

Commencement Highlights

We honored 38 graduates at our undergraduate graduation ceremony held on May 24, 2019. Among the 38 candidates, we had 12 majors and 26 minors; 11 students graduated with honors: three summa cum laude, one magna cum laude, and seven cum laude!



Rose Berktas, center, with her mother and grandmother

Our keynote speaker was undergraduate alum Gul (Rose) Berktas. A proud New York native who was born in Turkey, Rose earned Bachelor of Arts degrees in Women's and Gender Studies and Psychology in May 2014. Rose has been keeping busy traveling the country and exploring new career fields—from wildland firefighting in Arizona, to building educational trails in Washington state, to providing expertise on volunteer and donation management as Disaster Deployment Specialist for the California Governor's office. She has engaged in emergency mobilization and relief country wide. Rose also served as a Program Officer with CaliforniaVolunteers; the California state service commission; evaluated AmeriCorps grant applications; and trained, assessed, and monitored a \$5.5 million portfolio of programs. Currently, Rose is an Associate Director for CCS Fundraising, a leading global consulting and management firm that provides fundraising, development services and strategic consulting to nonprofit organizations worldwide.



Victoria Hesford, Rose Berktas and Teri Tiso

2019 Undergraduate Graduation Awards

Activism & Academic Excellence:

Farzana Khan

Terry Alexander Award:

Isha Joshi

Vivien Hartog Memorial Graduate Student Award, Excellence in Teaching:

Tara Holmes & Stephanie Bonvissuto

Academic Excellence:

Taylor Drost

WGSS Celebrates its Very First PhD Graduate: Rachel Corbman!

In May 2019, Rachel Corbman successfully defended her thesis, "Conferencing on the Edge: A Queer History of Feminist Field Formation, 1969-1989," and last fall, began a position as [Visiting Assistant Professor of WGSS at Wake Forest University!](#) Not only that, but Rachel's thesis was awarded an Honorable Mention for the Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize from the American Studies Association for the best doctoral dissertation in American studies, ethnic studies, or women's, gender, and sexuality studies. Congratulations, Dr. Corbman!



Undergraduate Alumni in the Spotlight



Maureen Ahmed '11: **BA Political Science and** **Women's and Gender Studies** **Foreign Affairs Officer, U.S. Department of State**

Congratulations to Maureen Ahmed '11, recently named to [Stony Brook's 40 Under Forty](#) Class of 2019! Here are just some of Maureen's accomplishments:

- Served as a United States Presidential Management Fellow at the U.S. Department of State for the Class of 2016, completing rotations to U.S. Embassies in South Africa and Croatia
- Managed the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program for South Africa, the United States' largest global health assistance program, with a budget of more than \$1.4 billion across fiscal years 2019 and 2020
- Currently a 2019-2020 Penn Kemble Forum on Democracy fellow and a Security Fellow for the Truman National Security Project
- Received the State Department's Benjamin Franklin Award for Public Service for providing exceptional diplomatic services at U.S. missions overseas

Undergraduate Alumni in the Spotlight



An Interview with Sophia Pierre-Antoine '13: BA Women's and Gender Studies and Sociology

Tell us what you're doing now.

Professionally, I work for the Gender Unit of the International Organization for Migration (IOM – The UN Migration Agency) in its headquarters in Geneva. I focus on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Personally, I volunteer my time as a co-chair of the Board of Directors of FRIDA The Young Feminist Fund, the biggest fund globally for and by young feminists.

How did your WGSS degree help you on the path you're on?

The rich discussions that took place in my WGSS classes, as well as after classes with fellow students and with amazing professors during their office hours, gave me the theoretical, historical and thematic knowledge and understanding of important – and shifting – gender and feminist issues globally. This helped shape my feminism into what it is today, and how I apply a feminist, inclusive, gender just, intersectional, and critical analytical framework in my professional and personal life.

Tell us about a book that is important to you.

The House of the Spirits by Isabel Allende. There is a feeling I found while I read this book that I do not often find. I read it for the first time many many years ago and the richness of the story, the fullness of the characters and its magical realism have stayed with me ever since.

What is a memorable event that you have participated in or witnessed since you graduated?

In 2018, the UN Security Council held its first [Open Debate on Youth, Peace, and Security](#), after the historic adoption of Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security a few years prior. I had the opportunity to present to Member States research and programmatic work on the importance of including the intersections of age and gender in peace and security work, as well as call for the recognition of the contributions of young women and trans youth towards building and sustaining peace globally. [Three out of four speakers, including myself, were young women, which made it the first time that three young women addressed the UN Security Council in the same meeting.](#) This was an incredibly powerful, inspiring and humbling experience.

What advice would you give to WGSS majors and minors who are about to graduate?

When you enter the next step, whether it be further academic studies or a new job, please stay true to yourselves, and don't compromise your values rooted in gender justice and intersectionality. Always challenge yourself to keep learning and growing by listening to people's experiences and perspectives. Focus on the day-to-day inequalities, yet never lose sight of the overall structural and systemic issues!

WGSS Welcomes Our Newest Faculty Member: Cristina Khan



Cristina Khan received her PhD in Sociology with a graduate certificate in Feminist Studies from the University of Connecticut in 2019. Her research and teaching interests include: feminist methodologies,

sexualities, race/ethnic studies, body/embodiment, Latina/o/x studies, qualitative methods, sex work, and women of color feminisms. She is co-author of *Race & Sexuality* (Polity Press, 2018) and managing editor of the Wiley Blackwell Companions to Women's and Gender Studies, Sexuality Studies, & Feminist Studies. Her work has appeared in *Gender & Society*.

Tell us about your work. What do you study?

My work centers on race and sexuality within erotic labor industries. I'm interested in how both of these social categories, together, come to bear meaning for folks across different kinds of sexual labor. Recently, I've started attending to the role of space and place in exotic dance and drawing upon feminist geography to analyze how different exotic dance settings might be conducive to agency for participants.

Tell us about a book that has had an influence on you and your work.

I read *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure* (edited by [Tristan Taormino](#), [Constance Penley](#), [Celine Parrenas Shimizu](#), & [Mireille Miller-Young](#)) when I had just started my MA in sociology. It was formative to read the work of feminist scholars who took seriously the question of how pleasure and power are produced in the erotic. It made me realize I could study the things I was truly passionate about, and that there was a community of feminist scholars I could learn from.

What was a favorite class you took as an undergrad?

I took my first sociology course, "Inequality: Class, Race, Ethnicity" with Dr. Bette Dickerson, during my first year as an undergrad at American University, and it profoundly changed my life. I found it cathartic to learn about inequality from a sociological perspective because it encouraged me to appreciate the relevance of social structures and institutions in my own life.

What do you like to do to relax or for fun?

When I'm not working I paint, spend time with my partner and dogs, and (perhaps most importantly) watch and re-watch *The Golden Girls*.

Dog or cat person?

Dog person for sure! My partner and I have three dogs: a senior chihuahua I've had since high school, a golden doodle, and a pocket pit we rescued a couple of years ago.

Favorite sport? Favorite team?

Honestly, I'm not too much of a sports person, but I'm definitely fascinated by Olympic curling if that counts!

What are you listening to now?

I'm always listening to Stevie Nicks. The podcasts on my most listened to list include *Myths and Legends*, *Psychic Teachers*, and *Oprah's SuperSoul Conversations*.