, November 17th, 6:00-7:30 PM, on Zoom Webinar

In this talk, Nadine Akkerman will speak about her recent biography of Elizabeth, *Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Hearts* (Oxford University Press 2021). Elizabeth (1596-1662), the only daughter of James VI of Scotland, later James I of England, was married to Frederick, the Elector Palatine, in 1613. His principality, the Palatinate, made him the first elector of the Holy Roman Empire. She was Queen of Bohemia for only twelve months. Frederick, offered the crown by its Protestant nobles, accepted it. His acceptance initiated the Thirty Years War, the pan-European conflict that lasted from 1618 to 1648 and left them stateless when Spain occupied the Palatinate. Frederick died in 1632, leaving Elizabeth a widow with eleven surviving children. Through her the Stuart succession was maintained in England: her grandson became George I in 1715.

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Year in Review
Fall 2021 and Spring 2022

Sarah Schulman, "Let the Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP, NY 1987 - 1993"
Moderated by Matt Brim

Rupal Oza, "Ties to Land: Sexual Violation and Political Economy in Rural India"
Moderated by Dana-Ain Davis

Mary L. Gray, "Ghost Work in Pandemic Times"

Private property and Public Violence

Book Salon: Nice White Ladies: The Truth about White Supremacy, Our Role in it, and How We can Help Dismantle it
Jessie Daniels (top left) in conversation with Alyssa Bowen (bottom) and Carla Shedd (top right)
Moderated by Dana-Ain Davis
WGS and WSCP students and faculty at an end-of-year celebration in June 2022.

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