

WGS Alumni Updates

Ricia Anne Chansky ('09) is a professor of literature at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. She is coeditor of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* and editor of the new Routledge *Auto/Biography Studies* book series. Published by Routledge in 2016, she coedited *The Routledge Auto/Biography Studies Reader* and edited *Auto/Biography in the Americas: Relational Lives* and *Auto/Biography across the Americas: Transnational Themes in Life Writing*. She is a 2018–2020 Voice of Witness Fellow, a partner in the Humanities Action Lab “Initiative on Climate and Environmental Justice,” and a Fulbright Specialist in U.S. Studies. Chansky has recent and forthcoming essays on critical disaster studies, disaster pedagogy, climate and social justice, Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean, as well as on oral history, transnational and diasporic identity constructions, contested national identity, and gendered identity constructions.



Cynthia Harbaugh Jagodzinski (LCSW '16) is a family therapist for Children's Home and Aid in The Butterfly Project, which uses attachment-based therapy to counter the effects that exposure to violence has brought into a family. Jagodzinski said: “I use the information that I obtained going through the WGS certificate program every day as it is typically mom and baby who have been exposed to violence and are seeking our services. I am in a position to spot mental health and social issues that face the female population disproportionately and advocate for them. I love the work that I do and am grateful to have received an education from WGS and Social Work to be aligned with assisting women and children primarily.”



Matthew Rillie ('15) works at Columbia College in Chicago as the coordinator of Student Support and Engagement in Student Diversity and Inclusion. Rillie reports that, “my main role is to create and grow networks of support for students with marginalized identities. I also advise Columbia Pride, the main LGBTQ+ student support group. My WGS education at Illinois State University has been a foundation of my work. I attest so much of my critical thinking and intentional work to my time in the department.”



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Women's and gender studies program
Campus Box 4260
Normal, IL 61790-4260



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Illinois State University

ALUMNI MATTER

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From the director

Illinois State University President Larry Dietz often uses the phrase “strong and stable” to describe ISU, and I’m happy to report that the WGS program fits that characterization. Our 54 minors, seven queer studies certificates, and 26 graduate certificate students major in departments across campus from art to nursing, and they are involved in a wide range of Registered Student Organizations that embody our mission of learning from a variety of interdisciplinary and multicultural lenses. We are so proud of what these students have done this year through groups such as FLAME (Feminist Led Activist Movement to Empower), PRIDE, and SERC (Students Ending Rape Culture). Our students balance a full course load, work at places from campus dining centers to retail stores, and engage in the community by volunteering for the YWCA's Stepping Stones rape crisis program, tutoring at the Boys & Girls Club, or providing advocacy through the Immigration Project.

We added eight scholars as affiliated faculty, and they also represent a variety of departments: Art History, English, Philosophy, Sociology and Anthropology, and Social Work. With these faculty come new opportunities to broaden our curriculum, and we are excited to be reaching a wider range of students with expanded course offerings in Criminal Justice Sciences, Family and Consumer Sciences, Geography, Health Sciences, History, and Sociology. From programming through the LGBT/Q Studies and Services Institute, Health Promotion and Wellness, Student Counseling Services, minor programs in African American studies and Latin American and Latino/a studies, we have been able to provide a more diverse educational experience. Importantly, we are thankful for our WGS suite in Rachel Cooper 237, which houses two gender neutral restrooms and our refreshed Resource Center, as it has given students a safe and supportive space to connect, reflect, and achieve.

It's been a delight for me to serve as the acting director this academic year and witness the many ways WGS faculty, staff, and students involve themselves in the University and community. Alison Bailey returns from her sabbatical this summer and is sure to start gearing up for our 25th Annual Symposium. We've already set the date for March 20, 2020, and are looking forward to this milestone celebration.

Thanks for keeping in touch with us through social media as it's always fun to see the “likes” on our posts. We hope you can stop by during ISU's Homecoming in October and again in March for the symposium, but please don't wait to visit if you are in the area.

In solidarity,

Kyle Ciani

She/Her/Hers

What's happening at WGS?

24th Annual Symposium with Qwo-Li Driskill

Each spring for the last 24 years, WGS has sponsored a symposium to allow undergraduate and graduate students an opportunity to present their academic work to a supportive audience and engage with a guest feminist scholar. This year, 16 students delivered research papers, and students from Saskia Beranak's ART 305 and Shelly Clevenger's CJS 337 courses exhibited projects they produced as elements of their learning.

Keynote speaker, Qwo-Li Driskill, associate professor in the School of Language, Culture, and Society at Oregon State University, delivered "Performing Revolution, Scholarship, and Decolonial Practice." The riveting address offered an important counter to transphobic, racist, ableist, and colonial spaces and provided possible paths to more inclusive teaching and learning. Introduced by Professor Angela Haas (English), Driskill is a co-founder and member of the Indigenous People's Interest Group for the National Women's Studies Association, an Advisory Board member of the Arts & Social Justice Living-Learning Community, and Advisory Council member for the Eena Haws Native American Longhouse at Oregon State. The previous day, Driskill visited the combined classrooms of Professors Linda Clemmons (Native American History) and Ann Haugo (Theatre & Performance of the Americas) and explained how bringing members from marginalized groups into one's art and research opens an academic conversation that recognizes the realities of multicultural experiences.



During lunch, WGS recognized the recipients of its scholarships and awards, one of which honors the best undergraduate and graduate papers (Rhonda Nicol Memorial Book Awards) by giving the students a signed copy of the keynote speaker's book. This year, those students received Driskill's *Asegi Stories: Cherokee Queer and Two-Spirit Memory*, University of Arizona Press, 2016. See the full list of award and scholarship recipients in this issue.

Mark your calendars for next year's symposium—Friday, March 20, 2020—to be held in ISU's Alumni Center. We would love to have our alumni return for this special celebration of feminist scholarship. Stay tuned for details.

Advocacy and Awareness

WGS faculty, staff, and students involved themselves in a variety of public events to raise awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault. In October, members of FLAME brought their activism into the Quad by exhibiting Clothes Line and holding "Take Back the Night" with a moonlit vigil to honor those individuals suffering from the effects of partner violence. And, in April they launched Monologues, a performance of student-written and -directed pieces. Proceeds from the performances went to support Stepping Stones and Neville House, local advocacy programs.



In April we partnered with Criminal Justice Sciences and Health Promotion and Wellness to honor the 20th Anniversary of Denim Day, which

works to dispel myths surrounding women being assaulted because of their clothing. As an important part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Associate Professor Shelly Clevenger's criminal justice class created the "What Were You Wearing?" exhibit and displayed it in several locations. Clevenger explained: "This exhibit shows people could be wearing all sorts of things, and their clothes have nothing to do with the victimization they experienced." Her class also created art projects with individuals as a way to work through grief and trauma. The message is clear that societal actions can reinforce and excuse behaviors that support rape culture; and the above advocacy is part of the conversation to change that culture.

Graphic Design Exhibitions Act Together for Social Change

With guidance from graphic design Associate Professor Archana Shekara, undergraduate students from across campus created two art installations that were displayed in the WGS office during the fall and spring semesters. The projects focused on social issues in the United States in hopes of bringing viewers from awareness to action. In fall, the *You Are Not Alone* exhibit allowed students to create works that showcased design as a form of catharsis to overcome social, political, and emotional barriers. The exhibit *This is America*, on display through the spring semester, was a collaborative project between students in Shekara's Honors and graphic design classes. Students analyzed stereotypes and how communities of minorities are marginalized while living in the United States, then created posters that acknowledged and challenged preconceived biases. Their intent was to provoke audiences to think about current issues and encourage action to join the conversation.



International Women's Day Breakfast

In March, several students from WGS classes attended the International Women's Day Breakfast with Acting Director Kyle Ciani and Assistant Director Tanya Diaz-Kozlowski. Sponsored annually by the Soroptimists of McLean County, the morning's theme "Challenging Our Narratives" offered students an opportunity to learn from women in a variety of professions, including those in social services, communications, criminal justice, and health care.



New life to the WGS Resource Center

Our suite of offices in Rachel Cooper 237 has always included a Resource Center where students can print their course papers or meet faculty, but last summer it underwent a transformation. The College of Arts & Sciences provided us with generous support to refresh that space with carpet, paint, living plants, and comfortable furniture. Students now use the center to discuss ideas, relax, and quietly study. We've sponsored academic review sessions and exhibition receptions in the space and even brought in certified comfort dogs at the end of the semesters. WGS course books and articles are available to students for in-center use, along with a wide-range of scholarly and community materials such as Milner Library finding aids. Students play chess, discuss their RSO ideas, and connect with others in their courses for group work. Feel free to stop in—during the school year we are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



2018-19 Award and Scholarship Recipients

Dr. Dorothy E. Lee Scholarship: Edna Milanga

Luellen Laurenti Scholarship: Jasmyne Lee

Anne M. Semlack Memorial Scholarship: Jessica L. White

WGS Achievement Award: Dani Creasey

Rhonda Nicol Memorial Book Awards: Emily Young (undergraduate) and Gina Stinnett (graduate)



Commencement graduates from left: Anthony Tutt, Sheldon Gooch, Deja-Maria Redmond, Dani Creasey, Samantha Reyes, Ashley Dusa, Kimberlee Conover, and Adam Guenther