

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

Newsletter Spring 2021

Edited by Caroline Daniels, MALS GA



Gabby Rivera: Radical Creativity

GABBY RIVERA

Gabby Rivera is a Bronx-born, queer Puerto Rican on a mission to create the wildest, most fun stories ever. Rivera is the first Latina to write for Marvel Comics, penning the solo series *America Chavez*, a portable-punching queer Latina powerhouse.

COFFEE WITH GABBY RIVERA
March 29 | 5 p.m. Eastern Time
<https://etsu.zoom.us/j/92223284721>

KEYNOTE SPEECH
March 30 | 5 p.m. Eastern Time
<https://etsu.zoom.us/j/94660568574>

For more information contact
Dr. Fluzza at lrc@etsu.edu

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Sponsored by Division of Cross-Disciplinary Studies, Department of Philosophy & Humanities, Dr. Patricia Robinson 'Pete' O'Neil, Department of Art & Design, Department of Communication & Performance, Department of Literature & Language, Women's Studies Program, Women's Health Center, Office of Equity & Inclusion, Language & Culture Resource Center

Gabby Rivera is a powerful force of creativity and joy. She is a young adult fiction writer, is the first Latina to write for Marvel (look up America Chavez!), and has recently branched out to work on her own graphic series called *b.b. free*. In her keynote discussion in March she spoke about the three principle that ground her work: Queer, Latinx, Joy. She sees queerness as a way to reimagine the world, and as something magic that makes the world sweeter. She is Latinx; her Puerto-rican roots have led to her to discover more about who she is, the history she comes from, and where she stands in the world. Her grandmothers have been influentially important to her discovery of her roots. Gabby Rivera is joy. She spoke about how “joy is part of the reckoning.” When we face challenges, experience hardships, fight for social justice... we must also find the joy along the way.

She started writing queer stories because she was tired of seeing sad queer stories where the LGBTQ+ characters met an unhappy end. She says, “I fill my stories with love notes for queer kids of color.” Rivera talked about how all the work we do changes to the future, so the work we do is important, not matter how small we think it is. The stories we tell, through whatever media we choose, are powerful. Someone in the world will find those stories and love them. One of my favorite quotes from her *America Chavez* series is, “Daydream. Revel in joy. The warmth of the sun belongs to you.” Rivera shared that she believes that peace, joy, and rest are radical acts of care and she infuses her writing with these concepts.

If you're looking for more Gabby Rivera joy, check out her podcast *Joy Revolution*. Her collection of writing includes *Juliet Takes a Breath*, *America Chavez* for Marvel, and *b.b.*

free.

If you want to know more, check out her website! <https://gabbyrivera.com>

Courses of Interest

Summer 2021

MALS 5000 Foundations of Liberal Studies, Dr. LeRoy-Frazier, (online)

MALS 5100: Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies, Dr. LeRoy-Frazier, (online)

COMM 5957: Special Topics in Communication Studies: Food and Communication, Dr. Kinser, (online)

ENGL 5077: Young Adult Literature, Dr. Thompson (online)

HIST 5956 Summer School Topic: Nigeria-- History and Culture, Dr. Weise (online)

SOWK 5567: Human Sexuality, (online)

Fall 2021

MALS 5000 Foundations of Liberal Studies

MALS 5100 Introduction to Interdisciplinary Study

MALS 5200 Bodies in Space (a study of the social body and public space)

AVST 5315: Topics in Archival Studies: Human Rights Archiving, Dr. Fox-Horton (online)

CJCR 5500: Topical Seminar: Domestic Violence, Dr. Prior (T 5:30-8:20 p.m.)

HIST 5010: Studies in U.S. History: American Sexuality, Dr. Watson (R 6-9 p.m.)

PSYC 5620: Topical Seminar in Social Psychology: Stigma, Dr. Williams (W 2-4:50 p.m.)



Soon-to-be Graduate!

Kim Barber

I will be graduating in the summer of 2021 from the MALS program. I received my undergraduate degree in English from ETSU in 2009. I have enjoyed my time at ETSU and have lasting connections with classmates and faculty. I am currently the executive director of a non profit that works to provide advocacy to victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and human trafficking. My concentration in the MALS program is Gender Studies. The extensive research into gender, diversity and social justice required by the MALS program helps me daily in my approach to advocacy. I plan to continue in a career in sexual assault response and prevention hopefully with the United States Department of Defense.

The flexibility of the MALS program allowed me to develop research unique to my interests and background. For that reason, I have been able to discover a passion for cultural psychology, sociology, racial and gendered social justice issues, and the law. I am passionate about exploring the ways in which cultural humanities can address major issues of social justice and offer us tools to move forward in our work to build stronger social justice programs and initiatives. I plan to pursue a PhD in policy administration in criminal justice.

My culminating project research centers around the uses of literary narrative to help clients address their experiences of trauma. I am focusing in particular on the work of women writers of color and its intersections with social ethics, cultural psychology, and trauma theory. My project incorporates an interactive Digital Humanities component that

New Student Profiles

Jessica Blaustein

I live in Chapel Hill, NC. I graduated with a degree in German in 1998. (I'm sure some of you remember my wonderful professor, Frau Hungate.) When I started looking for an online Liberal Studies program last year, ETSU's program was only in-person so I enrolled at another school. Unfortunately, my most recent trips to Johnson City have been sad occasions because of my father's illness and passing. My dad, the late Dr. Richard Blaustein, spent his entire career at ETSU and was deeply connected to the Upper East Tennessee community. When I was in town to pack up my dad's house in December, I noticed an ad announcing the MALS online option. I applied right away.



My Liberal Studies plans are still a bit amorphous, but everyone assures me that's normal. My professional linguistic aspirations disappeared the moment I graduated with my bachelors. Primarily during the last 23 years, I've been in the business of Middle Eastern dance. I'd intended to continue working in my field, developing linguistic abilities and communications skills fit for the international online environment. However, I could see myself throwing all those business-related studies out the window and focusing on how Germanic language is practiced between borders of European countries and in America because to me that's just a heck of a lot of fun.

I wasn't expecting to come back to ETSU, but I am extremely happy things turned out this way. Time will tell what I settle on. Regardless, I know I'm in the right place.



Mango Gabriel Gagara

My name is Mango Gabriel Gagara, a Chartered Accountant from Nigeria. I studied Accounting from Nasarawa State University, Keffi and earned a Master of Business Administration in Accounting from University of Portharcourt. I love being part of a team task to solve a problem; in other words, I love identifying gaps in processes and providing solutions.

I enrolled in the MALS program (concentration in gender and diversity) to change the narrative of ethnic/culture bias in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa. My most important cause is to minimize ethnic bias in electing, appointing, and accepting individuals into public and private office.

My hobbies are: playing and watching football, basketball and tennis, while my favorite movies are *OZ* and *Man on fire*. One thing I can't live without is the WORD OF GOD; it energizes me when everything is lost.

My wish list:

- African leaders include Gender and Diversity as a subject in Secondary schools. This is to educate the youth at an early stage to accept or elect people base on attributes not ethnicity.
 - Establish and partner with NGO's to educate institutions in sub-Saharan Africa on the need to elect, appoint and accept individuals base on attributes, not ethnic or gender bias. Having individuals in public office based on ethnicity rather than attributes has largely affected Africa's growth.
 - Get married and have a daughter to run home to her smile.
-

Invitation to Special Zoom Session

Hear ye, hear ye! We invite all alum, faculty, staff, and current students to a special class session of our MALS 5000 course! This class session will be showcasing research from MALS alum. It will take place on [April 29th](#). Please click the "I'm in" button below so we can send you a zoom link. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out!

RSVP for our MALS 5000 research showcase!

I'm in!!!

Select

Can't make it, but would love to attend in the future!

Select

Where are they now? Alumni profiles!

Joe Penza

I'm originally from RI and sought admission to the MALS program because of its personalized curriculum. I graduated in May 2011 with a concentration in Archival Studies and began an internship at the Kingsport City Archives. I was then hired at the Elizabethton-Carter County Public Library as a Library Clerk and subsequently pitched the idea of starting a city archives. This idea was well-received and we officially formed the Archives of the City of Elizabethton in January 2012. Since then, I have served as the city's first archivist, overseeing tremendous growth in the quantity and diversity of archival materials in our collections. I've also professionalized our environmental monitoring and storage standards, successfully implemented several state grants, and conducted outreach events that have endeared us to the community while strengthening our ability to attract underrepresented voices for inclusion in the archives. I'm also a member of the board of directors at the Museum at Mountain Home, our region's only medical history museum; as well as the Skateboarding Instructor for the P.E.A.K. Mentor Program. Overall, I wouldn't trade my MALS education for anything. It prepared me to chart my own path within my profession while feeling confident in my skills and knowledge.



Dana Bailey

I am honored to be a member of the first MALS graduating class in 2000. After graduation, I was fortunate to work as the Marketing Director for both Wellmont Health System and Johnson City Medical Center.

East Tennessee State University is home to me. I tell people that I bleed blue and gold. My undergraduate degree is in Social Work. I have held several jobs at ETSU and am still employed at ETSU College of Medicine as a Manager in Academic Affairs. I also teach as an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Management and Marketing.

My favorite memory is being in Appalachian Culture class and being assigned a group project. I was interested in health care marketing; one lady was interested in politics, and another one in primates. Our project became "Media Stereotypes". We had so much fun putting it all together and included all of our interests in the final project. I have had a wonderful career and would not change a thing. I am always willing to talk to students about ETSU and MALS. I have made so many wonderful memories and developed lifelong friendships at ETSU.

Thomas Hilton

My name is Thomas Hilton, and I graduated from the MALS program (Archival Studies concentration) in the summer of 2017. I am now the evening/weekend circulation supervisor at ETSU's Sherrod Library. Although I have a position that is only tangentially related to archives, I thoroughly enjoy my job, and getting it would have not been possible without my degree. My student worker positions helped me get a foot in the door, and a number of courses I took are relevant to my job. Finally, while I was a MALS student, I became very familiar with various library resources for my coursework and my final project. As a library staff member, I now show other students how to use those resources.



One piece of advice I would give to prospective students is that when it comes to completing assignments and readings, **don't procrastinate**. Assignments can pile up quickly, and before you know it, you'll have two 15 page papers and a ton of readings due tomorrow. Get started on them early. Not only will you learn more, but it will be a much more enjoyable experience.

Updates on our recent graduates!

Fisayo Ogunodoro has been awarded a full fellowship to do doctoral work in sociology at SUNY-Buffalo. She has also been admitted to the University of Utah's doctoral program.

Asongayi Venard has entered a doctoral program in Public Administration at West Chester University of Pennsylvania.

MALS Program now offered online!

The MALS program is now available online, on-ground, and as a hybrid! This summer we'll start with our first round of students who plan to complete the program online. One current requirement of this version of the MALS program is that students must start their courses in the summer in order to have online access to all required courses. The MALS program will still continue to be offered on-ground, and as a mix of online and on-ground. We've been aiming to increase the flexibility of our program and are excited to see what comes next!

AGLSP announces call for papers

October 14-16, 2021 – Unmute Yourself: Voice, Representation, Power

The Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs' annual conference will be virtual again this coming fall! Cost to attend for students and alumni is \$25.

For more information, and to keep an eye on when registration opens, click the link to their conference page here: <https://www.aglsp.org/annual-conference-2021>

Virtual Recruitment Sessions

The MALS department is now offering virtual recruitment sessions! We hosted one on March 29th and met with prospective students. We hope to schedule more for the future!

[Photo from the permanent collection at the Reese Museum at ETSU.]



Are you an alum and want to have your profile included in our next newsletter?

Click any option below so we can email you and create a profile for our next newsletter!

Yes

Select

Absolutely

Select

It's my wildest dream

Select

Contact Info

Dr. Jill LeRoy-Frazier, MALS Graduate Coordinator; Professor and Chair, Division of Cross-Disciplinary Studies; leroyfra@etsu.edu, (423) 439-5678

Dr. Julie-Fox-Horton, Archival Studies Graduate Certificate Coordinator; Assistant Professor, Cross-Disciplinary Studies; foxhorton@etsu.edu; (423) 439-4223



Follow us on social media for updates and information! You can find us on Facebook by clicking the associated button. We also have a website, which currently being updated: <https://www.etsu.edu/graduate-continue-education/cross-disciplinary/>