Shahzia Sikander: New York Artist to Visit in Spring Semester

New York-based artist Shahzia Sikander will be our International Women's Day speaker this year. She will address the campus and larger community on 2012's Women's History Month theme from an international perspective: “Engendering the Arts and Sciences: A Global Perspective.” Her talk and screening of her latest digital artwork will take place on March 8th at 11:30 am in Cohen Lounge in Dickson Hall and the event is open and free to the public.

Born in 1969 in Lahore, Pakistan, Shahzia Sikander found an early passion for the arts and received her undergraduate degree at the National College of Arts in Lahore. She continued her education at Rhode Island School of Design, receiving her MFA in 1995.

As an artist, her resume continues to impress. Most recently, in 2006, Ms. Sikander was chosen as a Young Global Leader and received the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, also known as the “genius” grant. She has also been awarded the 2005 National Medal of Honor by the Government of Pakistan, the 2003 Commendation Award from the Mayor’s Office in New York City, and several other honors during her career.

Ms. Sikander’s work is not simply an outlet of creativity. She uses her work as a political statement. When asked about her political agenda, Sikander answered, “At a fairly young age, my decisions and judgments were mostly intuitive and yet I gravitated towards those who were questioning the status quo.”

Sikander’s art focuses on the issues that truly affect her: she creates miniature paintings that are a blend of her Eastern and Western upbringings. She also explores the Muslim/Hindu borders, often combining themes from both into one impressive painting. Her art also explores the often taboo subjects of feminism and eroticism, tackling both subjects in creative and innovative ways. Most recently, in her exhibitions such as Gossamer, Bending the Barrels, and SpiNN, Sikander has experimented with the moving portrait, stunning audiences as her art pieces literally come to life.
Sociomedical scientist Rebecca Jordan-Young will be joining us at Montclair State University on March 19 at 2:30, sharing her findings on gender, sexuality, and the nature of both men and women.

Rebecca Jordan-Young is not your average professor. As an assistant professor at the Barnard College at Columbia University, she specializes in taboo subjects involving: HIV/AIDS, sexuality, gender, and sex. But Jordan-Young’s career was impressive far before she found a home at Columbia University. Before working as a professor, teaching in the Women’s Studies department, she worked as a Principal Investigator and Deputy Director of the Social Theory Core at the Center for Drug Use and HIV Research of the National Development and Research Institutes, Inc., and had been a Health Disparities Scholar sponsored by the National Institutes of Health.

Jordan-Young began questioning what we have already accepted as fact when it comes to gender while conducting experiments of her own. She questions girls playing with dolls while boys play with trucks. Are children conditioned to fit into these gender roles or is it something more than that, something they are born with? When asked about her research, Jordan-Young states, “The answers I question have to do with the nature and causes of differences between men and women, and between straight people and gay people. Specifically, I question what we ‘know’ about male and female brains or gay and straight brains.”

When it comes right down to it, she says, researchers go in with tunnel vision and look for specific answers. The real answer, she explains, is far simpler than that: “...when you have a lot of children, you begin to notice that they all come with personalities of their own, and they are all quite different. Gender recedes in importance.”

Meet Professor Neda Soltani

Professor Neda Soltani is a Visiting scholar from Iran who is at MSU with the help of the International Scholars Rescue Fund. She is teaching a course on Women’s Rights in Iran for WMGS this term and will be returning in the Fall to offer this course again for our majors and minors. Avail of the opportunity to take this exciting course with her to learn from her first-hand experience what it’s like to be an educated woman in Iran today.

Come to our Monthly Chai House Gatherings!

First Thursday of Every Month, 4-5 pm in Dickson 120 (the WMGS office)

A time to relax and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea with the students, professors, faculty of the WMGS and GLBTQ Programs, as well as their friends and supporters.
Fawzia Afzal-Khan 
Director’s Column

To say we are living in challenging times is perhaps an understatement. From the Arab revolts to the Euro crisis to continuing home foreclosures across the United States, where new data according to a USA Today report of Nov 2011, shows “More US homes entered the foreclosure process in October than in the previous month, with Florida, Pennsylvania and Indiana registering among the largest monthly increases”, to the Occupy Wall Street Movement—all show us a grim picture of reality, which OWS and the Arab uprisings are trying to resist and alter. The dire economic news at home is accompanied with legislative policies ratified by our Congress and Senate that point to social regression rather than progression. For example, last year, five states — Kansas, Alabama, Idaho, Indiana and Oklahoma — enacted abortion bans modeled after the groundbreaking fetal-pain bill which passed in Nebraska in 2010. Whatever happened to a woman’s right to choose?? Another type of law enacted in 2011 in Wisconsin, Indiana, Kansas and North Carolina, eliminates public funding for Planned Parenthood. The funds had been earmarked for family planning and other non-abortion services, but Planned Parenthood became a target for cutoffs because it also is the nation’s largest provider of abortions. At the same time as such funding cuts mean that fewer low-income women will get contraceptive aid and family planning counseling thus paradoxically increasing the risk of unwanted pregnancies as well as the spread of STDs (due to lack of funding for sex and health education)—billions of tax-payer dollars are being poured into the military to continue colonizing other lands and peoples (are we seriously thinking of “opening a war front with Iran”?) under cover of the never-ending “War on Terror.”

So in Women’s History Month this year, we would like to address some of the above-mentioned global crises and issues affecting women and men through using the Arts and Sciences to ask deeper questions about how we live, who we are, and who we could possibly be.

For International Women’s Day, the WMGS Program is thrilled to bring to our students, faculty and staff, the internationally-renowned visual artist, Shahzia Sikander, who aims to challenge boundaries and stereotypes imposed by gender, religion, time, and culture. Having been born in Lahore, Pakistan (1969), educated in both her homeland (BFA, National College of Art, 1992) and the United States (MFA, Rhode Island School of Design, 1995), and now based in New York, she is in a prime position to probe beneath surfaces and destabilize categorizing attitudes. Her creativity has been duly recognized by the MacArthur Genius Award she received in 2006. In this age of uprisings in the Arab world and East-West tensions, Sikander’s art has deep resonance. Her multilayered work “conveys a complexity rife with endless shifts in perception that call attention to difference even as it reveals similarities. On a deeper level, this complexity dismantles hierarchical assumptions and subverts the very notion of a singular, fixed identity or a simplistic reading of figures and forms.” [review from Square Cylinder]

Certainly, such work resonates with a recent class session in my course on Feminist Theory where my students and I were discussing Simone de Beauvoir’s groundbreaking work on dismantling gender hierarchies in her 1949 book, The Second Sex—obviously still relevant today as she asks us to consider the question, “what is a woman?” If “woman” can no longer be seen simply as “Other,” then neither can nations be seen as such from the perspective of a dominant superpower. In this perspective, “Sikander’s work bears witness to our ever-changing world, a global entity where nations and ethnicities interact and coalesce.” [review from Square Cylinder]

On March 19th, Professor Rebecca Jordan-Young of Barnard College, NY, will conduct a workshop for WMGS faculty, followed by a lecture to the general public, based on her recently launched book, Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences. This is a comprehensive critical analysis of research questioning whether hormone exposures in utero “hardwire” the brain to be either masculine or feminine in sexuality, skills, and interests. She teaches courses in science and technology studies, sexuality, gender theory, and HIV/AIDS.

Clearly, both these accomplished and brilliant women will bring the arts and sciences to bear critically upon the question of gender, ethnic, sexual, cultural and religious “difference” as these categories of identity have shaped our assumptions and understandings of ourselves and our world. Maybe with their help, we can deconstruct some of these categories of analysis and look forward to a world ruled by compassion and justice for humankind.

Fawzia Afzal-Khan Wins $70,000 NEH “Bridging Cultures Through Film” Grant to Begin Work on a Documentary Highlighting Pakistani Women Singers

“Whatever happened to a woman’s right to choose?”
This has been a busy year so far for those of us involved with the GLBTQ Minor. In mid-October the present and former Coordinators of the minor met with Amie MacMath, the director of the Lesbian and Gay Center and a bunch of students in the Stonewall Suites living-learning community. We tramped the streets of the West Village from one ‘sacred’ gay space to another, and in the process reliving some of the history of the GLBTQ movement.

Later in the semester the GLBTQ Minor held a Meet and Greet for faculty and graduate students to become familiar with the program and with one another. The interest and commitment to the program was evident. The only thing missing was the wine we had hoped to serve…

Then in November we helped bring Faisal Alam to campus. As a Muslim gay activist he had a special message for both Muslim-identified straight and gay, and other queer students: there is a movement and a push for acceptance of lesbians and gays within the Muslim-American community, paving the way for global change for Muslim GLBTQ folk.

This semester we have one important intellectual event scheduled and one fabulously nasty entertainment being prepared. Rebecca Young, the author of *Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences* will give a talk on the misconceptions of what has been actually ‘found’ by science with regard to sex differences in the brains of men and women.

The talk will be given on Monday, March 19th at 2:30, room to be announced.

Based on her experience at Barnard College, she will also speak to Women and Gender Studies faculty about the process of blending the dual foci of gender and sexuality into a mutually enriching curriculum.

And the entertainment we have in mind for April is the appearance on campus of The Kinsey Sicks, a well-known drag and a capella quartet of consummate jokers whose vocals sound lust, I mean lush, harmonies.

I hope you will attend these forthcoming events and if you have an idea for speakers and/or events that would enliven the discussion around GLBTQ issues, please don’t hesitate to communicate them to the Program Coordinator of the Minor, Prof. Gil Zicklin.

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**Spring 2012 Awards**

**Application Deadlines:**

*The Edna and Ben Gould Memorial Scholarship in Women’s and Gender Studies*

Scholarship: $250
Awarded to a student who has taken at least 15 credits in WMGS, has a minimum of a 3.0 GPA, and will continue their enrollment in the WMGS program.

**Deadline to apply:**
Thursday, March 8th

**WMGS Book Award Scholarship:** $100 each in form of MSU Bookstore credit (for books only)
Awards for WMGS majors/minors with the highest GPA, GLBTQ minors with the highest GPA, and the student with the highest promise as a feminist/GLBTQ activist.

**Deadline to apply:**
Thursday, March 8th

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**Fall 2012 WMGS/GLBTQ Core Courses:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Days and Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>GLQS 200-01</td>
<td>Intro to GLBTQ Studies</td>
<td>Zicklin G</td>
<td>MR 1:00-2:15</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMGS 102-01</td>
<td>Intro to WMGS</td>
<td>Cuevas-Reyes, C</td>
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<td>MW 11:30-12:45</td>
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<td>Global Feminism</td>
<td>Harry, S</td>
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<td>WMGS 201-01</td>
<td>Inventing Feminism</td>
<td>Hersh, J</td>
<td>MR 10:00-11:15</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMGS 302-01</td>
<td>Selected Topics:Women’s Rights in Iran</td>
<td>Soltani, Z</td>
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<td>WMGs 401-01</td>
<td>Co-op Ed: Women’s &amp; Gender Studies</td>
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<td>TBA</td>
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The New Jersey Women’s and Gender Studies Consortium is a state-wide forum for a discussion and support of all aspects of the functioning of the Women’s and Gender Studies Programs across the state of New Jersey. MSU’s Women’s and Gender Studies Program is a partner. This April, as usual, winners of our Student Essay Competition will present their work at the NJWGSC Undergraduate Colloquium at Rider University, after being recognized at the Flag Raising Ceremony on March 1st at MSU.

The mission of the New Jersey Women's and Gender Studies Consortium is to ensure the continued strength, visibility and development of interdisciplinary women’s and gender studies at universities and colleges in New Jersey. The Consortium stands as the formal organization of women’s and gender studies programs, departments and initiatives across New Jersey. The Consortium serves as a network of WGS programs, departments and initiatives and provides collaborative space where WGS students, staff and faculty can share resources, knowledge and strategies for achieving our common goals of feminist, multicultural education, research and practices for social justice.

Learn more and register at: http://www.njwgsc.org

Curriculum-Based Announcements

WMGS 303: Global Feminism is WMGS 200 as of Spring 2012 and Meets Gen Ed 200 - K2 Non-Western Cultural Perspectives as well as the World Languages and Cultures Requirement - World Cultures. The only Prerequisite for this course is WMGS 102. ***

**Please note that this is only the case for those who take Global Feminism WMGS 200 in Fall 2012 and after.

Starting Fall 2012, the WMGS Program is offering a Teacher Ed Certification for those students interested in obtaining K-5 Elementary Ed certification. With our certification, elementary school teachers will be able to encourage students from a very young age to critically analyze constructs of gender and their impact on defining boys’ and girls’ behaviors, hopefully leading K-5 students to become more questioning of these gender roles and open to change and appreciation of deviations in behavior from the “norm”.

Elementary school teachers trained in the WMGS major will be able to nurture these students’ capacities to reason clearly, support their ideas, become original thinkers and express themselves well both orally and in writing. WMGS-certified teachers of K-5 students will help them learn to recognize, understand and appreciate global diversity and a range of possible expressions of gender and sexuality. This, in turn, will help students to grow up to be compassionate human beings in a global environment attuned to differences of gender, race, class, sexuality and religion, with zero tolerance for bullying of any individuals or groups.
A Farewell to Montclair!

Lauren Cutrone, Outreach Student Assistant and Graduating Senior

When I entered Montclair State University, I wasn’t even aware that there was such a field as Women’s and Gender Studies. I was completely passionate about my choice to pursue English and Creative Writing and I never imagined I would change my mind. However, during my time at college, my interest and awareness of feminism grew and I found myself impulsively adding a WMGS minor.

I have yet to regret it. I have learned so many valuable lessons and I have met so many inspirational people during my time here at Montclair State University. Whether it be learning the extraordinary history of women in Jill Hersh’s Inventing Feminism, fighting against sexual and domestic violence in Jessica Restaino’s Writing Women Safe, or learning to battle detrimental ideologies in Fawzia Aftal-Khan’s Feminist Theory, the knowledge I have gained has shaped me immensely and has changed me as a person and, most importantly, as a woman.

Not only do I have my professors to thank for my wonderful experience, but I have my wonderful co-workers to thank as well. Working alongside Dr. Aftal-Khan and Viviana Bernal, our program assistant, has been an amazing experience. Whereas I originally felt timid and insecure about entering the real world and finding a new home at a new career, I feel that I have gained so many skills that I am certain I will carry over into my new life as a graduate of Montclair State University and as a professional individual.

Congratulations to my fellow 2012 graduates of Montclair State University and another thank you to my wonderful mentors! I will miss each and every one of you!

Graduating Senior/Student Book Awards! 
April 26th, 3:15-4:15
UN Courtyard Lounge

Don’t forget to attend the award ceremony for the distinguished and hard working members of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program. Refreshments will be served!

The WMGS Program stands in solidarity with all members of the campus community in protest against recent bias incidents.

We affirm that hate is NOT an MSU Value.

Come Visit Us in the Women’s and Gender Studies Office!
Located at: Dickson Hall 120
Phone: 973-655-7911

Office Hours
Monday: 9:30am-12pm & 1pm-3:30pm
Tuesday: 1am-1pm & 2pm-5pm
Wednesday: 9:30am-12pm & 1pm-3:30pm
Thursday: 10:00am-1pm & 2pm-4:00pm
Friday: CLOSED