MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hello Faculty, Students, Staff!

Welcome to a new year and the spring term, where even as we struggle through the snowstorms and bitter cold of the northeast area where we live and work, we know that spring will follow soon—and I know we are all looking forward to that! Spring brings with it the month of Women’s Herstory, and this March we have, as usual, a plethora of exciting speakers and events which are sure to engage and enrich our minds and feed our souls. Please do check out our full calendar of events on p....of this newsletter, and make it a point to come out to as many of them as possible. I especially wanted to call attention to our keynote speaker this year, Prof Brittany Cooper of Rutgers, who, as co-founder of the awesome Crunk Feminist Collective is a badass feminist you simply have to come listen to and meet! Given how difficult and disturbing these past few months have been regarding the violence communities of color routinely face in our society—a violence which startles us afresh with its brutality when incidents like the recent deaths of black men and boys at the hands of police in Ferguson and New York City flash across our TV screens---well, then, having someone like Dr. Cooper come and give us complex insights and new ways to look at and discuss and build solidarities around such incidents, provides us with a wonderful learning and organizing opportunity. One such relationship of solidarity that is a result of the intersectional approaches we at the newly-named Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies Program foreground, is our relationship to the African American Studies Minor which Prof Sandra Lewis directs. We are thrilled to have her and her Program as a co-sponsor for this important and urgent event on March 31st! (continued on pg. 5)
The Women’s & Gender Studies Program is changing its name to Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Program acknowledging the history of the program and its aspirations. The new title encapsulates some of the primary concerns of the program, around the shifting constructions and constellations of gender and sexuality in culture, and the interplay between notions of fixed categories and their unmooring, thus evoking a program full of possibilities. The coursework for the revised program reflects current scholarship and new developments in the field, in order to stay competitive with similar programs across the country. The program intends to do this by adequately addressing intersections between gender, sexuality, race, class, age, ethnicity, and nationality in the coursework. The new name will signal a shift in the direction of the program towards intersectionality and the integration of LGBTQ content into the core of the program, while continuing to acknowledge the contributions and struggles of the women’s movement.

**“We Empower While We Educate”**

**FROM OUR FACULTY & STAFF:**

**What is different about the name change? Why change it?**

“Well, the name change signals the increasing importance of the category of "sexuality" as an important component of how we understand constructions of Gender, and the complexity of the term "Women"—which cannot be understood as referring to some essential or undifferentiated group of humans called "women". So this name change demonstrates the increasing intersectionality of this field of study.” - Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan

**Why is it important to keep the word "women" in the name as opposed to just calling it Gender studies?**

“That is controversial but goes back to the roots of these types of programs and it is still true that there are huge human rights and equality issues pertaining specifically to women world-wide and those should not be forgotten with the expansion of the program to consider a wider range of gender identities.” - Dr. Julie F. Farnum

**How does sexuality relate to this program?**

“In our changing times, sexuality too is a constantly changing category of identity and analysis. We have more and more students identifying as non-heterosexual, and non-binary. So we have to address sexuality as another marker of identity and affiliation which affects people’s relationship to the world and to themselves.” - Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan

**How do you think the students will react to the name change?**

“Students requested that sexuality and GLBTQ issues be made more central to the major so I expect that they will embrace the name change.” - Dr. Julie F. Farnum

“Interestingly enough, it was students who first came to me several years ago with a request for a revised program that would address or encompass the work of Queer Studies-- this is why we decided that adding "sexuality" to our program’s name was really important as it would allow for more inclusivity of queer perspectives and methodologies.” - Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan

**Do you feel that the name "Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies" encompasses everything that this program is trying to teach or is there more to it?**

“I would like some day to see programs called Diversity and Human Rights – but that appears to be too broad for where the program is situated at this point. You will see the courses address intersectionality between gender, sexuality, race, social class, age, disability, etc. as all of these are key factors in decision making, equity (or lack there of), and how being human is experienced by a global population.” -Dr. Julie F. Farnum

“That’s a great question and I would just say that very name or title however inclusive leaves something out. I’d have loved to see ” race” in the title as that is such an important part of intersectionality-- but hopefully we get to point out all these overlaps in the courses we teach.” -Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

“This Spring, I will be graduating with a degree in WMGS studies and a minor in LGBTQ studies. The WMGS program allows students to take a real look at the issues that we are all facing. The WMGS and the LGBTQ programs are not exclusive, they are inclusive. Both of these programs possess forward thinking and through the power of the mind we can change the world. I am what a feminist looks like.”

-Arianna D’Amato ’15

“I’m a sophomore in the WMGS program and fell in love with the program ever since I started. It has strengthened my critical thinking skills and is a platform for some truly incredible discussion. I hope to one day become an educator and open up a safe space for at risk young girls by giving them a place where they can be creative as well as being able to freely open discussion.”

-Lauren Matasker ’17

“Having been to three colleges before arriving at Montclair State and joining the Women’s and Gender Studies program, I think just the fact that Dr. Khan and her amazing staff, both those who work in the office and in the classrooms, have gotten me to stay at MSU is commendable. Through the intensive, and often enlightening, classroom instruction, and one-on-one advising that I have been receiving from the WMGS program for the past two years I have been given the opportunity to grow and heal as an individual. I can honestly say that it is because I joined the WMGS program, and they accepted me with open arms, that I have learned so much about myself and gained the confidence necessary to tackle subject matters and challenges that I was previously too afraid to even approach. I don’t think I can express how thankful I am for the people that I have met and the knowledge that I have gained through the department. I am excited to graduate from MSU and use my Feminist outlook in my future work as a writer, human rights activist, and medical doctor.”

-Amena Khan ’15

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WMGS SENIOR GRADUATING CLASS OF 2015!

FROM OUR STUDENTS:

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Tuesday, April 28
WMGS Graduation Celebration
Speaker: Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan, Director of the Women’s & Gender Studies Program
5:30-8:00 p.m. Cohen Lounge, Dickson Hall
NEW GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN’S STUDIES CLUB!

The Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies club is a new academic club which will explore the ideas around current events, social issues, and intersectionality through a feminist lens. This club will be a discussion-based forum where students will be able to voice their ideas and opinions with support from their peers. We will be meeting in Dickson Hall, Room 340 on Thursdays from 2:30-4:00PM. Refreshments will be served!

Monday, March 2
Flag Raising – President’s Proclamation
12:00 p.m., SC Quad

“Bklyn Boihood: “un/doing” Black Masculinity”
Speaker: Ryann Holmes
Ryann Holmes is the founder of Bklyn Boihood Collective, an organization dedicated to highlighting masculine-identified women and non-gender-conforming members of NY’s Black LGBTQ community.
1:00-2:10 p.m., Cohen Lounge, Dickson Hall

Monday, March 16
“LGBTQ Children’s Literature, Really?”
Speaker: Dr. Danne Davis
Dr. Davis is an associate professor in the Early Childhood, Elementary Education, and Literacy Education Department at Montclair State. She will be presenting her research on children’s literature that have a LGBTQ focus. This event is part of our Faculty Showcase Series celebrating WMGS faculty, adjuncts and staff and the amazing research they are doing.
4:00-5:15 p.m., University Hall 3032

Thursday, March 26
“Blasphemy, Gender and the Shari’a”
Speaker: Dr. Shemeem Abbas
Dr. Shemeem Abbas is an Associate Professor of Political Science, Women’s Studies and Literature at State University of New York at Purchase College. Dr. Abbas is also the author of Pakistan’s Blasphemy Laws: from Islamic Empires to the Taliban (University of Texas Press, 2013). Dr. Abbas will be speaking on women in Islam in relation to blasphemy laws.
2:30-3:45 p.m., Cohen Lounge, Dickson Hall
Co-Sponsored by The Global Education Center

Monday, March 30
“Windows, Cards, Sponges, & Whirling Dervish”
Speaker: Narijs Ali
Narijs Ali will be speaking about her life as an entrepreneur, the beginning, the journey. She will be discussing what makes her who she is and where she is today, narrating the risks she took, the lessons she learned, and where she is headed next.
6:00-8:30 p.m., Conference Center
Co-Sponsored by Feliciano Center for Entrepreneurship

Thursday, April 2, 2015
“Apne Aap - A Grassroots Movement to End Sex Trafficking”
Speaker: Ruchira Gupta
Ruchira Gupta is the founder and president of Apne Aap Women Worldwide. Apne Aap is a grassroots movement whose mission is to end sex trafficking.
5:30-7:00 p.m., Cohen Lounge, Dickson Hall

Monday, April 13
Chai House
4:00-5:00 p.m. Cohen Lounge, Dickson Hall

“Discussion on the Gender Wage-Gap with Dr. Yasemin Besen-Cassino”
Speaker: Dr. Yasemin Besen-Cassino
Dr. Yasemin Besen-Cassino is an Associate Professor in the Sociology Department at Montclair State University. She will be presenting her research on the gender wage-gap. This event is part of the WMGS Faculty Showcase Series celebrating WMGS faculty, adjuncts and staff and the amazing research they are doing.
5:30-7:00 p.m., Cohen Lounge, Dickson Hall
Co-Sponsored by Black Studies Program, Honors Program, & English Department.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Brittney Cooper

Tuesday, March 31
“Race, Hip Hop & Feminism”
5:30-8:00 pm Dinallo Heights, MPR

Dr. Brittney Cooper is an Assistant Professor of Women’s & Gender Studies and Africana Studies at Rutgers University who specializes in Black Feminist Thought, Black Women’s Intellectual History, Hip Hop Studies, and Digital Feminisms. She is the Co-Founder of the Crunk Feminist Collective blog, Dr. Cooper talks are focused on discussing gender politics in and among the Hip Hop Generation, convergences of faith and feminism, dating while feminist, and the contemporary feminist movements. She is currently working on her first book, Race Women: Gender and the Making of a Black Public Intellectual Tradition.
Co-Sponsored by Black Studies Program, Honors Program, & English Department.

WMGS Chai House

Enjoy great conversation, snacks, tea & coffee.
April 13th
Cohen Lounge
4:00-5:00PM
FROM THE DIRECTOR (CONT’D):

It is part of our mission in our Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies Program to encourage our students to connect the dots between issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality because each one of us is affected by how we inhabit and claim these identities; and by how others’ perceive us and treat us according to these descriptors. Together, we must resist the forces that try to divide us by these limiting and limited labels of color, race, ethnicity, gender, religion and sexuality, just as we must develop ever more sophisticated analyses of the intersecting grids of oppression and dominance that govern our lives as we move through the boxes these labels try to imprison us in. It’s a difficult task—but one which we do our best to provide tools for, in the courses we offer to our majors and minors, many of whom go on to careers and lives dedicated to bringing progressive change in the lives of others around them, built on the feminist foundations of social and economic justice.

Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan

Director, Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies.

Feb 2015
Did You Know What Happened in 2014?

- From the Hunger Games Series, Mockingjay Part 1 is the 2nd highest grossing film of 2014 with a strong female lead, Katniss Everdeen.
- Bayan Mahmoud al-Zahran opened the first female law firm in Saudi Arabia.
- Malavath Poorna became the youngest climber to scale Mount Everest at 13 years old.
- Iranian mathematician Maryam Mirzakhani became the first woman to win the Fields Medal in Mathematics.
- The 1st woman party was established in Turkey to see equal political representation for women.
- Hundreds of women in Kenya protested on the streets of Nairobi after a woman was attacked and stripped by men in public who believe she was “dressed indecently” for wearing a mini-skirt.

- Beyoncé stood in front of a giant FEMINIST sign at the VMAs, inspiring millions to finally acknowledge women’s issues.
- Emma Watson gave a speech as part of the He For She campaign at the UN in New York.
- Harriet Harman wore her Fawcett Society “This is what a feminist looks like” T-shirt to the British Prime Minister’s questions.
- Shonda Rhimes dominated US Television. She controls ABC Thursdays with hit shows, Grey’s Anatomy, Scandal, and How To Get Away With Murder on at 8pm, 9pm, & 10pm.
- Laverne Cox became the first transgender woman to be nominated for an Emmy for her role on Orange is the New Black. She also became the first transgender woman to be on the cover TIME Magazine.