

WGS news

Department of Women's & Gender Studies
University of South Florida
Summer, 2021



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Artwork credit: Frances Price Herndl

I asked my daughter to make this piece of art for me for 2021 and I keep a version of it on my computer's desktop. I'm not a person who is much given to inspirational art or slogans, but it feels like this is a year for us all to be assessing how to move back into what is going to count as normal now. Most of us would agree that things before the pandemic were not good enough to settle for, but can we rebuild back better?

For feminists, there is a lot to assess. Study after study shows that women lost a lot of ground during the pandemic and communities of color likewise suffered more and lost more ground than white communities. As Clare Wenham, an Assistant Professor of Global Health at the London School of Economics puts it in an essay in *The Lancet*, "you have to differentiate between what comes from being infected and what comes from being affected." Women around the globe found themselves doing more childcare,

experiencing more domestic violence, working more in "essential" hazardous positions for low pay or being laid off from service work, or closed out of the informal economy. A recent UN report finds that the pandemic will drive 96 million people into poverty, 47 million of whom are girls and women. These effects have been particularly harsh in economically disadvantaged communities, both in the US and around the world.

Meanwhile, even at a point when the federal government has returned to more supportive LGBTQ, anti-racist, and reproductive justice policies, state legislatures around the country are passing anti-LGBTQ laws, and restricting access to voting and reproductive healthcare. We find ourselves in a place where going backwards actually might feel like a positive step in some ways.

There is a lot of work to be done, but Women's and Gender Studies as

a field has always been focused on a positive future and willing to do the work to get there. At USF, we're also committed to doing so in a community of intellectual and caring support. In the pages that follow, you'll find that our faculty and students are dedicated not just to recovering and restoring, but to rebuilding a better world by resisting the problems we encounter now. Even during the pandemic when we had to do so remotely, we hosted a series on anti-racism; we held numerous panels on scholarship, careers, and moving through your major or your career mindfully. Our students engage in community service and undertake projects, both intellectual and activist, to make ours a more equitable society. In the pages that follow, you'll find profiles of faculty, students, and alums who are all making the world better.

If you want to take a more active part in our department's life, be sure to look out for the opportunities we include here to join the WGS Alumni Group, to join us at social or art events, or to attend workshops, talks, and colloquia. We look forward to seeing you in the next year and to joining with you in the project!



Dr. Diane Price Herndl

WGS Faculty Spotlight:

Dr. Jill McCracken

Hi! I'm Jill McCracken, and I am a Professor in Women's and Gender Studies and in English at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg campus. I had the wonderful opportunity to join the Department of Women's and Gender Studies in August 2020, and I am thrilled to be here!

My primary areas of research focus on sex work and trafficking in the sex industry, women and incarceration, and the impact of sexuality education on marginalized communities.

Having worked with sex workers and victims of trafficking for almost 20 years, I am also the co-founder and co-director of the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) Behind Bars (swopbehindbars.org), a national grassroots social justice network dedicated to the fundamental human rights of sex workers and victims of trafficking that focuses on ending sex trafficking, violence, and stigma through education, community building, advocacy, and policy.

I draw primarily on ethnographic and qualitative research methods, and I strive to integrate community-based, participatory research into all of my work.

I had the amazing opportunity to collaborate with the New Zealand Prostitute's Collective in 2018



Dr. Jill McCracken

where I completed a Fulbright Specialist Project to investigate the presence of violence and trafficking in the sex industry in a country where prostitution is decriminalized.

Most recently, I have developed the Adolescent Sexual Health Education and Research (ASHER) Project, a program that provides comprehensive and inclusive sexual health education for underserved youth. This program is close to my heart because it draws on the research I have done with people engaged in sex work and trafficking and works to incorporate this knowledge into a curriculum that not only advances gender equity but simultaneously works to decrease gender-based violence and prevent sexual violence and trafficking.

The ASHER Team and I have created

the "Choosing Myself" curriculum, a seven-week program for young women ages 13-24 that incorporates program evaluation where participants engage in focus groups and interviews and complete pre and post surveys. Our goal is to provide sexual health education and to simultaneously determine how participation in this program impacts participants' sexual health, practices, and behaviors. This program places an individual's autonomy, choice, and values at its center because I believe it is only through understanding ourselves—our values, beliefs, viewpoints, and biases—that we can work to prevent and heal from gendered and sexualized violence and to create a more just and equitable world.

I am actively engaged in research projects in all of these areas, and I love to work with students, so if any of these areas pique your interest, reach out to me!

I integrate this community-based philosophy and analysis of the everyday into my teaching where together we analyze our material world and then "remake" it in ways that make space for greater understanding, social justice, and equity. I teach courses in English, like Rhetoric of Marginalized Communities, and in Women's and Gender Studies, and this fall I will be teaching Sex Work and Trafficking and Intro to Women's Studies.

Newsletter cover photo taken during a WGS event held in Microsoft Teams during the COVID pandemic.

WGS Alumni Spotlight: Yordanos Molla

Yordanos Molla received a BA degree in International Studies and Women's & Gender Studies in May, 2018 and an MA in Ethics, Peace, & Human Rights from American University in 2020. She is currently the Deputy Field Director at Equality Florida.

I am the Deputy Field Director at Equality Florida and mostly work on mobilizing our state-wide volunteers on various actions, working on state and local policies, assisting on election campaigns, and building coalitions with other organizations. I most enjoy connecting volunteers with actions that they're passionate about and trying to build a more intersectional framework with various issues.

WGS helped to prepare Yordanos for her career in many ways: I interned for Equality Florida during my last year at USF and gained valuable experience that I use during my job now.

I apply my education in WGS to my job by thinking about the intersectionality of issues for projects I work on: Who is in the conversation? Who is left out? How can we better serve marginalized communities? Also, the lessons I learned from WGS are something that I apply to the world every day in a society that is racist, sexist, etc. It also taught me to think critically about the U.S. perpetuation of imperialism, racism, capitalism, Islamophobia, etc. and I see those systems of oppression implemented daily on both a macro and micro scale.



Yordanos Molla

The emphasis on social justice in the Department of Women's & Gender Studies at USF appealed to Yordanos: I was always interested in social justice issues, so the WGS program was a perfect fit for my interest! There also seemed to be some overlap between the issues discussed in my International Studies courses and what I heard about WGS, so I thought it complemented it well.

My favorite area in WGS was learning about Black Feminism and Transnational Feminism and they were my favorite courses in college! I was particularly interested in Black Feminism because of my identity as a Black woman and a lot of the feminist issues today center middle-class white woman. I loved Transnational Feminism because it moves away from the U.S.-centric framework and I got to learn about radical feminist thoughts from all over the world that expanded my point of view. I think it's really important to center Black women and women in the Third World Movement to build international solidarity in order to truly move towards liberation.

WGS is more than just a major: What was most valuable about my experience as a WGS student was not only the immense amount of knowledge that I learned, but the relationships that I built with the faculty and other students. As cliché as it sounds, it really felt like a family.

I think what is special about WGS and what separates it from most departments is that it's close-knit, which allows for deeper connections with everyone. After a few courses, you start to know everyone in the program. All of the courses WGS offered I actually wanted to take, not because I had to, unlike students in other departments. I also wanted to shout out to Dr. Tangela Serls and Dr. David Rubin for being amazing professors and I loved their courses!

I highly recommend students take WGS courses to expand your knowledge and perspective. So much of what is taught in these courses should be taught in high school, but we never see it in our education system and curriculum. After WGS is when I started to question everything and it made me more conscious of the world today, which everyone should be. WGS can be related to any field, so I highly recommend any student to join because you can apply it everywhere!

Join the WGS Alumni Group

Introducing the USF WGS Alumni Group (UWAG)! Committed to upholding the goals and values of the Women's and Gender Studies Department (formerly Women's Studies Department), the USF WGS Alumni group was *created by WGS alumni* to help former WGS students give back to the community and connect with other like-minded alumni.

The USF WGS Alumni Group is still in its early stages and needs volunteers to

help make it a success. By becoming an active member or joining the leadership team, you can help choose what initiatives and events UWAG should spearhead. UWAG will always be based on the interests and goals of the WGS alumni.

If you're interested in becoming an active member, holding a leadership position, or just want to learn more about the group, please contact Communications/Student Outreach Coordinator, Daynah Singh at

singhd@usf.edu or visit <https://bit.ly/3wRcsWt>.

To stay in touch with UWAG, follow us:

Instagram:
[@usfwgsalumni](https://www.instagram.com/usfwgsalumni)

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/groups/wgsfriends/

WGS Alumni Group Social Justice Project: Save the USF Forest Preserve

The WGS Alumni Group is committed to social justice. As the group's first social justice project, the membership has chosen **to support** something close to home -- the movement to save the USF Forest Preserve from development. Read on for information from the **Save the USF Forest Preserve** group about this issue and how you can get involved.

"Located north of Fletcher Ave, the USF Northern Property, which includes USF River-front Park, USF Forest Preserve, and "The Claw" Golf Course, protects over 600 acres of imperiled sandhill and wetland ecosystems and nearly two dozen endangered or threatened plant and animal species. More than 400 native plant species can be found within the USF Forest Preserve, along with and estimated 194 bird species, 31 reptile species, bobcats, otters, fox squirrels, white-tailed deer, and countless other wildlife.



Photo courtesy of Save the USF Forest Preserve

For decades, the Preserve has functioned as a core research facility and natural class-room for many departments in the College of Arts and Sciences. The entire property serves as a critical link in a wildlife corridor that joins the Cypress Creek floodplain to the Green Swamp. This land also contains significant Indigenous cultural heritage sites, including a pre-Columbian village site and numerous burial sites.

On April 1st, USF quietly released a Request for Information (RFI) for development proposals on their 769-acre Northern Property.

Save the USF Forest Preserve was created by USF graduate students to oppose any measure that would diminish or destroy the ecosystems, Indigenous heritage sites, or educational opportunities within the Forest Preserve and to push for permanent protections on the land in the form of a conservation easement.

If you would like to take action or learn more about our initiative, please visit our website at [saveusfforestpreserve.com](https://www.saveusfforestpreserve.com)."

WGS Alumni Spotlight:

Katie Maloney

Katie Maloney graduated in December, 2020 with a B.A. in Women's and Gender Studies with a minor in Sociology. She is currently enrolled in the Human Resources Management graduate certificate program at USF, and recently started work at Metropolitan Ministries as an assistant in Human Resources. Katie is the founder and current President of the new WGS Alumni Group.



Katie Maloney

During my first semester at USF, I took a course called Human Sexual Behavior. I absolutely loved the class and at the end of the semester our professor told us if we enjoyed the class we should consider the WGS program. I was so excited I enrolled in Intro to Women's Studies and declared WGS as my major before the next semester even started.

Learning about intersectionality was absolutely transformative for me personally, politically, and academically. Also, as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, it meant the world to me that I was able to take classes like Intro to LGBTQ+ Cultures and Sexualities Studies. What I learned from majoring in WGS was invaluable. It challenged me and allowed me to grow into a more compassionate, resilient, and dynamic person.

Katie is leveraging what she learned in WGS into a career in human resources: In the future I would like to work in Human Resources, specifically, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (*since writing this, Katie has obtained a position in human resources*). I chose to major in Women's and Gender studies

because of the department's focus on developing students to be active citizens that work for social justice and change.

My major enhanced my critical thinking and analytical skills by encouraging me to approach all topics with an intersectional lens, which considers the impact of all identities (such as race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, nationality, etc.). This approach promotes effective diversity and inclusion in all sectors of society, but in this case in employment. Now more than ever organizations are accepting the importance of cultivating an environment that supports and values diversity, which is an area WGS has extensively prepared me for. WGS also equipped me with the knowledge and tools to effectively work with and for a variety of individuals, which allows me to gain multiple perspectives and collaborate well with others.

Katie overcame her worry about "what can you do with a degree in WGS?": When I first started telling people I changed my major to WGS I always got the same question. While the tone ranged anywhere from curious, to concerned to condescending, the

question remained the same: "What can you even do with that degree?" I took the class Careers & Professionalism in WGS with Dr. Wendland and what I learned in this class was invaluable. I realized that there was no direct pipeline from a WGS degree to a WGS job. I learned that you don't have to get a job directly related to WGS. You can leverage your WGS knowledge to make a positive impact in whatever position or field you choose.

I chose to major in WGS because I was passionate about social justice and change. People preach to do what you love, but often when you take their advice you get pushback on the practicality and financial aspects of your pursuit. I can't say I wasn't scared at first, but I knew that what I was learning from WGS was significant and essential. People may ask you what you can do with a WGS degree, but the question should be what can't you do with one. WGS is an interdisciplinary field, meaning it incorporates a variety of disciplines. You will walk with invaluable knowledge and skills that you will use for the rest of your life, both personally and professionally. But most importantly, you will walk away a better person.

Katie is the founder of the new WGS Alumni Group and is passionate about its success: During my last semester at USF I started an internship with the WGS Department. I collaborated with Dr. Tangel Serls and Sarah Jünke to start forming the WGS Alumni Group. What excites me the most about this project is having the opportunity to maintain my connection with the WGS

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Department after graduation. I learned and grew so much during my time with WGS from both my professors and peers and I was worried about losing that connection after I graduated. The WGS Alumni Group allows me to maintain those ties and stay active and committed to the values that drove me to choose WGS as my major.

Obtaining a college degree isn't easy. I would not have been able to do so without the amazing professors I had. Thank you to Jennifer Ellerman-

Queen for introducing me to WGS. Thank you to Dr. David Rubin for sharing your extensive knowledge in a compassionate, thoughtful, and inclusive way. Thank you to Dr. Milton Wendland for guiding me, sharing your expertise, and encouraging me when I needed it the most. Thank you to Dr. Helis Sikk for teaching me essential WGS knowledge in a unique and engaging way. Thank you to Dr. Tangel Serls for reviving my love of reading through your Literature by WOC course, encouraging me during

the formation of the WGS Alumni Group, and always being patient and kind. Thank you to Sarah Jünke for all of your effort in coordinating the formation of the WGS Alumni Group.

WGS Alumni Spotlight: Daynah Singh

Daynah Singh graduated from USF with a B.A. in Mass Communications with minors in Women and Gender Studies and Creative Writing. She currently works as a Junior Copywriter at an advertising agency based in downtown Tampa, using her background in WGS to increase diversity, inclusion, and minority representation in the advertising industry. Daynah is currently the Communications and Student Outreach Coordinator for the new WGS Alumni Group.

In 2019, I graduated with my bachelor's degree in Mass Communications with a minor in Women and Gender Studies. When I first started at USF, I had no idea the Women's and Gender Studies department existed. My first introduction to WGS came from taking the course Female Experience in America as a random elective. Through this course, I realized my current major and WGS could work really well together to improve the representation and diversity issues found in the media, and that was the moment I decided I wanted to pursue WGS as my minor.



Daynah Singh

With that in mind, I found myself drawn to areas of study surrounding race, gender, and sexuality. I wanted to understand how these factors shaped our society and, in turn, learn about ways my role in the media could help uplift minority voices.

Currently, I work as a Junior Copywriter at an advertising agency based in Tampa. I use strategy and storytelling to craft advertising campaigns from broadcast video to social media and print. I have always loved to write, so when I realized that I could work in media to help break cis, white, heterosexual narratives, advertising felt like a great fit. Today,

I'm proud to serve as a member of my company's Diversity and Inclusion Council, and to work on internal and external projects that highlight people from all different backgrounds,

The most valuable thing about my WGS experience was learning about systematic problems in our society. Through classes like Black Feminisms with Dr. Serls and discussions with my classmates, I have gained an intersectional perspective that I use every day. This department and all the amazing minds behind it have truly changed the way I look at the world.

I believe that all students regardless of their major should consider taking courses from the WGS department. WGS courses can be applied across all different disciplines, from STEM majors to business or the arts. At the very least, I recommend students take an intro class to understand different perspectives and to see the world outside of their own experiences.

WGS Alumni Group Events in Fall 2021

UWAG has two events already planned for the fall semester for WGS alumni. To stay up to date on more UWAG events and projects, follow us:

Instagram: @usfwgsalumni
WGS Website: <https://bit.ly/3wRcsWt>
Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/wgsfriends/

“Visibility and Remembrance: Standing with the Trans Community,” an art exhibit curated by the University of South Florida Women’s & Gender Studies Alumni Group (UWAG). Opens in November, 2021.

This exhibit is open to artwork submissions in all media from WGS alumni and current students, as well as faculty and affiliate faculty. The exhibit will be on display in the Department

of Women’s & Gender Studies at USF, but there will also be a virtual exhibit for those who are unable to mail or deliver their artwork to WGS.

The exhibit will open in November, 2021, and the deadline for submissions is October 20, 2021. For more information, including the Call for Submissions, visit our website at <https://bit.ly/36DeAXa> after August 1, 2021.

UWAG Mixer at the St. Pete Pier. Join WGS alumni in September, 2021 for an informal mixer event at the St. Pete Pier.

We’ve chosen St. Pete Pier because it’s a great place that allows us to gather outdoors and minimize COVID-19 risks. The Pier has dining, parks, artwork, and more. To learn more about it, visit: <https://stpetepier.org/explore/>.



St. Pete Pier

The Mixer will take place in the evening on September 17, 2021, with a rain date of September 24. For more information, including times and specific meeting location, follow UWAG on Instagram or Facebook, or visit <https://bit.ly/3wRcsWt>.

WGS Alumni Survey

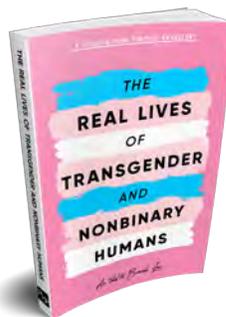
WGS is conducting a survey of its alumni and we hope that you will participate.

The information you provide helps us counsel WGS students on possible career paths. And we like hearing about where life takes you after you graduate from WGS!

To complete the survey, visit: <https://bit.ly/3yZ52BD>.

If you’d like to be profiled on the WGS website or in a future WGS newsletter, make sure to indicate that in your survey response.

Anthology by WGS Alumni Brandi Lai



WGS Alumni Brandi Lai has recently published an anthology, *The Real Lives of Transgender and Nonbinary Humans*. For more information, visit: <https://bit.ly/3i8hBFi>.

WGS Diversity Group

Beginning in the fall semester, WGS created a department Diversity Group and also began an Anti-Racism Series that brought speakers to campus, virtually, to have discussions around anti-racism.

The WGS Diversity Group organically developed after the WGS diversity liaisons took up the charge issued by the College of Arts and Sciences' diversity committee to establish formal trainings and informal activities related to antiracism, diversity, and inclusion.

They were also inspired by the USF Black Employee Steering Committee's (USF BESC) call to work towards a more inclusive and anti-racist USF. For the past year, the USF BESC has been providing the Enlightenment Workshop Series, which "presents courageous conversations designed to foster a culture of inclusive excellence" at USF.

To that end, our WGS Anti-Racism Series is meant to serve as an additional resource to the further the diversity,

equity, and inclusion efforts being done at the University. WGS's commitment to diversity work -- including the Anti-Racism Series will continue in the fall of 2021.

The WGS Diversity Group includes Dr. Kim Golombisky, Sarah Jünke, Dr. Tangela Serls (WGS diversity liaison), Dr. Helis Sikk (WGS diversity liaison), Sabeedah Ravat (graduate student member), and Tracy Meshey (spring 2021 diversity intern).

WGS Anti-Racism Series

The WGS Anti-Racism Series kicked off in October, 2020 with a screening and discussion of the film, *Suppressed 2020: The Fight to Vote*. The film, which is available to watch free online, details voter suppression efforts in Georgia in 2018 that disproportionately affected Black Americans.

In October, the Series brought **Keith Woods**, the Chief Diversity Officer at NPR, for a workshop, "Difficult Dialogues about Race." Woods worked with event attendees to grow in their anti-racism work and practice.

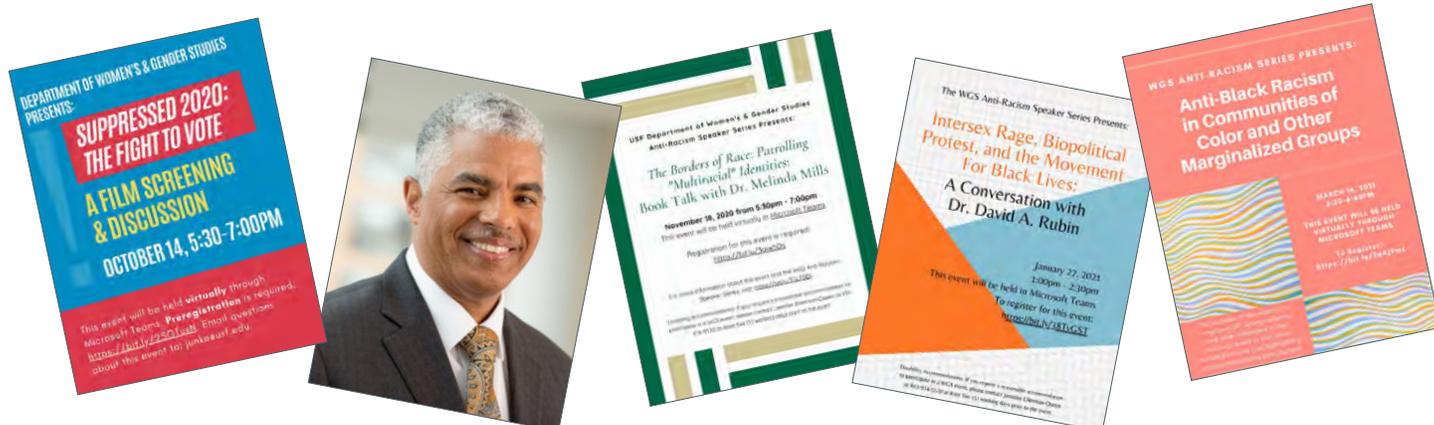
In November, WGS's own visiting instructor, **Dr. Melinda Mills**, hosted a talk on her book, *The Borders of Race: Patrolling "Multiracial" Identities*, and discussed her research into multiracial identities and how people manage these identities publicly and privately.

Dr. David Rubin spoke in January about "Intersex Rage, Biopolitical Protest, and the Movement for Black Lives," discussing how the Movement for Black Lives can help us to rethink and re-evaluate the interconnections between scientific and medical racism and state-sanctioned medical violence

against intersex, trans, and gender nonconforming people.

In March, WGS graduate students hosted a panel on "**Anti-Black Racism in Communities of Color and Other Marginalized Groups.**" The panelists discussed key themes in anti-black discourse, including ongoing social justice work combatting anti-black racism in communities of color.

The WGS Anti-Racism Series will be back in the fall 2021 semester. To stay informed about Series events, visit: <https://bit.ly/3vohEB8>.



WGS Undergraduate Student Spotlight: Emily Hernandez

Emily is minoring in Women's and Gender Studies and majoring in Integrated Public Relations and Advertising, and will graduate in the spring of 2022. A few women that inspire Emily are Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, and Dr. Tangela Serls.

I wanted to pursue WGS before I knew it was a minor/major offered at USF. During my first year, I took the intro class and I remember being so captivated by the readings that by the end of the semester, I knew that one class was not enough so I googled "Women and Gender Studies minor USF" and here I am today.

I'm originally from Trinidad and Tobago where the closest thing to Women's and Gender Studies is general social studies and the words 'feminisms' or 'queer' simply don't exist within those pedagogies and I hoped that these classes would cover these topics extensively. After two classes my expectations were exceeded as I was learning about the global LGBTQ+ experience, disabilities, feminist theories, and much more.

I soon realized that I had this great



Emily Hernandez

privilege to be able to pursue this field to only enhance my knowledge not just for my personal gain but so that I can pass knowledge down to those who didn't experience my privilege.

My future career plans change almost every week but more recently I decided to pursue a master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies and possibly a PhD in Social Justice Communications. I would love to teach at the intersection of these two fields at a tertiary level in the future as well as practice social justice communications.

WGS has definitely helped me with writing but it has also expanded my understanding of just how important intersectionality is in every

aspect of the world especially when communicating the oppressions of different communities in order to obtain due justice.

It is so difficult to choose a favorite WGS course, they have all been my favorite. I will say that Black Feminisms has been an amazing experience. Not only am I interacting with material authored and created by phenomenal Black women and non-binary folks but I am interacting with a class of the most accepting and affirming people I have ever met. Dr. Serls leads the class in such a way that I am always comfortable to be myself and share openly.

I would recommend this degree every time. I would say that if you have the opportunity to take just one class, take it because there is nothing to lose and everything to gain by stepping outside your comfort zone to learn about and understand the stories of the oppressed and apply this knowledge to your own life. For those like me who are a part of multiple minorities, this degree has been a safe space for me to express myself and meet other like-minded people.

Fall 2021 Art Exhibit: *The Founding Mothers: Women in Herstory*

This exhibit, which was curated for WGS by St. Pete's Museum of Motherhood, had the ill-fortune of opening in the spring of 2020, right as the COVID pandemic started. Because of this, we have extended its stay and it will be viewable in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies (CMC 202) until the end of October, 2021.

The exhibit will be accessible during our posted office hours or by appointment.

To view the exhibit online, visit: <https://mommuseum.org/usf-exhibit/>.

WGS Undergraduate Student Spotlight:

Jesus Gogo

Jesus is a Women's and Gender Studies major who just graduated in spring of 2021.

Jesus found WGS to be a good fit for his career plans of educating children: I changed my major to Women & Gender Studies because while I was majoring in Elementary Education, I was disappointed in how little say elementary teachers have in their lesson planning, what they teach, and how they teach.

My main goal in becoming an elementary teacher was to include an inclusive education where I introduced students to different identities (gay, lesbian, bi, trans, non-binary, etc.) and different family dynamics (single parent home, 2 father home, 2 mother home, etc.). After taking Dr. Rubin's "Queer Theory" course as an elective, I immediately knew I could learn more and teach more with a Women & Gender Studies degree than I could with an Elementary Education degree.

My Capstone course with Dr. Serls was my favorite because the class was so small and it gave all of us an opportunity to really listen to one another and to express our opinions in a smaller community. This was the first course during COVID-19 that I felt really helped me feel some type of normalcy.

Also, shoutout to Careers and Professionalism in WGS with Dr. Wendland! I learned so much about



Jesus Gogo

how to navigate the workforce as a queer person and learned so much about myself.

When asked if he recommends WGS as a major, Jesus responded, "Absolutely!" My degree in WGS taught me to question everything, research it, and understand the whys. I am a more thoughtful, intentional, and empathetic person because of my WGS degree, my fabulous professors, and my colleagues.

WGS has helped me understand the intersectionality of varying identities and how we all differ. Class discussions with my colleagues allowed me to hear and understand first-hand experiences that you can't get from a textbook or quiz. I thought I was open-minded when I started my WGS courses, however I learned about my own implicit biases and internalized phobias that I may not have recognized if I did not switch my major.

Jesus is already finding ways to integrate WGS into his career and life: At the moment, my partner and I have an online home décor boutique, California

Englished, where we specialize in collectible ceramics, tabletop pieces, and home décor accents. Within our messaging on our site and social media we aim to be inclusive to all identities with thoughtful and intentional language.

I would still love to pursue creating an inclusive education for K-5 students that introduces them to different identities, family dynamics, and possibilities that are not heteronormative. I also plan to write children's books that address these issues, but write them in a way that implicitly introduces and teaches and gives children a foundational knowledge of the world and people around them.

I took many gap years as I figured out who I am and how I wanted to contribute to society. I could not have come this far without the love and encouragement of my partner, Kyle, and the pup-love of my life, Bruce Wayne my little Frenchie. Like we discussed in my WGS courses, it takes community to make change and those two are my little community that encouraged me and help transform me into an advocate, ally, activist, and WGS college graduate.

WGS Undergraduate Student Spotlight: Edward Burun

Edward (Eddy) Burun is an Interdisciplinary Social Sciences major, concentrating in Women's and Gender Studies and Sociology with a minor in Spanish, and just graduated in spring 2021. During his time at USF, Eddy volunteered with the Campus Activities Board, interned at the Florida House of Representatives, and held the office of secretary for the Triota academic honor society.



Edward Burun

WGS aligns with Eddy's interests and career goals: I decided to concentrate in WGS because I was interested in the struggle of marginalized people. My academic advisor suggested the concentration to me, and I felt that it was a great fit for me. The main appeal of WGS was that it was interesting and aligned with my passions. As a gay, Hispanic man, I have certainly experienced oppression, and I wanted to learn more about how others have been oppressed and what can be done to dismantle this oppression.

I plan on moving to Southern California to pursue a career in the nonprofit sector. After a year of

working, I will attend graduate school to study public policy. I hope to one day hold an executive position within a nonprofit organization.

By understanding how gender, race, sexual orientation, ability, and much more affect the lives of all kinds of people, I feel that I will be better prepared to attend to the needs of disadvantaged communities. With the instruction that WGS has provided me, I will be able to appropriately assist others in many different situations, whether it be food insecurity, racial injustice, or any other kind of hardship.

Eddy sees WGS as valuable to students

regardless of their major: I highly recommend a degree in WGS. I believe the material that is covered in WGS courses is extremely valuable. At the very least, I suggest taking one WGS course while in college. What is learned in these courses is applicable to all aspects of life; it allows for people to learn about the experiences of others, providing a more informed perspective of life.

It is so difficult to pick a favorite WGS course! If I had to choose, I would pick Literature by Women of Color, taught by the amazing Dr. Serls. This class opened my eyes to the very specific and nuanced experiences of women of color and taught me a lot about intersectionality at work. I highly recommend!

I am beyond honored to have had the opportunity to be included in this newsletter. I would like to thank my family and friends for their support during my time here at USF. I would also like to thank the amazing faculty at USF, particularly from the WGS department. Thank you all so much!

Chart Your Path: WGS Faculty Guidance Sessions



WGS faculty presented two sessions in fall of 2020 designed to help WGS students navigate their way through the Women's and Gender Studies major and/or the Women's and Gender Studies and Queer and Sexuality Studies minors. Discussion topics included how to tailor a degree to career and academic plans, and how to find courses that tie in well with student interests.

WGS Graduate Student Spotlight: Sabeedah Ravat

Sabeedah graduated from USF with a BA in Biology and a minor in Women's and Gender Studies, and is now completing their MA in Women's and Gender Studies and will graduate in May, 2022. After graduation, Sabeedah plans to pursue doctoral studies to become a professor and writer. They are an immigrant from South Africa, a first-generation college student, and an avid sports fan.



Sabeedah Ravat

I got my undergraduate degree in Biology with plans to attend medical school. I decided to do a minor in WGS just out of personal interest in the field. From the moment I took my first class, I fell in love with the field and the potential I could have in it. When it came time to apply to graduate schools, I decided to follow my passions and take a leap of faith.

I have a lot of research interests but my two primary focuses are Queer Muslim experiences and politics, as well as the way race, gender, and sexuality are negotiated in sport.

My two favorite WGS classes were Queer Theory with Dr. Rubin and Sexuality Studies with Dr. Wendland in my undergraduate studies for different

reasons. Queer Theory was possibly the most challenging class I did during my Bachelors, pushing me to think in ways I had never considered, and allowed me to write a paper that was eventually published. Sexuality Studies was just incredibly fun and poignant to how I developed my voice in WGS.

I absolutely recommend WGS to others. It is a vast and exciting field that had something for everyone. It also provides knowledge that impacts how we move through the world, advocating for ourselves and others.

I cannot fully express what the WGS department at USF has done for me. From being taught by incredibly faculty to being supported in my graduate school application process and my research, I can't imagine earning my degree anywhere else.

WGS Alumni Panel: Navigating a Real-World Career with a WGS Worldview

On March 26, 2021, WGS hosted its an alumni panel that was co-sponsored by the USF Women's & Gender Studies Alumni Group (UWAG).

Attendees were able to get the scoop from WGS alumni about how they leveraged their diplomas into jobs they love, and how they are able to use what they learned in WGS to affect change where they work. The following alumni shared their experiences and wisdom:

Brandi Lai
(BA WGS, 2018)
Founder & President
Best Laid Pens, Orlando, FL

Yordanos Molla
(BA WGS & International Studies,
2018; MA Ethics, Peace, & Human
Rights, American University, 2020)
Deputy Field Director
Equality Florida, St. Petersburg, FL

Desiree Mora
(BA WGS & BS Computer Science,
2020)
Software Engineer
J.P. Morgan & Chase, Plano, TX

Katie Shrum
(BA WGS, 2017; M.Ed. Educational
Technology, 2019)
Instructional Designer, Diversity &
Inclusion Initiative Lead
Bloomin' Brands International, Tampa,
FL

WGS Affiliate Faculty Spotlight:

Dr. Diana Leon-Boys

I am an assistant professor in the Department of Communication, and affiliate faculty in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies and the Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Trained as an interdisciplinary critical ethnic and gender/sexuality studies media scholar, for over a decade my research has explored the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, age, and class in mainstream media such as film, television, advertising, and social media.



Dr. Diana Leon-Boys

My research integrates interdisciplinary methods including critical and textual analysis, digital culture studies,

ethnography, and industry and historical analysis. I pursue generation as a vector of difference, focusing on Girls' Studies, against the backdrop of neoliberalism and post-feminism.

Currently, I am working on my book manuscript (under contract with Rutgers University Press), which explores the production and reception of multiple iterations of Disney's Elena of Avalor. Since starting my position at the University of South Florida in August of 2020, I've been excited to work with, and be a part of, WGS.

WGS Brown Bag Series

The WGS Brown Bag Series presented three exciting talks in the spring 2021 semester.

Dr. Keith Berry, "Things I Must Still Do": The United States of America legalized marriage equality in June 2015, a decision that transformed the lives of queer people and our allies for the better. The right that we should have been able to benefit from all along was suddenly a reality. Yet, while the change was groundbreaking, LGBTQ+ continue to face hardship and struggle, in general, and the violence of discrimination and bigotry, in particular.

"Post-marriage" life is not necessarily a honeymoon. In this talk, Dr. Berry conveyed and explored the "things I

must still do" as a gay man. In homage to Susan Sontag's "Notes on Camp," the presentation was comprised of a list of descriptive notes that reveal and unpack these necessary ways of performing.

Dr. Diana Leon-Boys, "A Party for All: Analyzing the New Mediated Quinceañera, Gendered Nostalgia, and the (In)Visibility of Latinidad": Most recently Dr. Leon-Boys's research has focused on the production, representation, and consumption of Latina girls in a post-network digital era against the backdrop of contemporary post-feminist and neoliberal frameworks.

Alisha Romano, "A Discussion on Black Feminist Pedagogies": This WGS grad student-led discussion

centered on how Black feminist pedagogy can be implemented in the classroom. The discussion was guided by readings that covered introducing healing circles for students' well being and how to help students come to voice. The readings were Dr. Tangelia Serls' "Black girl magic: Beauty, brilliance, and coming to voice in the classroom," from *Teaching Brilliant and Beautiful Black Girls*, and Jennifer L. Richardson's "Healing circles as black feminist pedagogical interventions," from *Black Women's Liberatory Pedagogies: Resistance, Transformation, and Healing within and beyond the Academy*.

WGS Graduate Feminist Research Colloquium

The WGS Graduate Feminist Research Colloquium was held on April 19, 2021. Eighteen graduate students in WGS's Feminist Issues, Research, and Methods course presented their research on a diverse range of topics.

Panel: Critical Counter Narratives

- Sabeedah Ravat, *Queering Islam: The Transformative Promise of Queer Muslim Liberation* (Women and Gender Studies)
- Anjuliet Woodruffe, *Who Feels it, Knows it: An Autoethnography of Affective Citizenship* (Communication)
- Kristen Vogel, *An African Women's Empowerment: Listening to Ghana's Matriarchs* (Applied Anthropology)

Panel: Politics of Assessment and Development

- Amber Peretz, *Programming for Transformation: Approach and Impacts of Community-Based Education for Social Justice Youth Development* (Educational Leadership and Policy)
- Jess Griffith, *There's something missing: A look at instructor approaches to feedback* (Rhetoric and Composition)
- Travis Bell, *HoopGurlz's Biased Recruiting: Racial and Positional Stereotyping in Girls' Basketball Scouting Reports* (Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Certificate)

Panel: The Justice League

- Dairine Hoban, *Analysing the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Communication with Individuals Incarcerated in the Florida Department of Corrections Prison System* (Women and Gender Studies Graduate Certificate)
- Janae Thomas, *Stand Your Ground and the effects on women who have been the victim of sexual violence* (Politics and International Affairs)
- Amy Nourie, *Are We Really Helping Children? A Feminist Critical Analysis of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and Mandatory Reporting Laws* (Social Work)

Panel: Representation in Social Research

- Isabel Seidel, *Medical Discussion Surrounding Women's Sterilization* (Women and Gender Studies Graduate Certificate)
- Sarah Thomas, *An Exploratory Meta-Analysis of Demographics in Fad Diet Research and Recommendations* (Educational Measurement & Evaluation)
- Kelly Long, *The Intersection of Culture, Gender, and Education Leadership: Women Writing about Women* (Educational Leadership and Policy)

Panel: Media, Gender, and Bodies

- Beth Gaines, *Pink Ribbon Culture: How Cause-Related Marketing Impacts Ideas of Cancer Survivorship* (Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Certificate)
- Alisha Romano, *#MeToo in Japan and the Media's Perceptions* (Women's and Gender Studies)
- Callie Politano, *Great Power and Great Responsibility: Nurturant Ethic in Patty Jenkins' Wonder Woman Film Series* (Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Certificate)

Panel: Queer Encounters

- Rachel K. Henesy, *Counseling and LGBTQ+ Clients: Analyzing 50 Years of Trends in the Journal of Counseling & Development* (Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Certificate)
- Hayden J. Fulton, *The Limits of Charity in Creating Trans Care: Inequalities in GoFundMe Top Surgery Campaigns* (Sociology)
- Yulia Nekrashevich, *Performance and Persuasion: How the Carnavalesque Functions as a Rhetorical Tool for Queer Space* (Rhetoric and Composition)

WGS Talk & Toast

The annual WGS Talk & Toast event took place on April 27, 2021. The event was held virtually this year due to COVID-19.

WGS MA students Stella Escalante, Zoe Knowles, and Lauren Wright shared with us their thoughts on WGS, their research, and their futures after graduating.



Stella Escalante

Sophia “Stella” Escalante:

My work focuses on the intersection of race, sexuality, disability, and crime, and how having

intersecting identities affect treatment in a myriad of spaces, including education, healthcare, society in general, and laws and policies put in place by local, state, and federal governmental bodies.

My research portfolio, which is named “Violence Against the Humanity of Black, Brown, and Disabled Bodies,” is dedicated to the discussion of how Black and Brown disabled bodies are harmed by the society around us, which is built upon racist, sexist, ableist, and dehumanizing thought processes and actions, such as through the usage of historical sexual stereotypes of Black women in pornography and poor protections and assistance in sexual violence reporting and justice for disabled students of colour.

My plan is to officially take a break of two to three years after I graduate. After that, I aim to go for my doctorate

in human sexuality or Sexology to become a human sexuality educator whose speciality is marginalized communities such as disabled individuals, the kink community, and polyamorous circles.

Prior to attending the WGS program, I had never thought more deeply about the world around us outside a psychological context. I wasn’t into feminist thought or theory (or had limited knowledge of it), and only dealt with things on what I consider to be a surface level. With WGS, I consider things from a wide range of perspectives and formulate my own understanding based upon different scholars and my own experiences along with others like me and even those unlike me. I am incredibly grateful for the knowledge I have received from this program and it will carry with me for the rest of my life.



Zoe Knowles

Zoe Knowles:

My research interests include LGBTQ+ studies, Queer theory, transnational feminisms, Queer

criminology, and Caribbean studies. Primarily I focus my research on LGBTQ+ rights in Jamaica.

At Talk and Toast, I presented my thesis research *Perceptions of the LGBTQ+ Community Among Jamaican Students Studying in the United States*. Homophobia is endemic in Jamaican society. This research studies the attitudes of Jamaican college students who are studying at

USF toward Jamaican LGBTQ+ people, social issues, and culture.

Although there is no pretest or benchmark levels of support for Jamaican LGBTQ+ culture among Jamaican USF students prior to attending USF, I hypothesize that: (1) respondents will express more progressive attitudes toward Jamaican LGBTQ+ rights than might be anticipated given rampant Jamaican homophobia. (2) Respondents will perceive that they have become more progressive in their attitudes toward LGBTQ+ issues since attending school in the US due to exposure to more progressive social and institutional policies in the US and at USF; moreover, college students overall tend to hold more progressive politics compared to the general population.

After graduating in December, I plan to apply to Ph.D. programs in WGS, international relations, and criminology to continue my research. I also plan on presenting my thesis findings to the Jamaican government to reform the homophobic laws in the nation.



Lauren Wright

Lauren Wright:

My research interests include sex education, reproductive justice, and the relationship between those topics and

the media.

At Talk and Toast, I presented my thesis titled *Dismantling Hegemony through Inclusive Sexual Health Education*. My thesis is a case study of the research work I do with Dr. Jill McCracken,

continued on next page

where I helped to develop an inclusive sexual health education curriculum that is specifically designed to reach the unique needs of marginalized and underserved youth within our community. My primary areas of focus for inclusion were race, gender/sexuality, and religion.

I'm hoping to work in some sort of advocacy, specifically for reproductive justice or LGBTQ+ organizations. I

will also be staying on part-time with Dr. McCracken working on delivering our sex ed curriculum.

My time in WGS has opened my eyes to so many new concepts and perspectives and I can't wait to go out into the world with a new point of view. I'm hoping that the pandemic will be over soon, so I can start meeting new people and learning more from their perspectives as well. My time here

has prepared me to feel comfortable speaking up for those whose voices are silenced, as well as giving them a chance to be heard.

Welcome Incoming WGS Grad Students!

WGS is pleased to welcome all of our incoming MA students this fall. Two of them, Quinn Bachman and Juyeon Shin, shared with us their research interests and why they chose WGS at USF.



Quinn Bachman

Quinn Bachman: I graduated with my Bachelor's of Science in Psychology along with minors in Sociology and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies from Kutztown University of Pennsylvania in 2020.

My previous research has incorporated how societal and cultural differences affect romantic relationships. While at the University of South Florida, I would love to research and become more knowledgeable on gender bias and discrimination within the national sports world; in regards to the difference of funding provided for men's and women's sports, with a particular interest in soccer and

basketball. Some other research interests I plan on studying are intersectionality, gendered clothing and the cultural and historical connotations behind them, as well how to better diversify large corporations.

The main reason why I chose the WGS program at USF is because of how inclusive the program is and how helpful they were to me during my decision process. Besides being very qualified, the professors and individuals I have spoken to have been tremendously warm and welcoming, and truly made USF feel like my new home, where I would still receive the best possible education.



Juyeon Shin

Juyeon Shin: I'm from Busan, South Korea and I have a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from Pukyong

National University.

My research interests are postcolonial feminism, Latino studies, and violence

against women. I would like to study different approaches and methods to explore postcolonial feminism, understand how globalization impacts women from once-colonized nations, and challenges of transnational feminist activism by discussing studies from the Global South.

I am particularly interested in gender issues in Latin America and the Caribbean regions. It is my goal to be involved in international organization/ NGO projects related to women's empowerment or violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I chose the WGS department at USF because the program offers the most suitable courses for my research interests. Also, the faculty made me feel welcomed and showed their interest in me, which was an important factor as well. I hope to develop a more global perspective on gender issues with broader insight through the program.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A WGS DEGREE?

We asked WGS alumni what they have done...

LEADERSHIP ROLES

WGS alumni are leaders:



executive director, assistant director of stewardship, annual giving manager, project manager, director of account management, strategy manager of process engineering, IT manager, insurance claims manager, healthcare practice administrator

EDUCATION & RESEARCH

WGS alumni build knowledge and educate:



assistant professor, librarian, research manager, academic services administrator, teacher success coach, social studies department head, instructional designer, Montessori teacher, editorial coordinator

HEALTHCARE & COUNSELING

WGS alumni help people to lead healthier lives:



med student, public health researcher, mental health clinician, school counselor, clinical trauma interventionist, medical case manager, children's therapist, sex therapist, social services case manager

ANYTHING YOU WANT!

WGS alumni follow their passions:



attorney, law student, deaconess, video game writer, state park assistant manager, poet, feminist real estate agent

WGS Degrees

Undergraduate Programs:

Major or Second Major in Women's & Gender Studies: 36 hours (30 for second major). The major focuses on feminist research and practice. WGS promotes social justice through the discovery and production of knowledge that emerges from feminist perspectives on culture and society.

Minor in Women's & Gender Studies: 18 hours. This minor offers students from other majors the opportunity to learn more about feminist analysis, research, and activism.

Minor in Queer and Sexuality Studies: 18 hours. This minor trains students in the critical analysis of sexuality. It examines the rich history and cultural contributions of LGBTQIA people as well as the processes of normalization and pathologization that have structured sexual relations in different contexts.

Graduate Programs:

M.A. in Women's & Gender Studies: 36 hours. The M.A. is useful for students and professionals who are preparing for advanced degrees, nonprofit sector employment, and those interested in broadening their understanding of WGS topics. Deadline to apply for fall admission: February 15. Funding is available to students through graduate assistantships.

Graduate Certificate in Women's & Gender Studies: 12 hours. The Certificate provides an opportunity for graduate students and other professionals to gain a more inclusive knowledge of women's and gender issues in society, including feminist studies.

WGS is Different

We link knowledge, research, teaching, and activism.

We promote social justice by engaging students in the discovery and production of knowledge that emerges from feminist perspectives on culture and society.

We teach students to use the analytic skills that emerge from engaging the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, and nation in order to promote responsible citizenship in a diverse transnational environment.

We expose limits in traditional higher education caused by excluding women and other marginalized groups and create knowledge that is transformative and inclusive.

We aim for knowledge that will better all people's lives, not just the lives of a few.

We connect our work as academics with the social, political, and economic world outside the university to educate our students about social inequalities that result from sexism, heterosexism and homophobia, racism, classism, able-ism, and ethnocentrism.

We seek to empower students through a feminist critique of social, cultural, and institutional structures that enables them to think more critically about their own lives and that inspires them to work as active citizens for social change.

WGS prepares students to go on to graduate school, medical school, law school, or to enter the workforce in a wide variety of public, private, governmental, and non-profit agencies.

WGS offers a B.A., a second major, a minor in Women's Studies, a minor in Queer & Sexuality Studies, an M.A., and a graduate certificate.

For more information, visit the WGS website at: usf.edu/wgs.

WGS Symposium: Personal & Professional Perspectives on Disability

WGS hosted a symposium on April 8, 2021 focused on disability. The symposium covered a range of topics related to disabilities including how disabilities affect one's everyday life, legal concerns for those living with disabilities, as well as disabilities and their impact on education and the workplace.

The panelists, Dr. Beth Boone (USF), Deborah McCarthy (USF), Sashy O'Connor (Grow Group), Bonnie Greenball Silvestri (USF), and Stella Escalante (USF), offered a diverse range of perspectives based in their personal and professional experiences -- a USF graduate student and a USF Student Affairs professional -- both of whom identify as having a disability, the Director for the CARD center (Center for Autism and Related Disabilities), a USF professor who specializes in ADA law and accommodations, and the Co-Director for the Grow Group -- a non-profit organization that specializes in helping people with disabilities find meaningful careers.

Giving to WGS

Do you love the work WGS does and want to support the Department and its students? You can give to WGS to support our operating fund, which pays for event expenses, and you can give to our scholarship fund that benefits WGS students.

To give to WGS, visit usf.to/wgs. To give to our scholarship fund specifically, search for Women's Studies and select one of the scholarship funds.



WGS Faculty, 2020-2021

Dr. Diane Price Herndl
Professor and Chair

Dr. Elizabeth Bell
Professor

Jennifer Ellerman-Queen
Instructor and Graduate Program Coordinator

Dr. Kim Golombisky
Associate Professor

Dr. Jill McCracken
Professor

Dr. Michelle Hughes Miller
Professor and Director of Graduate Studies

Dr. Melinda Mills
Visiting Instructor

Dr. David A. Rubin
Associate Professor

Dr. Tangela Serls
Instructor and Director of Undergraduate Studies

Dr. Helis Sikk
Visiting Assistant Professor

Dr. Milton Wendland
Instructor and Internship Director

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