



# WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

AT LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

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## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



BECKY ROPERS-HUILMAN

For the last newsletter to which I will be contributing, I wanted to focus on two ideas that have been ever-present in my mind when I think of Women's and Gender Studies at Louisiana State University. Those ideas are "excellence" and "potential." WGS at LSU is already excellent. I am amazed at the many contributions our faculty members make to Baton Rouge, LSU, our country, and our world. However, I think that we often forget to acknowledge and celebrate our accomplishments. At the same time, I do not yet think WGS has achieved its potential. We have amazing faculty and students. And yet, I am not certain that we have created the kind of synergy necessary to achieve our collective potential. As I see it, WGS has responsibilities to our students, to ourselves as affiliated faculty and staff, to WGS as an academic field, and to broader non-academic communities. Yet, WGS will only be what we make of it. LSU's Women's and Gender Studies Program is well-poised to be a national leader in the field. Indeed, in many ways, it already is. I am certain that the incoming director will move the program even further along that path. I hope each of you will decide to be a part of the journey. From my new position at the University of Minnesota, I will be cheering you on. Thank you for the privilege of serving you as your director.

## THE FUTURE OF WGS AT LSU

*IN OUR LAST NEWSLETTER, WE CELEBRATED THE CENTENNIAL OF LSU'S ORIGINAL FRESHMAN CLASS OF WOMEN. IN THIS NEWSLETTER, WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE FUTURE OF WGS THROUGH INTERVIEWS WITH THREE OF OUR NEW FACULTY MEMBERS: DR. ROLAND MITCHELL, DR. CASSANDRA CHANEY, AND DR. ELAINE MACCIO.*

**DR. ROLAND MITCHELL**  
ELRC



**Dr. Roland Mitchell** joined LSU in the fall of 2005. He is currently an Assistant Professor in Higher Education Administration.

**What are your research interests?** The theorization of cultural influences such as gender and race on teaching in educational settings; the "scholarship of teaching" in conjunction with pragmatist philosophy, theories of insider/outsider status in social science research, and qualitative research methodologies.

**How did you become interested in WGS?** I first became interested in WGS through my personal commitments to social justice in general. This is reflected in that prior to taking the position at LSU I searched for a community that had similar commitments and I found these commitments most strongly represented in WGS. Further, in a scholarly sense I think all of our work is enriched through the interdisciplinary context that WGS provides.

**In your opinion, what is the future of WGS at LSU?** The future of WGS at LSU is first to celebrate the accomplishments that have been made through the past and on-going work of WGS. I find this important because at times

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**DR. CASSANDRA CHANEY**  
School of Human Ecology



**Dr. Cassandra Chaney** joined the LSU community in the fall of 2006. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor in the School of Human Ecology.

**What are your research interests?** My primary research examines how married and cohabitating African-Americans define, experience, and practice emotional closeness and commitment (one of the two most components of relationship stability) in their romantic relationships.

**How did you become interested in WGS?**

Although I have always been informally interested in the distinct ways by which men and women experience the world, the graduate course "Family Theories" is what really heightened my interest in the WGS field. Through that course, I learned that Feminist Theory actively works to uncover the many and varied "silent" voices and experiences of women (based on gender and socioeconomic status) and places them within the context of those experienced by the dominant members of society. In addition, I learned that Black Feminist Theory examines how race, gender, socioeconomic status, and power are inextricably linked into the experiences of Black women when

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**DR. ELAINE MACCIO**  
School of Social Work



**Dr. Elaine Maccio** joined the the LSU faculty in August 2006. She is currently an Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work.

**What are your research interests?** My research interests include lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people; multicultural and diversity issues; children and families; and substance abuse.

**How did you become interested in WGS?** I see the field of Women's and Gender Studies inextricably linked with my interests in diversity and LGBT issues, both of which encompass women and gender.

**In your opinion, what is the future of WGS at LSU?** The future of WGS at LSU is a bright one. The strong support within the organization has already demonstrated and will continue to contribute to its power to effect change. In my short time here, I've met many wonderful WGS members who will serve as outstanding role models. Their commitment to the organization, the University, and the field is inspiring.

My interest in promoting diversity and social justice compels me to contribute to WGS's mission, part of which is to "encourage, support and provide

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## WGS EVENTS

### 16TH ANNUAL WGS GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE

Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Susan Gardner, the 16th Annual WGS Graduate Student Conference was held March 9, 2007 in Peabody Hall. The conference featured over 30 presentations from graduate students and advanced undergraduates throughout Louisiana. Paper sessions featured a variety of topics in fields such as literature, film, music and social work.

In addition, the conference hosted an engaging panel discussion entitled, "The State of Feminism in Louisiana." Panelists included Racheal Hebert, President of Women Organizing Women (WOW),



Panelists (from left to right): Dr. Michelle Massé, Shanelle Matthews, Racheal Hebert, Julie Mickelberry, and Dr. Jessica McKelvie-Kemp.

Michelle Massé, Professor of English, Jessica McKelvie-Kemp, LSU Women's Center Manager, Shanelle

Matthews, Vice President of WOW & *Reveille* columnist, and Julie Mickelberry, Public Affairs Director of Louisiana Planned Parenthood.

When asked about the future of feminism in Louisiana, the panelists expressed the need for a women's community that encourages and teaches women to think for themselves.

The discussion continued at the conference luncheon where the "100 Years of Women at LSU" slideshow was featured.

Thanks to the presenters, moderators, and attendees for making this year's conference such a success.

### KERRISSA HEFFERNAN

In an event co-sponsored by The Center for Community Engagement, Learning, and Leadership (CCELL) and the WGS Program, Dr. Kerrissa Heffernan gave a lecture entitled, "Community Engagement and Course Construction: Some Frames of Reference." The lecture was held March 13, 2007.

Dr. Heffernan is the co-editor of *The Practice of Change: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Women's Studies*, co-editor of *Introduction to Service*



From left to right: Dr. Becky Ropers-Huilman, Director of WGS, Dr. Kerrissa Heffernan, and Dr. Jan Shoemaker, Director of CCELL.

*Learning Toolkit: Readings and Resources for Faculty*, and author of the

*The Fundamentals of Course Construction*. Dr. Heffernan is also the Associate Director of the Swearer Center for Public Service at Brown University.

Immediately following the lecture, LSU faculty and students had the chance to discuss Service Learning methods and opportunities with Dr. Heffernan.

This lecture was an exciting opportunity for our faculty and students, as many WGS courses offer students a service-learning component.

### WGS STUDENT INTERVIEW: TANYA RAWAL-JINDIA

**Tanya Rawal-Jindia** is a recent graduate of LSU who minored in WGS.

After graduation, under the guidance of Dr. Becky Ropers-Huilman and Dr. Pallavi Rastogi, Rawal-Jindia spent her time in India teaching literary and feminist theory at a small college in Punjab.

In addition to teaching, Rawal-Jindia conducted research with four single women pursuing their M.A.s in English Literature. The goal of her research was to understand what roles class, gender, and social and government laws play in the education of women in a quickly developing country such as India.

**How did you become interested in WGS?** Well I first got into the

WGS program at LSU during Spring 2005, the end of my junior year. I took English 3593, Women's Literature, with Dr. Robin Roberts and within the first week of class I developed a strong interest in WGS. In this class I also developed strong friendships with my peers: we started to create our own WGS community. I liked being able to freely discuss, and therefore freely think about, women's and gender issues.

**How did your studies at LSU (especially in WGS) prepare you for this trip?** In WGS it is important to analyze situations/texts/everything from an interdisciplinary perspective and I think my practice in doing this at LSU in

my WGS classes helped me in understanding who/what/where I was when I was living in India. By looking at the economy, the government, the social/cultural laws, and gender relations (the themes of my research), I was able to identify with the role of Indian women, which is not only significant to my research and the academic world, but also on a more personal level.

**Has your time in India changed your perspective on WGS?** Yes. Living in India taught me to better understand the role of women in India. Growing up in a semi-Indian culture in the states I was always really quick to judge Indian women, I would often describe

them as submissive, and I hate to admit this but I would sometimes call Indian women weak. Now, I understand the situation of women in a more global context.

*In Fall 2007, Rawal-Jindia will begin her graduate studies and pursue a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. Her future goal is to return to LSU as a professor.*



Tanya Rawal-Jindia

## FACULTY NEWS

### NSF GRANT AWARDED TO DR. KATE BRATTON

Dr. Kate Bratton along with collaborators from Duke University and Emory



Dr. Kate Bratton

University received a National Science Foundation (NSF) Grant to study the intersection of race, gender and ethnicity in legislative politics.

The study involves the collection of legislative data from a 24 year period and examines male and female legislators in three ethnic groups: Black, Latino, and all other ethnicities.

The data collected will reveal how race and gender influence legislative issues. In addition, the study will examine how race and gender affect collaboration and networking in the legislative milieu.

*Dr. Kate Bratton is an Associate Professor in Political Science and a WGS faculty member.*

### 2007 FACULTY COLLOQUIUM

Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Gail Sutherland, the 2007 WGS Faculty Colloquium was held January 19, 2007 at the Red Shoes in Baton Rouge. This day-long event featured a WGS Director panel and discussion followed by a WGS student panel and discussion. This is the first year that students were in attendance, and the ideas generated by these panels shed new light on WGS's future.

Colloquium topics included ways in which WGS will remain strong and viable in changing times and the role of gender studies in the evolving academic environment.



WGS Director Becky Ropers-Huilman, program founder Michelle Massé, and past program directors: Rita Cultross, Margaret Parker, and Petra Hendry (pictured from left to right)

### FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

#### Books

**Katherine Henninger's** book, *Ordering the Façade: Photography and Contemporary Women's Writing*, is just out from The University of North Carolina Press.

**Irene Di Maio** edited and translated *Gerstacker's Louisiana: Fiction and Travel Sketches from Antebellum Times through Reconstruction* published by the Louisiana State University Press in June 2006.

#### Articles

**Nina Asher** published "Made in the (Multicultural) U.S.A.: Unpacking Tensions of Race, Culture, Gender, and Sexuality in Education" in the March 2007 issue of *Educational Researcher*, 36 (2), 65-73.

#### Grants

**Joyce Jackson** received a Board of Regents Award to Louisiana Artists and Scholars (ATLAS) fellowship for 2006-2007.

**Helen Regis and Michelle Massé** are recipients of ATLAS fellowships for 2007-2008.

#### WGS WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME OUR NEW HALF-LINE FACULTY MEMBERS!

**Dr. Kristen Hogan, WGS & English**  
**Dr. Dana Berkowitz, WGS & Sociology**  
**Dr. Heather Ondercin, WGS & Political Science**

### THE FUTURE OF WGS AT LSU (continued from page 1)

#### Dr. Roland Mitchell

systems of injustice like patriarchy seem so overwhelming and totalizing that they can appear insurmountable. I think this façade is not only unfortunate but also systemically used to paralyze those best equipped to challenge it. Secondly, I think that it is important to highlight to the LSU community how we are all enriched and improved when patriarchy is eradicated. You do not have to be a woman to suffer when women are treated unfairly. In short I see my role to be that of an ally.

#### Dr. Cassandra Chaney

relating to Black men, as well as members of the dominant society. To this end, my research interests give African-American women a "voice" when describing their romantic relationships as well as their religious/spiritual experiences.

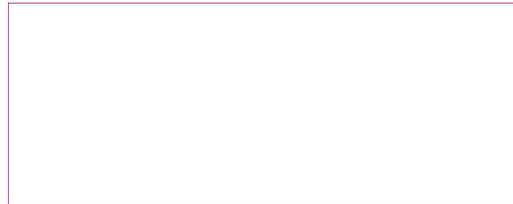
**In your opinion, what is the future of WGS at LSU?** In my opinion, I see the future of WGS at LSU as a very optimistic one with greater visibility in the years to come. I believe this because I see WGS as key in promoting the many missions of the Flagship Agenda, which seeks to locate and retain quality undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty at LSU.

#### Dr. Elaine Maccio

a forum for interdisciplinary research by contributing to a better understanding of diversity." I'm looking forward to collaborating with other scholars who are committed to addressing these and similar issues.



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## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WGS PROGRAM AWARD RECIPIENTS!

Outstanding WGS Major  
**Nicole Zaleski**

Ann Veronica Simon Outstanding  
Gender Studies Dissertation Award  
**Catherine Afua Kapi**

Outstanding Feminist Activist  
**Racheal Hebert**

Outstanding Faculty  
Contribution to WGS  
**Dr. Becky Ropers-Huilman**

## WGSGO



This fundraiser featured musical performances and a poetry reading by LSU professor Laura Mullen.

Jessica Ketcham, WGSGO member, arranged a well-attended luncheon entitled "**Having Children in/and Academic Life.**" The luncheon was held at the French House, November 15, 2006.

Lori Knox, Professional Development Chair, organized monthly writing group sessions for WGSGO members working on projects ranging from articles to dissertation chapters.

The Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Organization (WGSGO) has been very active during the 2006-07 academic year.

WGSGO president, Elizabeth Domangue, along with other WGSGO members, organized the **Standpoint Project** held December 7, 2006 at Chelsea's Café.

WGSGO membership is open to LSU graduate students interested in gender studies. For more information:

[groups.yahoo.com/group/wgsgo/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wgsgo/)