



Women's and Gender Studies

University of Oregon

This is an abbreviated version of our Spring newsletter. Full version online at <http://wgs.uoregon.edu/?page=5816>

June 2015

New Beginnings in Store for Women's and Gender Studies



Like our graduating seniors, the Women's and Gender Studies Department is embarking on some major transitions. Several of our faculty members are going on leave or sabbatical, others have moved their joint positions into other departments, and one is moving to New York. Professor Judith Raitskin will be on sabbatical next year, after she leads a group of students to Siena on a study abroad program in the fall. Professor Kemi Balogun will be taking time off in the fall and winter to care for a new baby arriving in September. Professors Ernesto Martinez and Lynn Fujiwara have moved their positions fully into Ethnic Studies (thank you for your years of service to WGS!), and finally, I will be moving to New York to take a job at the Macaulay Honors College, the honors college for the City University of New York.

All of these changes provide our department with the opportunity for reflection and growth. Professor Carol Stabile will be our new department head. Carol has years of experience as well as the vision, energy, and enthusiasm to guide WGS into its next phase. In the winter quarter we hosted external faculty members for our program review, a process that each department goes through once every ten years. It's a good opportunity to get outsiders' perspectives and to take stock of the department's direction. We learned a lot from this process, and we plan on spending the next couple of years revising our curriculum based on their suggestions.

We are hiring two visiting professors for the next academic year to fill in while we revise our curriculum and search for permanent faculty positions in the near future. In the meantime, we will continue with our usual courses and programming. This year we hosted a fabulous lecture and performance piece by Ana-Maurine Lara for our annual Sally Miller Gearhart event, which was a huge success. We look forward to the changes ahead!

-- Dr. Elizabeth Reis, Department Head

Alumni Spotlight: Emelia Udd

After graduation from WGS, I was uncertain about my future. Dr Fujiwara had encouraged me to consider graduate school, as she'd witnessed my passionate love affair with theory. Others had encouraged me to continue my work in the social justice community. I'd been working with and for all of Eugene's anti-violence agencies most of my time at university. I was torn between this tension of pure theory and pure practice, unsure of my thoughts around entering professional academia as well as professional social work. In the end, I chose to wait on formalized education and headed to Seattle for a job at the University of Washington.



I have no idea what possessed them to hire me, a naive 22-year old white woman from rural Oregon. Luckily they did, because the Parent Child Assistance Program (PCAP) changed my life, integrated my education, and set me on the path that I'm still on today. PCAP is a longitudinal research project, a social service intervention, and an incredible program for moms who are struggling with both mental health and chemical dependency. Two requirements to get into the program: a) active addiction during pregnancy to either alcohol and/or drugs and b) connection to social service programs without engagement. The women in this program taught me everything I know about city living, including how to speed on the freeway and navigate traffic. But most of their time was spent teaching me how to spot drug deals, understand the power of environment to promote addiction, community-based police brutality, and life at the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality. I cannot count the number of times we participated in a dialectical, patient, "calling out" of problematic language between us. My relationships with these women, their children and families, are an integrated part of my psyche.

Health justice social work was not a big leap. This was the groundwork intervention on race, class, gender, and sexuality-based health disparities. I began work with families to combat infant mortality on the interpersonal and policy levels, moved into work with Health Care for the Homeless, and became a part of BABES Network: A Sisterhood of Women Facing HIV Together.

It was during my time in health justice that the last ten years collapsed into a single vision: I wanted to be a midwife. During my time at PCAP, I'd been present for many births, gone through many pregnancies, and seen what can only be described as the misogynist system of maternity care. Sometimes this was just attitudinal, but often it was physical. Anesthetized signatures that signed away parental rights, sterilizations that "mysteriously" occurred, the straight-forward removal of children of color. I had seen enough to know more about my place in the world. I was looking for a solution that could happen, person by person, family by family, for the strongest and most vulnerable among us.

I begin my graduate studies in nurse-midwifery this summer, at Seattle University. It is my hope to continue building a praxis, a waking meditation on the daily practice of liberation for myself, my community, and the world.

Research Highlights

Oluwakemi Balogun continues work on her book tentatively titled *Beauty Diplomacy: Culture, Markets, and Politics in the Nigerian Beauty Industry*. The book examines the Nigerian beauty pageant industry as a lens to analyze varied articulations of embodied Nigerian nationhood. The book draws on ethnographic research and archival data to analyze four case studies of beauty pageants that illuminate how Nigeria envisions itself as a nation. Dr. Balogun explores Nigeria's fledgling position in the global economy alongside its contentious cultural politics. She also looks at beauty in the context of major transitions within the Nigerian nation-state, using pageants to understand how Nigeria simultaneously makes sense of itself internally as a national community and internationally to the world.

Yvonne Braun currently has a number of research projects extending into new areas, with collaborative research on gender, development, power, and policy in Costa Rica and in Japan, in addition to her ongoing work in Southern Africa. She has a forthcoming article in *Gender & Society* with Assitan Sylla, MA alum in IS, on plastic bag pollution and environmental responsibility in Mali and a co-authored chapter on the global anti-dam movement in Lesotho in *Border Politics: Social Movements, Collective Identities, and Globalization*. She was also recently awarded a research grant from the Center for the Study of Women in Society to continue her collaborative research on local and regional organizing for women's rights in Southern Africa. She was also active in professional service including serving as Graduate Studies Director within International Studies, being Director of the UO African Studies Program, and chairing the Global Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP).

Elizabeth Reis will be working over the summer with disability studies scholar, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, on a Feminist Research Seminar, to be hosted through the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan. The seminar is called "The Problem of Intersex Frogs: A Seminar on Feminism, Disability, and Environmental Justice." The purpose of the seminar is to provide a small group of scholars an uninterrupted, intimate, and supportive setting for meaningful discourse. They have invited a group of people who research intersex, disability, environmental studies, and feminism for a three day intensive conference in the fall.

Judith Raiskin will use the summer to transcribe and analyze many interviews conducted as part of her ongoing research on LGBT parenting. Her book (co-authored by Alison Gash) asks how people exercise their rights and responsibilities in an environment marked by significant legal confusion and social apprehension and transition. Based on this research, Raiskin is working with a local non-profit organization, Parenting Now!, to revise the parent education curriculum distributed to 46 states and 17 countries. She will also develop two courses she will teach this fall in Siena, Italy: "The Art of Travel Writing" and "Italy through Film."

Over the past year, **Carol Stabile** has been working on a book about a group of women she refers to as the Broadcast 41 because in 1950 they all had the serious misfortune of being listed in *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television*, a book that became known as the bible of the broadcast blacklist. In an industry dominated by men, a full thirty percent of those identified by anti-communists as subversives were women. Although many of the Broadcast 41 had never worked in radio or television and most would never work in those industries after the blacklist, at the dawn of the age of television, their lives and work offer a compelling, if largely invisible, reminder of the vibrant and multiple perspectives that were part of the medium's early history. The suppression of these perspectives helped to ensure that television for many years to come would only rarely include the perspectives of women, people of color, queer people, and immigrants who diverged from the traditional family that anti-communists helped create. The book tells the story of the attacks on this politically progressive and diverse group of women in broadcasting and the ways in which their multiple perspectives were eradicated from the industry, while at the same time offering a sense of what American television might have looked like had their hopes and dreams for the new medium been allowed to take root and flourish.

Lani Teves continues working this summer on her manuscript, *Defiant Indigeneity: The Politics of Native Hawaiian Performance*. She will also travel to the Cook Islands to present her research at the Oceanic Performance Biennial focusing on Pacific Urbanism, Performance, and Ecology. Bringing together debates in Queer Studies and Native Studies, the presentation will discuss how queer Pacific Islanders living in the continental United States cultivate kinship networks that challenge the division between on-island and off-island Indigenous identities and communities.

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