



The Maine Women's and Gender Studies Consortium conference, organized and hosted by Women Invigorating Curriculum (WIC) and University of Maine at Augusta WGS faculty:

Naming & Serving: "WGS" in the Curriculum and the Community

Women's Studies in Maine is in transition as names shift, demands increase, and funds dwindle. As we imagine new curricular directions, connections between service to students and service to our communities are more important than ever. "Naming & Serving" offers an opportunity for students, faculty, staff, and community members to reflect on the state of WGS in Maine today, and to share the important scholarly and activist work that connects us to progressive education in our state, nation, and world.

WGS is ...

As a part of a campaign (on the UMA campuses and through social media) to raise awareness about what "WGS" is, we'd like to invite conference participants to pose for a picture that expresses what WGS is to you. You'll complete the sentence "WGS Is... [fill in the blank]" Pose for your picture (individually or in small groups during check in or any time during the day.

Naming & Serving: "WGS" in the Curriculum and the Community

Schedule

Date: March 8th, Saturday, 9:00 – 5:00--International Women's Day

9:00- 9:30 Check-in	Coffee/Check-in, "WGS Is..." Klahr Center	
9:30- 11:00 Presentations	Flash Presentations, Klahr Center classroom	
11:00- 12:00 Meetings	Consortium Meeting, Randall 248	Student and Community Meeting, Randall 250
12:00- 1:00 Lunch	Lunch @ the Fireplace Lounge	Reports from meetings and informal discussion
1:15- 2:15 Session1	Using Technology in and out of the WGS Classroom, Randall 248	Humanities Approaches to Experiential Learning in Women's and Gender Studies, Randall 250
2:30- 3:30 Session 2	Reproductive Justice Work on College Campuses, Randall 248	Roundtable Discussion Regarding Dylan Farrow's Open Letter, Randall 250
3:45- 4:45 Session3	Creating the Trans-literate and Trans-inclusive Women and Gender Studies Classroom, Randall 248	Feminism, Service, and Scholarship: Measuring Expectations, Randall 250

9:30-11:00 FLASH PRESENTATIONS

Participants will share their research in a 5-minute "flash." After presentations, we will open up discussion to the whole group or take the option to break out into small discussion groups. Presenters include:

Grace Glasson, Bates

Many teen films of the 1980s and 90s might be all petty high school drama and “overly dramatic” teen angst on the surface, but there is plenty of sex, drugs, death, and family and mental health issues lurking in the not-so-distant background. This thesis makes the latter more transparent and creates the horrific teenage flick film genre, centered on teen films from this era (specifically *River’s Edge*, *Heathers*, and *Pump Up the Volume*), while also arguing for the existence of an intersectional incarnation of horrific teenage film characters and celebrities. Drawing on innovative horror films of the 1970s in conjunction with feminist film theory and analysis of interviews, fan magazines, and film trailers, this project constructs a gendered, classed, and raced genre as well as existence of the horrific teenager.

Sarah Cunningham, UMaine

Noisy Attention: The Embodied Experience of the Teenage Girl and the Subversive Power of Being In-Between

While the teenage girl’s body might be a site of monstrosity, grotesqueness, and possession, it *is also*, and through society’s branding *becomes*, a site of intervention. I use the verbs “is” and “becomes” as two separate actions intentionally. While teenage girls *are* “fashion fanatics, shopaholics, sex crazed, shit-talkers, bulimics, classless gum crackers, & Plath addicts,” they simultaneously *become* overwhelmed by the influences of their “parents, the government, Urban Outfitters and Teen Vogue,” sources which brand them daily. Thus the teenage girl further becomes what is expected of her; her monstrosity is both a side-effect of society’s branding (a kind of disease) as well as a method of coping with such. The possession that engulfs these bodies—the thing which causes teenage girls to be labeled as annoying, disgusting, frightening...all nuanced versions of attention-seeking—also becomes a source of power. The teenage girl subverts the influences surrounding her by over-embracing such societal possession and, in her monstrosity, becoming “culturally uncontrollable in [her] unnatural movements, defying laws of god, state & the natural order.” My goal in this paper is to explore Kate Durbin’s essay, “A Teenage Girl Speaks as a Melodramatic, Hysterical Demon” (as quoted above), in an attempt to pinpoint this “subversive power.” I examine Durbin’s notions of the “cultural body” that female celebrities become, and relate this to the marginalized, larger-than-life body of the teenage girl. In recognizing the subversive power which these young girls may harness, we might see them as providing a lens for recognizing current American culture and a certain popular demand for people to be understood through constructed sets of binary oppositions; that is, in rejecting standard notions of “cultural intelligibility” (a concept I’m borrowing from Butler), teenage girls highlight what it means to be culturally intelligible in 21st century America. In addition to exploring the way the teenage girl upsets certain binaries, I will also attempt to complicate the clear distinctions between “academic” and “non-academic” writing, and between peer-reviewed, scholarly journals and online blogs and zines—arguing that this is another kind of “in-between-ness” that might lead to more possibilities in knowledge formation. I will go on to consider Durbin’s claim that perhaps all feminist writing is “some form of noisy attention.” Finally, I’ll end the paper by turning

these lenses toward Durbin's own creative writing and doing a brief close reading of poems from her chapbook, *Fragments Found in a 1937 Aviator's Boot*.

Heather Monty, Bates

Understanding the Gendered Construction of Birth among the Amish in Lancaster, PA

This thesis explores Amish cultural constructions of childbirth. This project asks the following question: How is knowledge about childbirth from one generation to the next transmitted and how does this process construct gender expectations during pregnancy and birth? Feminist anthropology and the theory of authoritative knowledge guide this analysis.

Emma Perkinson, Bates

This thesis studies the dissemination of eugenic ideas to women beyond the formal structures of eugenic feminism by analyzing the presentation of eugenic topics in popular women's journals and magazines, two major newspapers, and at state fairs. Using these three mediums to gauge popular culture in the early twentieth century, this thesis demonstrates how white middle-class homemakers negotiated, consumed, and engaged with eugenic ideas. Through this study we can understand the movement's powerful appeal to this generation of women to be the mothers and moral keepers of the "American race."

Sarah Streat, Bates

Though some tenets of feminist theory argue that silence is an apparatus of oppression, this project suggests that in Virginia Woolf's fiction rejecting language may be a means of subverting discursive regimes and reductive ontological categories. To navigate this paradox—that political recognition is contingent on language, a primary instrument of exclusion—language must be reworked constantly, what it signifies kept eternally ambiguous. This thesis argues that Woolf does this by using "silence" as a narrative tactic, establishing a lexicon in moments when words fail or speech is refused, in secret code, and in textual ruptures, such as ellipses and blanks. With silence, Woolf crafts poetic complexity and queer sensibility, grappling with notions of gender and sexual identity and proposing an understanding of the self unrestricted by linguistic taxonomies

Gabriel Demaine, Revolutionary

Co-curricular Programming: Opportunities for activism

This presentation focuses on the importance of linking co-curricular programming with the Women and Gender Studies curriculum. I will be referencing my 6 years of experience as the University of Southern Maine's Coordinator of Diversity and Inclusivity Programming to address how to develop and produce co-curricular programming that augments the curriculum as well as encourages a sense of community and opportunities for activism.

Sarah Lockridge, USM

Skin Lightening and Strategies For Change Among Low Status Women of Mali: Contradictory Conceptions of Power and Empowerment

I explore the contradictions between the development discourse (mainstream meanings of power and empowerment held by NGOs in Ségou, Mali), as compared to local meanings of power and empowerment that participants in women's arts and crafts organizations hold. NGOs focus on eradicating

the practice of skin lightening by highlighting issues of bodily health and self-acceptance; whereas, Malian women perceive bleaching as a tangible way to gain social status. NGOs endorse democratic ways of organizing as the most effective way to assure equal access to resources in women's associations; whereas, Malian women choose to organize undemocratically. Mali is a gerontocratic society where senior women have greater power than younger females. Hence, the predominant social hierarchy that influences women's groups is the age order. This mother-daughter model negatively influences NGO consciousness-raising (CR) tactics to eradicate skin lightening. Younger members, with little or no access to income, feel compelled to sell bleaching products for money and wear them to advertise. NGO efforts would be strengthened by paying greater attention to power differences structured by age because age is an important determinant of women's roles in decision-making and access to economic resources in all-female associations of Mali. Overlooking culturally specific meanings of power and empowerment weakens development efforts.

Val Marsh, UMA

The work of Maine's Suffragists from 1900-1919.

While many stories are well known of suffragists who worked at the national level, Maine had its own group of strong, determined women who worked tirelessly. This remarkable group of women toiled for 19 years for the right to vote. Their numbers were many. Their organizational skills were astonishing. The hardships they faced were substantial. Their political and advocacy skills grew in sophistication and acceptance among Maine's political and media establishments, comprised solely of men, over the course of the years.

Most of the state's efforts pushing for the right to vote operated independent of the efforts at the national level. However, as federal legislation finally gained momentum, Maine was targeted for a major campaign by national groups of anti-suffragists. It was viewed as a place where the state legislature could be swayed to block ratification. How state and federal ratification came about simultaneously in Maine is a must-tell story, and should be a source of pride for all Mainers.

The story of Maine's suffragists is important to understand. Women in Maine, and across the nation, worked for decades to force open the iron fist that withheld their right to participate in our democratic system of governance. Over the last century, women have not only voted, but they have run for elected office and have learned well how to stand tall in the halls of power.

The League of Women Voters of Maine (LWCME) was born out of the hard work on the state's suffragists. Today, LWVME is a respected voice at the Maine State House. One hundred years later, the League continues to fight for voting rights, clean elections, open and fair government, and more.

These are interesting times. Far too many citizens now sit on the sidelines and watch politics stray further and further from equality and justice for all. A look back at the remarkable women who forged a way out of no way is instructive, exciting, and reinvigorating. The story of Maine's suffragists could become a means of renewing and cultivating new interest in civic responsibility and unified action for all would-be activists who aspire to work for a more just society.

11:00-12:00 MEETINGS

During this hour, we will break into two separate groups and when we come back as a whole group for lunch, we will report out what was discussed at these meetings. Consortium members will have their spring business meeting while students and guests will meet to talk informally about whatever is on their minds. WIC student intern, Jessica Bishop will help to facilitate this discussion and will take notes to report back to the group at lunch.

12:00-1:00 LUNCH

Catered by the UMA campus food service. Lunch is free and will include reporting back from our meetings as well as the opportunity to talk informally with each other. Please RSVP for lunch and dietary restrictions.

AFTERNOON PANELS and ROUNDTABLES

Our afternoon sessions give us an opportunity for more conversation around issues important to WGS in Maine. In each timeslot there are two choices that will run concurrently.

1:15-2:15 SESSION 1

Humanities Approaches to Experiential Learning in Women's and Gender Studies Randall 250

Chair: Jennifer S. Tuttle, University of New England (UNE)

Panelists:

Robert F. Alegre, WGST Program Director and Assistant Professor of History, UNE

Shannon Cardinal, History/English/Education majors ('16), UNE

Brett Peterson, Psychology/Sociology Majors ('13), Conference Coordinator, UNE

Jennifer S. Tuttle, Professor of English and Dorothy M. Healy Chair in Literature and Health, UNE

Description:

This panel will feature a roundtable discussion about humanities-related WGST internship experiences pursued by students at the University of New England. UNE students pursuing the minor in Women's and Gender Studies, as well as UNE students more generally, have many opportunities for experiential learning outside the classroom; not surprisingly, given UNE's association with the health sciences, recent examples focus on issues of women's health, with students interning at Sexual Assault Services of Southern Maine and working to improve women's health services in Sekondi, Ghana. Less familiar are the opportunities for students to learn and apply practical skills via the humanities.

On this roundtable, we explore two such examples. Robert Alegre, the current Director of the Women's and Gender Studies at UNE, will begin by discussing how hands-on experiences, such as internships and service-learning projects, enhance WGST students' academic experience while benefitting the community outside of campus as well. Alegre will proceed to introduce recent UNE alumnus Brett Peterson, who will

discuss his experiences working for AddVerb Productions, a nonprofit organization that uses performance to address a wide range of social issues, from domestic violence to LGBT youth culture. For Coming Out Week, Peterson produced a reading from AddVerb's *Out & Allied* anthology, a collection of writing by LGBT and allied youth and young adults. Introducing our second example, Jennifer Tuttle, Editor-in-Chief of *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, will then discuss the aims of the journal as a venue for feminist literary history and for the recovery of women's lives and texts from unmerited obscurity; the work of student interns has long been a crucial part of the journal's educational work. Shannon Cardinal, currently an intern at *Legacy*, will reflect upon her own experiences in learning and shaping this academic field through her service to the journal. Together these two internship examples illuminate the important contributions the humanities make to serving both our students and our communities.

Using Technology in and out of the WGS Classroom Randall 248

A panel and discussion with:

Eileen Eagan (USM) is working on a project, part of a larger grant backed Digitizing Maine project, to digitize the Portland Women's History trail. She'll talk about that and the larger project's possibilities for wgs scholarship and teaching.

Mary Okin is an adjunct at U Maine Orono who has been teaching Intro to WGS online for 6 years. She'll discuss her experience teaching Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Masculinities and Gender and the History of Psychiatry through the online format.

Sarah Hentges (UMA) and her student intern, Jessica Bishop, will discuss their experiment in using social media (Facebook and Twitter) in the WGS 101 classroom this spring. After Sarah introduces the bigger picture--teaching a face-to-face WGS 101 class and an online section and how she approaches this dual class--Jessica will talk about some theory of social media as well as the ways in which this forum can engage and connect students in exciting and enriching ways.

2:30-3:30 SESSION 2

Roundtable Discussion: Dylan Farrow's open letter and how we might envision the possibilities for productive, respectful responses. Randall 250

Participants: Sarah Cunningham (University of Maine, Graduate TA); Tessa Pyles (University of Maine, Graduate TA); Emily Rasely (University of Maine, Wicks Fellow & Graduate TA).

We are a group of women moved in various complicated ways in response to Dylan Farrow's recent open letter to Woody Allen and the plethora of reactions and accusations which followed suit.

We don't want this to be a discussion where we simply list the reasons why we should believe that Dylan is right.

We don't necessarily want to use words like "evidence" or "proof." There are new articles getting published online daily, some of them arguing on behalf of Dylan's credibility. We are grateful that there are people who are making such cases, but we believe that "credibility" is beside the point.

When a woman speaks up about experiences of sexual abuse, we feel that the discussion of such an experience is enough—that to speak of such experiences is a kind of trauma in itself which does not call for verification or validation but support, sympathy, and discussion. How might we—as readers, students, scholars, female-identified supporters, feminists, daughters of survivors, friends of survivors, human beings alive and existing within a time of "rape culture"—how might we productively react and respond to experiences like Farrow's? How do we cope and help others to cope with the plethora of reactions which stampede the internet immediately following such "scandals"? How might we react and respond in ways that don't perpetuate trauma, that might provide support for survivors like Farrow? How can we have these difficult and crucial discussions without triggering further pain for survivors of sexual abuse? Are there ways we might counteract some of the negative responses and accusations against Farrow, reactions which inevitably follow any claim made against a man in a position of power? And especially, as graduate students working at an institution, engaging variously with feminist ideas and concepts, and with classrooms and students of our own, how might we practically and productively respond in solidarity with Farrow and other survivors? How do we cope with the fact that we sometimes read, study, and/or teach literature or art composed by abusers? We have more questions than answers, but we believe that asking such questions in a safe, inclusive and productive space is necessary if we hope to encourage and show support for the bravery which Farrow has shown in her act of speaking up. We want to reinforce that bravery. When coping with sexual abuse, how can we extend our voices, our writing, our work, and our activism in meaningful ways? We feel responsibility as women, as feminists, as teachers, as students. We feel hurt and we feel sympathetic and we also feel empathetic, and we want to consider positive, productive ways of channeling our voices and our feelings and our ideas toward something better. This discussion will start with our own thoughts and questions, the reading of a few excerpts from Farrow's letter and some of the responses to it, and then open up to a bigger discussion including attendees and audience members.

Reproductive Justice Work on College Campuses Randall 248

Across the nation, we are witnessing women being stripped of their reproductive agency as reproductive rights are being eroded state by state. As these legislative attacks have grown, so too has the level of grassroots activism around reproductive justice. As this "war against women" has picked up momentum, we have seen new activists and new types of activism arising. . Young activists, in particular, have become galvanized to protect and defend their right to determine their reproductive choices. Crucial spaces for this activism are college campuses. This roundtable will address the positive potential of student activism and faculty/staff engagement. Presenters will outline local and national student-focused reproductive justice movements. Presenters will also discuss strategies for integrating discussions of reproductive rights into the classroom.

Participants:

Samaa Abdurraqib – Reproductive Freedom Organizer, ACLU of Maine
Sharon Barker – Director, Women's Resource Center

Ashley Burns – Graduate Assistant, Women’s Resource Center
Mary Calloway – Former University of Maine student
Shannon Brenner – Student, Student Women’s Association (U of Maine)

3:45-4:45 SESSION 3

"Creating the Trans-literate and Trans-inclusive Women and Gender Studies Classroom"

Randall 248

A panel discussion with:

Wendy Chapkis (Professor of Women & Gender Studies and Sociology at the University of Southern Maine)

Erica Rand (Professor of Women & Gender Studies and Art & Visual Culture at Bates College)

Jules Purnell (Women and Gender Studies major at the University of Southern Maine)

This panel looks at concepts as "cisgender," "transgender," "trans," "trans*," and "genderqueer" and at fostering inclusive learning environments. Topics to be discussed include: How can we assure that people's preferred names and pronouns are used in our classrooms? What common habits of assigning gender to people, bodies, and activities might we want to think twice about? What resources by and about trans* people are particularly useful in the WGS classroom? This session is intended for faculty and students, for cisgender and trans" people, and for people new to these issues and long concerned with these terms and issues.

Feminism, Service, and Scholarship: Measuring Expectations Randall 250

This roundtable, sponsored by the USM WGS Equity and Diversity Committee, is intended to open up discussions about individual and institutional expectations surrounding service and scholarship, especially as those pertain to tenure and promotion.

Chair: Lucinda Cole, Director of Women and Gender Studies, USM and panel members: Rebecca Lockridge, Lorraine Carroll, and Lisa Walker.