Envisioning a Feminist and Queer South

The Women’s Studies Program travels to SEWSA

Once again, the Women’s Studies Program loaded up and headed south for the annual Southeastern Women’s Studies Association Conference. This year’s theme was “Envisioning a Feminist and Queer South” which considered the distinctive role of gender studies programs in the South in fostering interdisciplinary scholarship, social change, and the creation of inclusive spaces.

In what is a true ode to the interdisciplinarity of SEWSA and gender studies programs, The Women’s Studies Program took 14 student, faculty, and staff members to the University of Mississippi in Oxford to present their research. From the Masters of Liberal Studies program, Tobi Oloyede presented on feminist consciousness in Buchi Emecheta’s Second-Class Citizen, Esosa Mohammed presented on Nigerian women as agents of socio-cultural change in adverse widowhood practices, Oluwafisayo Ogundora presented on gender work-life in Nigeria, and Women’s Studies Tuition Scholar Lia Bevins with Professor Jill LeRoy-Frazier presented on LBGTQ+ in the churches of Appalachia. LeRoy-Frazier presented on LBGTQ+ in the churches of Appalachia, and currently works at Penn State as an assistant professor of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies and research assistant at the Rock Ethics Institute. Malatino also served their last term as chair for SEWSA’s LGBTQ caucus conference. In addition to recently publishing a book entitled Queer Embodiment, they are currently working as co-organizer for the first ever Society for the Study of Affect Summer School. (For more information on that visit http://affectsociety.com/). Three ETSU students, Amelia Charles, Oluwafisayo Ogundora, and Tobi Oloyede, were awarded competitive travel grants from SEWSA. Yet again, this conference provided students with opportunities for professional development, networking, and crucial discussion with peers. SEWSA was filled with learning, friendship, and growth for everyone involved as they collaborated to envision a more equitable future.

Next year’s conference will be held at the University of South Florida in St. Petersburg from March 26 to March 28. The theme “Embodying Disobedience, Crafting Affinities” prompts scholars to consider embodiment and diversity as the lifeblood of resistant politics and the livelihood of building alliances across differences. As always, the Women’s Studies Program is eager for another lively and invigorating conference.

Interested in going to SEWSA?
Check out www.sewsa.net
Paving a Path to Student Success

Dr. Arpita Nandi, Chair of the Department of Geosciences, kicked-off this semester’s Women on Wednesdays series by discussing strategies to help the next generation of students “meet the economic, social, and environmental challenges to become an active part in shaping the world of the future.” As the Undergraduate Student Coordinator in her department, Nandi takes steps to emphasize the interdisciplinarity of geosciences to help students find career paths that best suit their needs. Creating an internship program through regional public and private sectors, giving assistance on résumé and cover letter writing, developing networking opportunities through guest lectures and alumni visits, encouraging students to join professional organizations, providing funds for conference travel, and collaborating with students on research and publications are the primary ways Nandi paves the path to success for her students. Ultimately, she says, all of these strategies are interwoven and work together to ensure student success.

Cyberflashing and the Digital Playground

Drs. Emily Donald and Rebecca Milner, Assistant Professors in the Department of Counseling and Human Services, discussed the effects of sending and receiving unsolicited lewd photographs via various forms of technology in their talk. The limited extant research shows that while cybersexual harassment is fairly pervasive—around 41% of women and 22% of men reported being sexually harassed through digital means—many fields are only now beginning to investigate the implications of this harassment. Milner noted that this behavior is not a recent phenomenon, and that perpetrators of sexual violence have historically found sophisticated ways of accessing the populations they want to victimize. They hope their research will bring components of social justice and advocacy into the conversation and encourage people who want to support loved ones who have experienced cyber-flashing to refer them to professional mental health services.

Social Network Analysis and Social Determinants

Assistant Professor of Sociology Dr. Candace Bright discussed how her research on Social Network Analysis (SNA) illustrates how connected the world truly is through analyzing and evaluating relationship development. SNA can be used by organizations or companies to help them evaluate how well their members communicate, where they are neglecting their focus, and who are the major hubs in terms of networking with other groups or organizations. SNA can also be useful to see who (such as employers or potential employers) is connected and how a person might be able to use those connections personally or for their organization. Bright noted that SNA is particularly useful in capturing the effectiveness of coalition building, which is a strategy used in social justice initiatives and has become widely-used in community based research. In her research, Bright found that building coalition can improve the work and collaboration among organizational partners, supporting the need to foster relationships between coalition members.

Taking a Department or Organization to the Next Level

Assistant Vice President of Public Safety and Police Chief Nicole Collins wrapped up a successful Women on Wednesdays series with her talk, “Taking a Department or Organization to the Next Level.” Collins discussed the means by which a team can seek excellence, which include developing common goals and mutual trust, ensuring team members share power and have respect for differences, and being committed to constructive conflict resolution and open communication. These strategies will help as individuals form teams and define roles, identify and address potential areas of conflict, rely on Group Think to develop methods of compromise, and adapt to changes in order to “keep the train moving.” Collins encouraged us to consider whether we are problem monitors or problem solvers, and has found that there are several key essentials for organizational survival including continuous learning, on-going evaluation, a proactive approach to change, strong leadership, and skilled management.

Women on Wednesdays Series

Special thanks to the Reece Museum staff and students for their help and use of space.
Women’s Studies Undertakes Trauma-Informed Care Initiative

The Women’s Studies Steering Committee and affiliate faculty spent the 2018-19 school year attending workshops and applying trauma-informed methods to their respective syllabi, class assignments, and policies and procedures in an effort to create a more trauma-informed program. These workshops were an extension of the Trauma-Informed Care and Curriculum Development Retreat held at The Highlander Center and funded, in part, by a SEWSA instructional grant in July of 2018. In addition to the changes made in the classroom, the steering committee has helped spark positive changes in the community. Dr. Jamie Brown of the steering committee has worked closely with Duane Slone, a Circuit Court Judge with the 4th Judicial District Circuit Court in Dandridge, TN, to infuse information gained during the Trauma-Informed Care Retreat and workshops into the Recovery Services and Drug Court. This court now administers the Adverse Childhood Experiences test along with Drug Screening and other measures in an effort to provide a more trauma-informed environment and screening process.

Women’s Studies is grateful to host our retreat at The Highlander Research and Education Center located in New Market, TN, which is a leadership school and cultural training center responsible for grassroots organizing in Appalachia and the South. The program and committee are saddened to learn Highlander recently suffered a fire in one of their main buildings which housed many historical documents and artifacts from the Civil Rights Movement. As supporters of their mission and work, we offer our condolences and support during this time of rebuilding.

Spotlight: Recent WMST Graduates

“I became a Women’s Studies Major because it had the most interdisciplinary classes, and I wanted to learn as much as possible. I was able to study art, literature, history, and sociology, while also focusing on women and LGBTQ people, whose stories and contributions are too often forgotten in academia. During my time in WMST, I have presented at SEWSA twice, been awarded both the ETSU Feminist Activist award and the Outstanding Scholar Activist award in Women’s Studies, and have connected to some really incredible people who have enlightened and inspired me. The education I have gotten as a Women’s Studies Major has made me more well-rounded, more empathetic, and has contributed to my growth as a person and an artist. I hope to continue this growth, and to take what I have learned and use it to help others, whether that is through art, education, or activism.”

Pepper Heifner

“While earning my BA in Women’s Studies (with an Appalachian Studies minor), I applied the concepts and broadened perspectives to my coursework and research. While I began my courses in Women’s Studies in hopes of developing a stronger foundation for my discussion of gender roles in country music, I have also written about social movements and canonized literature as well. Just this past spring, I presented a paper about songwriter Cindy Walker at the Southeastern Women’s Studies Association conference and a paper about Malaprop’s Bookstore and HB1 at the Appalachian Association Conference. I am confident my scholarship will continue to benefit from these areas of study.”

Alan Holmes

“The Women’s Studies program has helped me realize what I wanted to do with my life. A Women’s Studies Internship gave me a way to pursue what my newfound passions were and also explore what they meant to me by writing papers and journal entries throughout my journey at my placement. In my Civic Engagement project I worked with at-risk females addressing trauma and inclusivity trainings. While working in this setting I got to explore the dynamics of gender, sex, sexuality, and race in this region and how it corresponds with mental health. This project was amazing, and I loved it because it compiles everything I want to do together in one setting. I enjoyed my time at the group home and it helped me realize that I want to be a counselor for women. I plan to earn a Master’s degree in Counseling so I can continue this work.”

Amber Byrge
The ETSU Women's Studies Program continues to be a hub of feminist teaching, research, and activism on campus. First, congratulations to our WMST graduates for the 2018-2019 academic year: Amber Byrge, Pepper J. Heifner, and Thomas Alan Holmes and to award winners: Jaden Finch, The Barbara Murphy Brooks Scholarship; Pepper J. Heifner, The Feminist Activist and Feminist Scholar Awards; and Amelia Charles, The Graduate Student Feminist Activist Award! We are proud of you. This semester, students in WMST 3410: Gender and Violence completed action-research projects to raise awareness about the pervasiveness of gender-based violence and share strategies on how to respond if someone reports to you. For instance, Cara Holt constructed an information board in Gilbert Hall on identifying and responding to Domestic Violence, Kerriann Lorigan published an associated “take-away,” and Jessie Birkeland facilitated a public workshop on Healthy Relationships at the Main Street Theatre. These are just a sample of the many great projects completed this semester in Women's Studies. In February, Women's Studies sponsored a road trip to Appalachian State University to hear Dr. Hil Malatino (Penn State) give a lecture on their new book, *Queer Embodiment: Monstrosity, Medical Violence, and Intersex Experience* (U of Nebraska P), which has received high praise by leading authorities in the field. In March, fourteen students, staff, and faculty drove from ETSU to Ole Miss to attend the Southeastern Women's Studies Association Conference 2019, Oxford, MS. The twelve-hour drive in an over-packed van, E. Patrick Johnson's moving performance of “Put a Little Honey in My Sweet Tea” and Minnie Bruce Pratt's energizing keynote that traced the herstory of the feminist MOVement sparked three days of envisioning, celebrating, and strategizing a feminist and queer South. You can read more about this amazing experience, including our students' competitive SEWSA travel grant awards, in the cover story. This semester Women's Studies also partnered with the Language and Culture Resource Center to provide information about healthy relationships and resources for gender-based violence at the Hispanic Health Fair and at the Corazón Latino festival. Since April is Sexual Assault Awareness month, the Program rolled out a series of infographics entitled “YOU HAVE OPTIONS” about resources available on the campus of ETSU in response to Sexual Assault. The infographics are framed and will be on permanent display in dorms and classroom buildings as part of the trauma-informed work produced by a $10,000 Avon Foundation Grant which the Women's Studies Program received last year. It's been a great spring semester, but we are already looking forward to the opportunities in store next fall. The Women's Studies Program has been advancing feminist thought and promoting feminist action at ETSU and in the region for 25 years. Watch for news about our upcoming birthday celebration!

**Director's Corner**

*Words from Director Phyllis Thompson*

**Faculty Scholarship**

*Brown, J.B. & Langenbrunner, M.* *A view from the bench: Adjudicating same-sex divorce-related issues with parents of minor children.* National Council on Family Relations, Nov 2018 San Diego, CA


*Marsh, H. & Thompson, P.* (2019) *“Safe enough to learn”: Attending to Trauma in Higher Education.* Southeastern Women's Studies Association Conference 2019, Oxford, MS.

*Novotny, B.* (2018, April). *Understanding the fluidity of gender identity and sexual identity formation.* American Counseling Association Conference, Atlanta, GA.

*Thompson, P. & Marsh, H.* (2019) *“Introduction to Trauma-Informed Approaches.”* WMST 3410: Gender and Violence. East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.


*If you have news to share, let us know! Email us at womenstudies@etsu.edu*

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