

## Past Symposium Keynote Speakers

- 2025 Nada Elia
- 2024 Lauren Gutterman
- 2023 Kate Manne
- 2022 Arlene Stein, Veronica Ivy, Karma R. Chávez, Maia Kobabe
- 2021 Tristen Johnson, Harsha Walia, Laina Reese Carney
- 2019 Qwo-Li Driskill
- 2018 Janaya Khan
- 2017 Mariana Ortega
- 2016 Jafari S. Allen
- 2015 Jennifer Lisa Vest
- 2014 Susan J. Douglas

## 2026 Symposium Sponsors:

- The Alice and Fannie Fell Trust
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- Office of Sustainability
- College of Arts and Sciences
- Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program
- Department of English
- Department of Sociology and Anthropology
- Office of Student Research
- Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment
- Queer Coalition
- LGBTQ+ Student Support Fund

Keynote Speaker:

### Dr. Sarah Ensor



Dr. Sarah Ensor is an Associate Professor of English at UW–Madison, where she is also a faculty associate in the Nelson Institute's Center for History, Culture, and Environment. Her work engages the intersections between queer and environmental thought in American literature from the nineteenth century through the present. Her most recent book, *Queer Lasting: Ecologies of Care for a Dying World* (2025), looks to scenes of queer extinction for alternate grammars of continuance and care. With Susan Scott Parrish, she co-edited *The Cambridge Companion to American Literature and the Environment*, which was published in 2022. Before arriving in Madison, she was an Assistant Professor of English at Portland State University and the University of Michigan.

# 29th Annual Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Student Research Symposium

April 24th, 2026



WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND  
SEXUALITY STUDIES PROGRAM  
Illinois State University



DESIGN  
STREAK

## 8:30 – 9:00 AM

Registration (Outside Old Main Room)  
Coffee and Pastries (Founders Suite)

## 9:00 – 10:00 AM

**Intersectional Literary Analysis (Circus Room)**

*Moderator: Dr. Katherine Ellison*

**Grace Gross**, “Patriarchal Gender Norms in Contemporary Romance Novels: *The Love Hypothesis* by Ali Hazelwood”

**Jia Zuo**, “The Success / Failure of a Girl Entrepreneur: Female Agency and Subjectivity within Neoliberal and Biopolitical Spaces”

**Kate Fortner**, “‘Where Peeta’s Child Could Be Safe’: Reproductive Justice in *The Hunger Games* Trilogy”

**Barbara Kuznetsova**, “‘A Race of Devils’: De-eroticized Corps Morcelé and Asexual Resonances in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*”

**Struggles for Inclusive Education (Founders Suite)**

*Moderator: Dr. Megan VanGorder*

**Dr. Angell Howard**, “Refusing to Die on The Vine: Black Women’s Survival, Resistance, and DEI Labor in Historically White Institutions”

**Lauri Klump**, “Education in the Age of Censorship: Educator Insights into the New Sociopolitical Environment in Education”

**Kayleigh Anderson**, “A Universal Right, a Gendered Reality: Analyzing the Global Barriers to Girls’ Education”

**Colonial Legacies, Political Dynamics (Old Main Room)**

*Moderator: Dr. Christine Varga-Harris*

**Campbell Arington**, “African Football’s Modern Ties to Colonialism: The Africa Cup of Nations as Decolonial Practice”

**Lily Linden**, “The Impact of *The Women, Peace and Security* Agenda on International Peace and Security”

**Letícia Vicente Horst**, “‘Why Do Women Vote For Them?’: Social Identity and Intergroup Perspectives as Guidance for Brazilian Women’s Political Support for Left- and Right-Wing Parties”

## 10:10 – 11:10 AM

**Critical Media Studies (Circus Room)**

*Moderator: Dr. Kyla Cary*

**Ilaria Noonan**, “The Aesthetic of Domesticity: Traditional Wives and Entrepreneurial Feminism”

**Nicholas Stulga**, “Benson Boone’s Queer Commercialization of Aesthetics and Body”

**Dean Romack**, “Cultural Representations of Serial Offenders in a Third-Wave Feminist Lens”

**Inequalities in Place (Founders Suite)**

*Moderator: Dr. Caitlin Mercier*

**Tyler Despe**, “Dispossessed: A Critical Analysis of Resources and Barriers to Food Insecurity for the Unhoused”

**Grace Haack**, “Money, Sex, Race, and Environmental Hazards”

**Erica Montegrando**, “Gendered Racism and Coping Through the COVID-19 Pandemic”

**Critical and Feminist Methodological Interventions (Old Main Room)**

*Moderator: Dr. Liv Stone*

**Emily Grimany**, “Cross-Gender Casting in Shakespeare”

**Jacob Taylor**, “Using Feminist Speculation for Epistemological Justice”

**Raylinn Vasquez**, “Beyond Colonial Bodies: Rethinking Gender in Mesoamerica”

## 11:20 AM – 12:20 PM

**Sexualities and Sex (Circus Room)**

*Moderator: Dr. Kyla Cary*

**Fenix Perkins**, “LGBTQ+ = Let God Burn Them Quickly? Queerness, Christianity, and the Price of Prejudice”

**Camila Fontes Fialho**, “Pain and Pleasure in College Students’ Sexual Experiences”

**Tyler Thomas**, “What’s in the Box?: An Examination of How Transgender Women are Labeled, Fetishized, and Dehumanized in Pornography”

**The Power of Social Pressure (Founders Suite)**

*Moderator: Dr. Caitlin Mercier*

**Molly Marin and Julianna Marroquin**, “The Impact of Skin-Tone Messages on Appearance-Altering Behaviors Among College Students”

**Lila Mitchell and Thalia Gordon**, “‘We Are Stunning in Every Shape, Sort, or Form’: A Qualitative Investigation of Black Women in Regard to Body Image and Self-Esteem”

**Grace Goss, Kyah Joseph, and Ilaria Noonan**, “Romance Readers and Their ‘Happily Ever After’: How Romance Novels Influence Romantic Relationships”

**Gender-Based Violence (Old Main Room)**

*Moderator: Dr. Jacklyn Weier*

**Ella Woodruff**, “Transmisogyny Within Analyses of Verdict Leniencies for Violent Crime”

**Kelly Harman**, “The Epstein Files at the International Scale”

**Mackenzie Reimers**, “Rachel Zegler: Intersectional Celebrity Feminism and the Resentment It’s Met With”

**Luka Anderson**, “Men, Masculinities, and Intimate Partner Violence”

## 12:30 – 1:30 PM

**Lunch and Awards Ceremony (Old Main Room)**

## 1:30 – 3:00 PM

**Keynote Address (Circus Room)**

**Dr. Sarah Ensor**,  
“Queer Extinctions: Or Learning How to Last”

## 3:10 – 4:10 PM

**Interrogating Physical or Mental Well-Being (Founders Suite)**

*Moderator: Dr. Derek Sparby*

**Breck Holtz**, “‘He Implied I’m Not a Real Person Because I Don’t Eat Gluten’: Women’s Gastrointestinal Health Boundary Management in Families”

**Natalia Preza**, “Can You Find Me? Autoethnography of Grief after the Death of an Animal”

**Tyler Ellison**, “The Mentally Ill Black Woman”

**Lainey Campbell**, “Harm Reduction on College Campuses: An Intersectional Analysis of Access to Naloxone”

**Exploring the Art of Visual Expression (Old Main Room)**

*Moderator: Dr. Lauren Bratslavsky*

**Design Streak Studio, Allie Schlottman, Maccrae Barnett, and Sarai Arevalo**, “Designing for the 29th Annual WGSS Symposium”

**Amaka Chime**, “Composing from a Third Place: Black Gaze, Icons, and Womanism in the Art of Njideka Akunyili Crosby”

**Cynthia Nwakudu**, “Confronting Violence Against Women: Text-Textile Tension in the Art of Peju Alatise”