

Fall 2022 NEWSLETTER

Greetings from the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies!

Allow me to begin by introducing myself. My name is Liz Montegary, and I'm the new chair of WGSS. My first semester at Stony Brook was exactly 10 years ago. At the time, I was pretty sure I had landed my dream position: a queer studies professor at a public university. But I didn't realize just how lucky I was until I started meeting the amazing students, alumni, faculty, and staff who have made – and continue to make – WGSS one of the most vibrant places on our campus. I really do have the best job! It has been an honor to work with such brilliant feminist thinkers, and I couldn't be more thrilled about serving the WGSS community as Department chair.



Last spring was an exciting time for WGSS. We entered the third year of the pandemic committed to finding safe and accessible ways to connect with one another through hybrid formats. Margarita Espada, artist, social justice organizer, and WGSS adjunct faculty member, received an award from the National Endowment for the Arts to bring US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo to Stony Brook Southampton and then livestream the event. A link to view the event follows within this newsletter.

The WGSS community also came together for two fabulous dissertation defenses where we honored our newest PhD graduates. We closed out the year with our first in-person commencement since COVID and were delighted to welcome WGSS alum Raven Dorsey '16 back to campus to give the keynote address and to celebrate our graduating majors and minors with their friends and families.

Unfortunately, just a few weeks later, the WGSS community confronted devastating news. The US Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. By reversing the last 50 years of legal precedent, this decision compromises the reproductive freedoms of all people. Moreover, it disproportionately impacts racially and economically marginalized communities and other vulnerable populations already facing enormous barriers to accessing health care. We may not have been surprised by the decision, but we are most certainly angry and alarmed.

And, yet, the WGSS Department remains hopeful. We are proud to provide a space on campus where students work together to learn the history of reproductive injustices, develop analyses of contemporary reproductive politics, and devise strategies for creating social change. We also know that many WGSS alumni and students are playing crucial roles in the struggle for reproductive justice across the United States and beyond. We stand with you, and we thank you!

Take good care of yourselves and each other. And, if you can find a moment, please drop us a line and let us know what you've been up to.

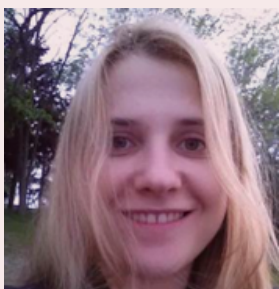
Liz Montegary
Associate Professor and Chair

Recent News & Updates

Congratulations to Dr. Valerie Moyer and Dr. Alexandra Novitskaya! Val and Alex successfully defended their dissertations and accepted exciting postdoctoral positions.



Val's dissertation, [Muscles, Testosterone, and Other "Threats" to Women's Sport](#), was defended on Friday, May 6, 2022. Valerie Moyer received a Presidential Postdoctoral Extension Award and will serve as a Postdoc Associate here at Stony Brook from June to December 2022.



Alex's dissertation, [New queer dissidents: Politics and geopolitics of post-Soviet LGBTQ migration and asylum](#), was defended on Thursday, May 12, 2022. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Robert F. Byrnes Russian and East European Institute at Indiana University, Bloomington.

Commencement Highlights

We honored 48 students at our undergraduate graduation ceremony held on May 20, 2022. Among the 48 candidates, we had 20 majors and 28 minors; five students graduated with honors: three summa cum laude, one magna cum laude, and one cum laude.

Our keynote speaker was undergraduate alum and previous Terry Alexander Award winner, Raven Dorsey. Raven is a doula and social worker who completed her bachelor's degree in Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies with a concentration in gender, sexuality, and public health from Stony Brook in 2016. She then went on to earn her Master's of Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania in May 2018.

[Watch Raven's graduation speech.](#)



Raven Dorsey and Courtney Alexander

2022 Undergraduate Graduation Awards

- Activism & Academic Excellence: Cassandra Skolnick and Sophia Garbarino
- [Terry Alexander Award](#): Zarya Shaikh
- [Vivien Hartog Memorial Graduate Student Award, Excellence in Teaching](#): Ashley Barry
- Academic Excellence: Hayden Cuttone and Sabriya Saif



MaryJo Bona and Cassandra Skolnick



Sophia Garbarino and Nancy Hiemstra

Awards and Acknowledgements

- [WGSS Associate Professor, Nancy Hiemstra was awarded the College of Arts and Sciences Godfrey Excellence in Teaching Award](#). Students from across the College were invited to nominate faculty for the Godfrey Award, named in honor of the late Aaron (Bill) Godfrey, whose 52-year career at Stony Brook impacted the lives of so many students. A [student panel](#) selected the 2022 recipients, one in each of five disciplines, from nearly 100 nominations. Congratulations, Nancy!
- Twenty-three members of Stony Brook University's faculty and staff received the 2021-2022 State University of New York (SUNY) [Chancellor's Awards for Excellence](#), including our very own Professor Lisa Diedrich, and Department Administrator Jackie Donnelly. Lisa was recognized for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities, and Jackie was recognized for Excellence in Professional Service. An on campus luncheon is scheduled for November 2022 to celebrate all of the awardees. Congratulations, Lisa and Jackie!
- WGSS doctoral alum Rachel Corbman received a two-year post-doctoral fellowship in Community Data as part of the [Critical Digital Humanities](#) Initiative at the University of Toronto. Congratulations, Rachel!

- WGSS adjunct faculty, Margarita Espada, founder and executive-artistic director of Teatro Yerbabruja, an organization that uses the arts as a tool for social change, received an NEA Award as part of its Big Read program to bring U.S. Poet Laureate, [Joy Harjo](#), to Stony Brook Southampton on Friday, April 8. The NEA Big Read program created space for acknowledging the intersections between the Indigenous people from the Shinnecock and Montaukett Nations native to Long Island, and the Indigenous Latino immigrant community. [Watch the live recording](#) (you'll need to click on the Play button!) Congratulations, Margarita!



US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo with WGSS Faculty & Staff

WGSS Blog - Undergraduate Testimonials

As May 2022 graduation was approaching, WGSS seniors reflected on experiences within the Women's and Gender Studies major and minor. Thanks to our Social Media and Communications undergraduate intern, Angelina Zingariello, we were able to showcase the experiences and insights of our graduating seniors on our [WGSS@SBU Blog](#).



Amanda Stuart

Amanda Stuart is a graduating Sociology and Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies- Concentration in Gender and Social Change B.A with a minor in English and History

What made you pursue a Women's and Gender Studies (WST) major/minor?

WGSS courses are very interesting and enlightening and helped me to reconcile my experiences living within the intersectionality of my identities as an African American woman. I loved learning about the intersection between race, gender, and sexuality and how these identities have impacted my life experiences which have been very empowering to learn about throughout the WGSS courses I have taken over the last four years at Stony Brook.

Are there any professors and/or classes that had an impact on you?

I have taken some of my favorite courses through the WGSS Department. Freshman year I took my freshman seminar course GLS 102 in Spring 2019 with Mary Jo Bona. I absolutely loved her as a professor, she was always animated and warm and she sparked my passion for WGSS. I especially enjoyed the courses Race and Sex work with Cristina Khan and Black Women's Literature in the African Diaspora with Tracey Walters. I have taken a few courses with Cristina Khan whom I admire as a professor. She is very insightful and brilliant as her lectures are always intriguing. I have taken WST 102 with her, which has solidified my passion for WGSS. Her class taught me the foundation of the subject that I have brought with me throughout my other WGSS courses and within my life. I am also her TA for one of her WST 102 course sections this semester which is rewarding as I was a student of hers four years ago, and now I work alongside her as her teaching assistant.

[Read more about Amanda Stuart here.](#)

WGSS Partners with S.A.F.E. for an Undergraduate Internship



Jaime DiChiara, Kira Sells, and Cassandra Skolnick

Society of Advocates Fighting for Equality (S.A.F.E.) is a nonprofit organization founded by Stony Brook University and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) Alumna, Cassandra Skolnick.

The organization employs feminist theory and feminist lenses as a foundation for the composition of sensible and progressive legislation, engagement in direct and grassroots lobbying, investments in harmed or marginalized communities, and for the development of educational resources to increase community understanding of concepts like intersectionality. Cassie was thrilled to partner with the WGSS Department at Stony Brook University to offer an internship opportunity because it granted her organization an opportunity to demonstrate how feminist theory and feminist lenses can be used to solve real world problems.

"We accepted two interns for the Fall 2022 semester and the enthusiasm and excitement stemming from the work we are doing has been nothing short of incredible. Our Fall agenda is ambitious, so the partnership with WGSS is giving interns an astounding opportunity to work on legislation seeking to ban assault weapons, reform mass incarceration, and terminate immigration detention and enforcement practices. We also launched a local community project, requesting that superintendents from across the Long Island region provide a statement explaining how they are ensuring all students have equal access to technology and academic success. The partnership with the WGSS department has been invaluable and we hope to continue offering internship opportunities to undergraduate students in the future!"

- Cassandra Skolnick

Spotlight on Visiting Scholar, Anna Cadoni



Anna Cadoni is a doctoral candidate in American Literature at Roma Tre, and is currently in residence as a visiting scholar at Stony Brook University. Anna is working with both the Departments of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and English, and her project focuses on widely underrepresented women authors.

What inspired you to pursue a PhD? What does your doctoral research focus on?

After I graduated from my MA in American Literature, I knew that I wanted to explore more of my field of study. Literature has always been my passion so I think it was a written path for me. So I wrote my project on Modernist literature and Feminist studies, focusing on the corporeal aspects of the female characters of the novel that I took into account. My theoretical frame is Affect Theory, which is still a new subject in Italy and therefore I knew that I could create new knowledge out of it.

How did you hear about the WGSS Department at Stony Brook, and what made you interested in visiting our campus & department to continue your doctoral research?

When I started my PhD program, my tutor immediately suggested that I pursue part of my research in the US and she strongly recommended Stony Brook and its WGSS Department as a valuable site to further my study. Of course, this was pre-pandemic, so I had to postpone it and therefore shorten my stay, but it was worth it anyway!

Once you complete your doctoral program, what do you plan on doing next?

After my degree, I will try and pursue academic jobs and research at several universities in Italy.

What has surprised you most about Long Island/New York?

Long Island is obviously very different from NYC. I love it there, it's crowded, lively – I know when I want to have fun I can just visit the city, and then study and rest here in Long Island. The transport system here is not very convenient, so I had a rough time at the beginning when I realized that you need a car to go everywhere, but I am adjusting now!

What do you like to do for fun?

I am an extrovert, so any social activity is amusing to me. I also love to find new spots in NYC and visit museums every time I can. On the other hand, I love staying home sometimes and just reading a book or watching a movie!

We Appreciate Your Support!

We are grateful for the generous giving of so many of our alumni and friends! We depend on this support to build and improve our research and teaching opportunities through scholarships, graduate fellowships, and other experiential opportunities for our students. If you are interested in learning more about how you can [support](#) our students and Departmental initiatives, please feel free to contact [Hodan Hassan](#), Assistant Dean for Advancement, at 631.632.4055.

