



FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR



by Shawn Burn, Acting Chair WGS

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the first edition of the WGS Observer, our latest vehicle for showcasing Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) at Cal Poly. Our department is committed to promoting a critical understanding of how genders and sexualities shape

and are shaped by social, political, ethical, economic, legal, and cultural institutions in historical and contemporary contexts. We accomplish our mission by teaching a variety of WGS-prefixed courses (including many General Education courses), offering a WGS minor, and sponsoring lectures, panels, and other events, often in collaboration with other departments, non-academic campus units including Women's Programs, the Pride Center, and the MultiCultural Center, and organizations in our local community.

As Acting Chair of WGS this year, I have been impressed by the many ways in which WGS contributes to Cal Poly and our community, through our scholarly and teaching contributions and our collaborations with others across the university. This newsletter

provides evidence of the hard work of our faculty, students, and alumni to promote complex understandings of gender and sexualities and promote appreciation and respect for diversity on our campus.

I am also grateful for the hard work of the WGS Board, WGS teaching faculty, and WGS affiliated faculty and staff. WGS also counts on the support of other departments that offer WGS cross-listed and elective courses and support their faculty members' service on our Board. These departments include English, Social Sciences, Art & Design, History, Political Science, Ethnic Studies, Philosophy, Kinesiology, and the Psychology & Child Development Department. Our ability to serve the WGS mission is also possible because of the wonderful Andrea Nash, WGS's administrative staff person. Thanks Andrea—I couldn't have done it without you!

It's been a busy year for everyone in WGS, made more difficult by budget cuts and faculty furloughs, but we can be proud of our many accomplishments.

News from Alums

Keep in touch! We want to hear what our graduates are up to and how their WGS minor has served them! Send your updates to anash@calpoly.edu. Here are some recent reports from WGS alum.

Jess Hawley (WGS/Journalism 2008) is currently the Education Services Coordinator at the Sexual Assault Recovery & Prevention (SARP) Center in San Luis Obispo. When asked how her WGS minor has served her since graduation, Jess said, "It is because of my WGS classes that I became so interested, and in turn so passionate, about women's issues. I feel that the background I gained in those classes set the foundation for me to become a much stronger woman in my own life, and a louder voice in the prevention of sexual assault in the community."

Allie O'Leary (WGS/Political Science 2008) went to Denver after graduation where she worked as the Executive Assistant to the Chief Financial Officer for the 2008 Democratic National Convention. Then she went on to Columbus, Ohio where she worked on the Obama Campaign as an out-of-state volunteer coordinator. In Spring of 2010 she moved to Washington, DC where she is the Programs Assistant at the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, an organization which advocates for more money from Congress and the Administration for the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Allie has been accepted into the Masters of Public Health program at The George Washington University in DC where she will focus

on women's health. Says Allie, "My choice in focusing on women's health is a definite off-shoot of my minor in the Women's and Gender Studies department at Cal Poly."

Keely Sweeny (WGS/English 2006) completed her teaching credential and is now working on her MA in Education (Curriculum & Instruction) through CSU Bakersfield Extended University. Keely says, "My WS minor has informed many of my teaching decisions — specifically how I present issues relating to gender, religion, race, and sexuality to my students. I make a concerted effort to present all issues from an unbiased and non—stereotypical point of view."

Haley Myers (WGS/English 2003) is currently pursuing a Masters in Public Policy Administration at Sacramento State. She works as a legislative aide for Assembly Member Tony Mendoza (D - 56th District, East Los Angeles). Haley is a member of CA Women Lead, a statewide group that hosts events that promote women in public office.

Kara Groth (WGS/Political Science 2006) spent two years in Lutheran Volunteer Corps—a program like Americorps, run by the Lutheran church—in Baltimore, Maryland. "I spent two days a week researching affordable housing trends on a national level and four days a week at an inner-city African-American church." She is currently attending Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary to earn a Masters of Divinity and works at a small, multicultural church in Oakland. Kara reports that "My WGS minor has served me very well! Particularly with work in the church, I'm amazed at how many ways people assume that "gender equality" has been achieved. Many of my female colleagues and I often talk about the unique challenges of becoming female pastors—and the even greater challenges for female pastors of color. I feel very thankful for what I learned at Cal Poly as it's helped me be very aware of the gender dynamics/the history of the struggle for equality—which helps me identify some of the same issues playing out today."

Morgan Leckie (WGS/English 2006) graduated with her MA in English with an emphasis in Rhetoric and Composition in June of 2009. She has been teaching at Cal Poly as an adjunct English lecturer and has received a "full ride" to attend Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in the fall. Her plan is to study "gender identity as it is performed online via multi-modal rhetoric." Her daughter Juno, was born in October of 2008. Morgan reports that she explores issues of gender and sexuality in her classes and when she can, she devotes time to the Marriage Equality movement. Morgan says, "I really cannot imagine the woman I would be if I had not enrolled in the amazing classes of Rachel Fernflores, Shawn Burn, Marie Pagliarini, Brenda Helmbrecht, and Mary Armstrong. The minor and department did so much for me - I am, as a result of my minor, a student who is eager to confront social injustice, to consider

non-Western (hetero-patriarchal) perspectives and experiences, to appreciate and recognize my own intellectual - not simply physical - value as a woman...Finally, and most personally, the minor I chose helps me to know that I am a mother my daughter will learn feminist values by watching."

Erin Partridge (WGS/Art & Design 2006) now works as a therapist at Coalinga State Hospital, a state facility for the treatment of sexually violent predators. She says, "I have been thinking about how my experiences as a Women's Studies minor impacted my life in the past 4 years since graduation and about how I use those experiences today. I am discovering that my thoughts are far beyond what an email message can contain. As an artist and art therapist, the experiences and knowledge permeate my art, professional work, and interpersonal life. Do I walk around the hospital where I treat Sexually Violent Predators wearing my "This is what a feminist looks like" t-shirt? No. I'm sure you can imagine the reaction that would get—take every worst-case-scenario and multiply by 100. But my personal beliefs as a feminist and my training in feminist approaches to therapy play a part in every interaction I have with the Individuals we work with at the hospital."

Winners of 2009–2010 WGS Scholarships

The Women's Studies and Gender Studies Department administers seven scholarships for Cal Poly students. WGS is proud to announce the 2009-2010 winners:

SUSAN CURRIER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP:

Devin Murphy — Psychology & Child Development

JAMES M. DUENOW SCHOLARSHIP:

Amy Hart — Political Science

VICKI AND DARELL FARRER SCHOLARSHIP:

Alyssa Daw — Software Engineering

STEVE HARMON SCHOLARSHIP:

Lauren Rabaino — Journalism

L. DIANE RYAN SCHOLARSHIP:

Krystin Thomas — Business Administration

NELL E. SPRADLIN SCHOLARSHIP

FOR THE RECOGNITION OF INDIVIDUALITY:

Christine Marin — Art

DR. SHIRLEY H. WALKER SCHOLARSHIP:

Krystin Thomas — Business Administration

Student Wins Award For Her Feminist Research At 2010 CSU Student Research Competition

Kimberly Paterson (English) won second place in her session for her paper on the experience of women and girls who play in the male-dominated, hostile environment of online role-playing games. The paper describes Kimberly's original research on the challenges faced by women and girls who play multiplayer online games like "World of Warcraft" – sexual harassment, trivialization of feminist issues, stereotyping about player skills, etc. She also identified coping strategies used by women players to adapt to this masculine environment. Her paper was a version of a paper she wrote for ENGL 495 Language and Gender in Fall 2009, a course taught by Associate Professor Johanna Rubba (English), member of the WGS teaching faculty. Rubba encouraged Kimberly to submit her paper for the CSU Undergrad Research Competition.

Recent WGS Faculty Scholarship (2009–Spring 2010)

Mary Armstrong's (English/WGS) article "Eight Lessons: Becoming the Great Teacher You Already Are" was published in the journal *Thought & Action*.

Kathleen Cairns' (History/WGS) book "Hard Time at Tehachapi: California's First Women's Prison," was published by the University of New Mexico Press.

Rachel Fernflores (Philosophy/WGS) had her article "Merciful Interpretation," published in the journal *Feminist Studies*.

Shawn Burn's (Psychology & Child Development/WGS) article, "A Situational Model of Sexual Assault Prevention through

Bystander Intervention" was published in *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. A third edition of her book "Women Across Cultures: A Global Perspective" will be available in fall 2010.

Jane Lehr (Ethnic Studies/WGS) presented "Have we, should we or how do we move beyond 'gender and...' stories to put race, class, or sexuality at the center of Feminist STS analyses?" at the 2009 National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference.

Patrice Engle (Psychology & Child Development/WGS) had her article "Maternal Depression: Program and Policy Implications" published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

Recent WGS Service on Behalf of WGS Issues & Diversity

Faculty members *Devin Kuhn* (Religious Studies/WGS), *Jane Lehr* (Ethnic Studies/WGS), and *Camille O'Bryant* (Kinesiology/WGS) served on the Cal Poly Diversity Learning Objectives Assessment committee. The committee developed a plan and mechanisms for assessing student learning with respect to four Diversity Learning Objectives. Dr. Lehr also serves as co-chair of the National Women's Studies Association's Science & Technology Taskforce. Members of the task force analyze scientific and technical fields from feminist perspectives.

Rachel Fernflores (Philosophy/WGS) served as the chair of the university's Academic Senate in 2009-2010 and was reelected to serve next year. *Camille O'Bryant* (Kinesiology/WGS) serves as Vice-Chair. We are proud that two of our faculty members occupy these high-level positions that until recently were typically held by men.

Camille O'Bryant (Kinesiology/WGS) and *Christina Firpo* (History/WGS) serve on the Board of Directors for Sexual Assault Recovery and Prevention Center.

Shawn Burn (Psychology & Child Development/WGS) was one of the founding members of the university's newly formed Diversity Coalition (*Kathryn Rummell* (English), *Don Ryujin* (Psychology & Child Development/Ethnic Studies), and *Jasna Jovonovich* (Psychology & Child Development), WGS faculty affiliates, were the other founding members). As a member of the steering committee, Professor Burn helped recruit members (which included many individuals and campus units committed to promoting diversity at Poly) and helped accomplish the Coalition's first mission: insuring that a commitment to diversity would be a factor in the hiring of Cal Poly's next President. She also continues her work with SAFER, Cal Poly's sexual assault prevention program and served as the faculty advisor for Spectrum, the campus LGBTI student club.

Recent WGS Community Lectures & Presentations

The WGS mission is accomplished in part through giving, organizing, and supporting community presentations. The many presentations below show we've been hard at work sharing women's and gender studies scholarship with the campus and local community.

In April, 2009 WGS hosted Dr. Sandra Harding who gave a talk called "Why Should We Value Indigenous Knowledge." Harding's substantial and influential published works include *Science and Social Inequality: Feminist and Postcolonial Issues* (2006) and *Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities* (2008). The talk, which was open to the campus and local community, was cosponsored by Ethnic Studies Materials Engineering, Biological Sciences, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Multicultural Center. WGS/Ethnic Studies professor Jane Lehr organized and hosted a small and intimate discussion with Sandra Harding on women and people of color in STEM fields.

From January to May of 2009, the WGS Department ran a successful lecture series at the SLO Public Library. The lecture series, organized by Rachel Fernflores (WGS/Philosophy), showcased five WGS faculty, beginning with Jean Williams (Political Science/WGS), who kicked off the series with a provocative discussion of the politics of virginity and sexuality in abstinence-only sex education. Patrice Engle (Psychology & Child Development/WGS) gave the second talk in the series, which set out the extreme challenges women face simply to survive and provide for their families in a global context. Judy Saltzman-Saveker's talk (Philosophy/WGS) provided a history of feminist critiques of male dominance in religion. Camille O'Bryant (Kinesiology/WGS) gave the fourth talk, which concerned Title IX and sex discrimination in sport. Finally, Jean Wetzel (Art/WGS) talked about courtesans and the roles they played in Classical and Renaissance art, as well as the art of the Ming-dynasty.

In fall 2009, visiting WGS scholar Ghada Talhami gave a lecture to an overfilled room titled "Why Middle East Women Matter." Dr. Talhami was our first Susan Currier Visiting Professor. Susan Currier, a beloved English faculty member and Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Arts lost her battle with breast cancer in June, 2006. The visiting scholar position is funded through a generous donation from her husband Max Wills.



Ghada Talhami

Also in fall, WGS minor student Rachel Hornstein created a panel



Rachel Fernflores and Rachel Hornstein

discussion of California health care experts who discussed health care reform.

In January 2010, WGS/Ethnic Studies assistant professor Jane Lehr gave a presentation titled "Who is Left Behind? Race, Class and the Higher Education

Crisis in California" at the Xicano Youth Conference held in San Luis Obispo.

In February 2010, WGS faculty members Shawn Burn (Psychology & Child Development/WGS) and Jane Lehr (Ethnic Studies/WGS) gave presentations at the 20th Annual Western Regional LGBTQIA College Conference held at Cal Poly. Dr. Burn spoke on "LGBT Rights as Human Rights" and Dr. Lehr on "Beyond Nature: Critical Engaging Science to Queer Teachers, Students, Activists, and Ourselves." Also in February, Shawn Burn gave a presentation to Cal Poly's Spectrum student Club on the role of psychology in promoting LGBT mental health and equality.

In March 2010, The Department of Women & Gender Studies, Women's Programs & Services, and Cal Poly's Chapter of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) presented a round-table discussion titled, "Women and People of Color in STEM Fields — An Update." The discussion, facilitated by Jane Lehr (Ethnic Studies/WGS) explored the status of Women and/or People of Color in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) fields.

In April 2010, WGS and Religious Studies Program hosted Christian feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether as part of a speaker series on women's ordination in Catholicism (organized by WGS/Religious Studies assistant professor Devin Kuhn). Ruether's talk, "Should Women Want Women Priests or Woman Church?" expanded the question of whether or not women should be ordained as priests in the Catholic Church to explore what impact women priests might have, and whether or not women's ordination would actually lead to greater gender equality within the Church. The series concluded in May with Bishop Olivia Doko's "A Bridge to the Future in a Shaken Church. Bishop Doko explained the ministry as practiced by Roman Catholic Women Priests and shared highlights of her personal journey to become ordained as a priest and bishop.

Recent WGS Faculty Awards



Patrice Engle

Patrice Engle (Psychology & Child Development/WGS) received the university's Distinguished Scholarship Award as well as the 2009 Barbara Hallman award for excellence in WGS faculty. Dr. Engle is a globally recognized expert on maternal-child nutrition and the relationship between women's status and children's health.



Jean Williams

Jean Williams (Political Science/WGS) received the 2009 Cal Poly President's Community Service Award for her work on the 2009 San Luis Obispo County homeless enumeration. Her report showed that homeless families—primarily single parent female headed families—are much more numerous in the county than previously thought.



Shawn Burn

Shawn Burn (WGS/Psychology & Child Development) was awarded the College of Liberal Arts' Outstanding Teaching Award in Spring 2009.

WGS Transitions

Mary Armstrong (English/WGS) is currently on a two-year leave from Cal Poly. She is now Associate Professor of English and Chair of Women's and Gender Studies Program at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania.

Jean Williams (Political Science/WGS) will be Acting Chair of Women and Gender Studies for the 2010-2011 academic year. Dr. Williams teaches WGS 301 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies and POLS 310 Politics of Ethnicity and Gender.

Jean Wetzel (Art & Design/WGS) retired from the WGS Faculty Board after serving for 13 years. Dr. Wetzel, an art historian teaches WGS/ART 316 Women as Subject/Object in Art History.

Patrice Engle (Psychology & Child Development/WGS) retired from the WGS Faculty Board after serving for 5 years. Dr. Engle often teaches WGS 320 Women in Global Perspective for WGS.

WGS welcomes new WGS Faculty Board members *Tom Trice* (History), *Elizabeth Adan* (Art & Design), *Catherine Waitinas* (English), and *Kathleen Cairns* (History). Dr. Trice is an expert on Soviet history and also has an interest in LGBT history. In fall, he will teach the WGS elective course HIST 458 Gender and Sexuality on Modern Europe. Dr. Adan has taught Women's Studies courses at UCSB, and much of her research has focused on contemporary women artists and feminist theory as it applies to Art History. Dr. Waitinas specializes in early through antebellum American literature, ethnic American literature, and women's literature. Dr. Cairns's work focuses on Californian women's history. She teaches the WGS core course WGS/HIST 435 American Women's History to 1870.

Laura King (Psychology & Child Development/WGS) is retiring from Cal Poly and moving back to Arkansas (her home state) with her daughter Grace. Dr. King has taught Psychology of Women for many years.

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We are so very grateful to those who have donated resources to our department. Individuals like Max Wills and Susanne Redalje help us accomplish our mission and acknowledge those that make a difference through scholarship, teaching, and service. Donations have been used to fund visiting professors, fund scholarships and awards, and purchase classroom materials such as films. We can put even the smallest donation to good use. We are also happy to use your donation in a specific way if you so wish—to pay for specific course offerings, to buy particular films for our collection, to bring a speaker to campus, to create a scholarship, etc. Your donation is tax-deductible. For more information on making a donation, or to make a donation to WGS, go to: <http://cla.calpoly.edu/wgs/support.html>.