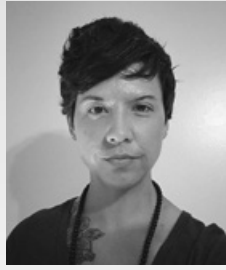


## Welcome new WGS faculty!



### Tanya Diaz-Kozlowski, WGS Assistant Director and Academic Adviser

Tanya Diaz-Kozlowski is a professor, mentor, advisor, and writer. She earned her Ph.D. in Education Policy, Organization and Leadership with a minor in Gender and Women's Studies and Latino/a Studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2015. Professor D-K's pedagogical approach creates a classroom environment that pushes students to use inquiry, dialogue, reflection, and action to think clearly, to speak and write persuasively and eloquently, and to evaluate critically both their own and others' ideas. Professor D-K teaches *con ganas y sinvergüenza*. La maestra luchando también enseñando. During the 2018-2019 academic year Professor D-K is teaching a range of courses in Women's and Gender Studies that are also cross listed with Latino/s Studies entitled: Gender, Sex, and Power, Chicana Feminist Thought, and Feminist Theories and Methodologies.

### Jason Whitesel, WGS/SOA Assistant Professor

Jason Whitesel earned his Ph.D. at The Ohio State University and holds a joint appointment in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Illinois State University. He is delighted to teach the core sequence of classes in the Queer Studies Concentration: Sociology of Gender, Sociology of the Body, Introduction to LGBTQ Studies, and Queer & Transgender Theory. He formerly coordinated the Queer Studies minor in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at Pace University where he was awarded tenure in 2018 and LGBTQA Educator of the Year in both 2016 and 2018. He researches, writes, and consults on Intersecting Categories of Oppression, Men & Masculinities, Gay Men's Experiences, Fat Studies, and Social Constructions of Deviance, and has authored a critically acclaimed book, *Fat Gay Men: Girth, Mirth, and the Politics of Stigma* (NYU Press, 2014). He is currently writing about groups with a mission to support older gay and bisexual men, and he is researching the representation(s) (and lack thereof) of same-gender-loving men of color and size in the queer community.



### Lisa Ortiz, WGS Instructional Assistant Professor

Lisa Ortiz has doctoral training in the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership with minors in Latina/o and Gender and Women's studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Previously, she lived in Puerto Rico, where she pursued an M.A. in English education and a B.A. in business administration. Ortiz is an interdisciplinary scholar whose interests are grounded at the intersections of (im)migration, media, education, gender, and Latina/x/o studies. Her current research specifically examines rural-to-rural migration among Puerto Rican intergenerational families.

Visit us at [WGS.IllinoisState.edu](http://WGS.IllinoisState.edu)



Like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ISUWGS](http://www.facebook.com/ISUWGS)

Follow us on Twitter @ISUWGS

The WGS website and social media pages are great ways to keep up with the program, see what our students are doing, and check out some good reads. Come find us!



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Women's and gender studies program  
Campus Box 4260  
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## WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM

Illinois State University

# ALUMNI MATTER

A bulletin of Illinois State University's Women's and Gender Studies Program

SUMMER 2018

### From the director

It's been a year of change and growth for the Women's and Gender Studies Program (WGS). Between community activism, developing exciting new classes, organizing our symposium, hosting student art shows, and hiring new WGS faculty we've had our hands full. The good news is that with the support of the college and the Provost's Office we are moving steadily toward designing a major.

This year we made three historic hires for the program. Tanya Diaz-Kozlowski will be our new assistant director and academic advisor. She is also teaching our Chicana Feminisms class. We also welcome Lisa Ortiz, our first full-time instructional assistant professor, and Jason Whitesel, (WGS/SOA) who will be teaching the queer studies course sequence. The WGS Program has also entered into collaborations with African-American Studies, Latin American and Latinx Studies, and other minors to pool our resources and find ways to co-sponsor events and cross list our classes. Thanks to the College of Arts and Sciences for supporting these new initiatives.

Our annual symposium continues to showcase the work of our minors and graduate students. This year we recognized our very first class (13 students!) to complete the Queer Studies certificate. We also honored our second class of Iota Iota Iota (Triota) honors students. Janaya Khan gave an inspiring keynote address on transformational justice and met with students in the Black Feminist Thought class.

The next academic year brings even more promise. Kyle Ciani (HIS/WGS) will serve as interim director for the program while I go on a much-needed sabbatical. During that time WGS will conduct an external review that will guide us toward establishing a stronger curriculum for a major. We also hope to update our WGS resource center, expand our programming, and renew the popular QueerTalks series.

As always, the most exciting part of the year is hearing from our alumni. You have become parents, teachers and professors, journalists, mentors, graduate students, social workers, performers, artists, and have given your time and energy to causes for which you are passionate. We are proud of you. We just know that you are collectively making the world a better place to be right now, and for this, we are grateful.

In solidarity,

Alison Bailey

## What's happening at WGS?

### Janaya Khan delivers keynote symposium address

This year's keynote for our annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium focused on unity among activists on the left. Janaya Khan's talk, titled "Demanding Social Transformation, Justice, and Equality for All," was an inspiring and transformative call to work toward finding more commonalities across identity lines and to stop "allowing our traumas to determine what we care about." Khan's message of unity resonated deeply with the audience that packed the room and kept people talking for weeks after the event.

Khan (pronouns: they/them/theirs) is an international ambassador for the Black Lives Matter movement, and throughout the keynote, offered multiple examples of the various compromises that need to happen when engaging in activist work. Whether it was working with the Nation of Islam (which Khan acknowledged held very homophobic views) on anti-racist activism or working with fellow activists whose views might diverge from one's own, Khan reminds us that "you can't always walk in at 100 percent agreement—sometimes you have to start at 25 percent and work up from there." Khan pushes for activists to find commonalities where they exist and work towards everyone's liberation.

### Anne M. Semlak Memorial Scholarship keeps professor's daughter's legacy alive

To say that Bill Semlak created a legacy at Illinois State is an understatement. He has motivated and impacted students for decades as a professor in the School of Communication, a local Rotarian, and a philanthropist.

In 2008, he established the Anne M. Semlak Memorial Scholarship in the Women's and Gender Studies Program in memory of his daughter. Anne shared her father's generous spirit and positive outlook. She touched many lives before fighting cancer, which took her in May 2008. Her named scholarship is awarded each year to an undergraduate or graduate student who is most active in the WGS Program.

Anne graduated from ISU in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in political science. She earned a minor in peace studies and what was then called women's studies. She was extremely active in the both the Women's Studies Program and in The Women's Coalition—a registered student organization. Anne's heartfelt desire to make the world a more just place truly defined her life. Her spirit and good works live on in those who had the good fortune to know her and in the scholarship recipients who walk in her footsteps.

Bill Semlak came to Illinois State in 1974 as director of the forensics team, after earning his doctorate in political communications at the University of Minnesota. Within two years, he moved the program into the national spotlight, where it has stayed. He also served as director of the Honors Program and as chair of the Department of Information Sciences. He taught a study abroad program in Grenoble, relocating there with his now deceased wife, Elizabeth; Anne; and her three siblings.

Semlak and his wife, Joani Moore, reside in Mackinaw and remain actively involved at ISU. He returned to campus to teach a couple of courses before finally retiring for good. "You know it's time to go when your students tell you their grandmother had you for class," he said. Semlak still ends conversations with, "Go for it!" His signature phrase exemplifies his hope for each recipient of the Semlak scholarship, which is designed to empower students as they pursue their goals.

Scholarship support is a main focus of Redbirds Rising: The Campaign for Illinois State. The \$150 million initiative will lift the University for decades to come. Your help is needed to make sure Redbirds continue to soar. Join the more than 44,000 ISU donors and make a gift by calling (309) 438-8184 or by visiting [RedbirdsRising.IllinoisState.edu](http://RedbirdsRising.IllinoisState.edu).



### Vagina Monologues at the Normal Theater

Audience members at this year's *Vagina Monologues* gathered at an exciting new venue for this year's show. The historic Normal Theatre hosted F.L.A.M.E.'s (Feminist-Led Activist Movement to Empower) annual production, allowing for even more people to attend the highly anticipated performances. All proceeds were donated to McLean County's Neville House and the YWCA. This year's event saw one of the largest turnouts for the performances and fair—Saturday night's show came close to selling out.

### Alumni Spotlight: Ana Roncero-Bellido

Ana Roncero-Bellido graduated with her Ph.D. in English and a graduate certificate in women's and gender studies in 2017. After graduation, she was hired as an assistant professor of English at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, where she continues to incorporate WGS content into her courses.

In her multicultural autobiography class, she skyped in fellow ISU alum Lasantha Rodrigo to talk with her students about his memoir, *Fireflies in the Dark*. Roncero-Bellido says that "teaching these classes at Gonzaga with a Jesuit mission in mind has allowed me to continue developing feminist pedagogy." She has also made waves as a member of Gonzaga's Women's and Gender Studies Program: "I helped to develop ideas to create an ethnic studies minor, and we even hosted a symposium to hear from students so we could develop this further. It was a really great experience to work on that and create more connections with students and see how my interdisciplinary work manifested through the symposium."

### WGS students visit Amy Cousins exhibit

In September, the students in Professor Alexis Wolstein's WGS 292: Intro to LGBTQ Studies course visited ISU's University Galleries for a tour of Amy Cousins' exhibit, "You Will Never Have The Comfort Of Our Silence Again." Kendra Paitz, senior curator of University Galleries, guided the students through Cousins' artistic exploration of "radical queer histories." After the tour, students wrote reflections on their reactions to the art and their conceptions of the documentation of queer histories.

### Chingonas in training: new Chicana feminist thought course

This fall Professor Tanya Diaz-Kozlowski taught ISU's first course focused entirely on Chicana feminist thought. What started as a gathering of students wanting to learn more about Chicana feminisms quickly turned into a community of "Chingonas in training" willing to support and challenge each other in their journeys to become better activists and accomplices. Juana Chavez-Carrillo originally took the course because she was excited to finally take a class that spoke to her experiences: "It was like, 'finally! I get to learn about myself!'" Prior to taking this class, many of the Chicanas in the room had not had the experience of learning about themselves in a classroom environment. Chavez-Carrillo explained how alienating that felt: "It is very disheartening to know that the first time I have learned about myself and my experiences as a Chicana in academia is when I am a senior in college." Kelsey Klopfenstein described experiencing a similar shift in her attitude toward whether she could be an agent of change: "This class has given me a much more urgent sense of how I can affect change in my social circles of interaction, in my own thinking, and in my ways of being." This is why it is even more exigent that we as a classroom community come to see ourselves as agents of change committed to continuing this work. As they say, "Mi existencia es resistencia!"

## WGS alumni updates



Emma Belz



Emily Johnston



Gina Stinnett



Kamie Schladenhauffen



Luisa M. Gomez



Brooke Barnhart

**Emma Belz ('15 and '18)** just graduated with her Master of Science in college student personnel administration. She is currently job hunting.

**Emily Johnston ('16)** is currently finishing up her post-doc in writing studies at the University of Delaware.

**Gina Stinnett ('18)** is finishing up her M.A. thesis this summer and will be moving to Syracuse in the fall to start her Ph.D. in composition and cultural rhetoric at Syracuse University.

**Kamie Schladenhauffen ('18)** has accepted a 10-month AmeriCorps position in Chicago with College Possible, an organization that works toward preparing high school students from low-income families for college.

**Luisa M. Gomez ('18)** will start her master's degree in social work at ISU this fall. She will also serve as a graduate assistant for the Women's and Gender Studies Program.

**Brooke Barnhart ('15)** completed her master's degree in gender and women's studies at University of Wisconsin–Madison last summer. She worked as a teaching assistant for the Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies class. This year she was hired at the Cross-College Advising Service, where she is putting her WGS social justice training to good use.

**Devon Rae (Hartwig) Tracy ('15)** lives outside Bloomington with husband Greg, daughter Jo, and is soon expecting a son. She works as an elementary II language arts and humanities instructor, a childbirth mentor, on a flower farm, and writes "mama-uptlifting" pieces for various publications.

**Fabiola Rosiles ('16)** graduated from DePaul University with an M.A. in women's and gender studies.