ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The WGSS Department at Wake Forest offers all students rigorous academic courses that examine and question cultural, biological, political, and social constructions of femininity and masculinity. Our Department is interdisciplinary in content and approach.

CONTACT

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Greetings to all of you - current majors and minors, newly graduated seniors, and alumni! We hope you are all safe and well in the midst of this Covid-19 pandemic. We are grateful that Wake Forest University has been able to weather this storm as smoothly as possible given the dire situation. We are sad that we were unable to hold our May parents’ reception and graduation, but we look forward to celebrating this special event together on campus on October 31, 2020.

The last several years have been transitional for the Department of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies. The department has had a change in leadership and staff. Dr. Wanda Balzano served first as Director of the WGSS minor, and then became the first chair when WGSS gained department status. Dr. Balzano took a well-deserved year’s sabbatical during the 2018-2019 academic year, and returned to full time teaching and research in the fall of 2019. I took over as chair in July of 2018 and will serve in this capacity until June of 2021. Also in 2018, WGSS was very fortunate to have Alex Burch join the department as the new Administrative Assistant. Alex brings exceptional organizational skills, and her warm and hospitable demeanor has made WGSS a welcoming place for all.

Many exciting changes have occurred among the WGSS faculty. The most recent congratulatory news goes to Kristina Gupta. Dr. Gupta joined the department in 2014. In April of 2020 Dr. Gupta earned tenure and promotion to Associate Professor of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and in May of 2020 won the prestigious Faculty Excellence in Research Award. Covid-19 has forced us to offer heart-felt congratulations from afar, but this fall we will celebrate these stellar academic achievements once we are safely able to do so. The department also welcomed Dr. Jeff Solomon 2017 as a tenure-track faculty member with a joint appointment in WGSS and English. In 2018, Dr. Jieun Lee joined the department as a tenure-track faculty member with a specialty in gender, sexuality, and the performative arts.

These new faculty members have brought exciting courses to add to an already dynamic curriculum. Kristina Gupta teaches Men, Masculinity and Power; Gender and the Politics of Health; and Sexual Politics in the United States. Jeff Solomon teaches Sexual Revolution! Gender and Sexuality in the United States, 1950-1980; Girls Gone Wild: A Century of Misbehavior; and Invert, Pervert, Bull Dagger, Queen: Queer Fiction in the 20th Century. Jieun Lee offers Women of Color, Feminisms, and the Politics of Resistance in the United States; Feminism and Theatre; Transnational Asia and Asian American Feminism; and Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Korea.
GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

By Simone Caron

Publications have also flourished in WGSS. Kristina Gupta’s new book, Medical Entanglements: Rethinking Feminist Debates about Healthcare, came out in spring 2020 with Rutgers University Press. Dr. Gupta has also published two edited books and eleven refereed articles. Jeff Solomon published So Famous and So Gay: The Fabulous Potency of Truman Capote and Gertrude Stein (U of Minnesota Press, 2017) as well as a number of articles and book chapters. Shannon Gilreath has published a number of books; his most recent include The End of Straight Supremacy: Realizing Gay Liberation (Cambridge UP 2011) and Sexual Orientation and Identity: Political and Legal Analysis (co-authored with Lydia Lavell, 2016). Jieun Lee has several articles forthcoming, and will use a full-year’s sabbatical in 2020-2021 to revise her 2018 dissertation into a monograph.

The department has also taken steps to honor faculty who were crucial to the development and evolution of WGSS from a program to a major department. In addition to the long-standing Elizabeth Phillips Award, the department added the Anne Boyle Award for the best creative nonfiction, creative performance short play, or visual art; and the Mary DeShazer Award for the best undergraduate research or analytical paper. The department also honors Professor Emeritus Mary DeShazer’s decades of service with the Mary DeShazer Fund.

As a historian, I would be remiss if I did not end this letter by marking the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage in the United States. I will leave you with words of wisdom from some key suffragists and activists. In this time of violence against black bodies, Ida B. Wells’ call to protect the free press resonates today as much as it did one hundred years ago: ‘The people must know before they can act, and there is no educator to compare with the press.’ We all must take a stand to protect all people and help eradicate hatred, prejudice, discrimination and suffering. As Elizabeth Cady Stanton stated: ‘The happiest people I have known have been those who gave themselves no concern about their own souls, but did their uttermost to mitigate the miseries of others.’ My wish for all of you is that you remain safe and healthy, and that you extend the spirit of Pro Humanitate to all people during this Covid-19 crisis and beyond.

Simone M. Caron

Professor of History and Chair of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies
MEET THE STAFF

Alex Burch

I came to Wake Forest in August of 2018, hired as an Administrative Assistant for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department. In 2019 I took on the additional Programs for Jewish and African Studies.

My focus is on assisting my faculty, students, other departments, and guests with professionalism, efficiency, and respect. Some of my daily activities revolve around assisting faculty, budgeting, scheduling rooms, updating the website, planning events, and assisting students.
MEET THE STAFF

Scott Claybrook

My official title is currently Instructional Technology Analyst and I currently work with the following departments and programs: English, Women's Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Wake Forest Scholars, and Magnolia Scholars. At various points I have worked with Classical Languages, The Teaching and Learning Center, and various Interdisciplinary Studies and Programs.

I came to Wake Forest University in September 2001 as an Instructional Technology Consultant in the English Department. I have served as the Instructional Technologist for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies since 2004. WGS (as it was known at that time) was an interdisciplinary minor. There was an administrative assistant, a program director, an advisory committee, and no full time WGS faculty. All WGS courses were cross-listed and taught by faculty based in other departments and programs. My, how much we have changed in the subsequent 16 years.

Then and now, my primary mission as an Instructional Technologist is to support and to advise the faculty in the pedagogically sound use of technology tools in their work in the classroom. I want faculty to reach out to me so I can help them navigate the ever changing technology landscape of technology in education. Wake Forest provides an amazing set of technology tools to enhance teaching and learning. I want to help the faculty make better use of them.
Hello, WGSS! I have missed you all—my colleagues, and our majors and minors—while I have been on research leave. I feel like I have been away for a very long time, and I was sorry to miss the last year of our seniors. Since many of you have emailed me to ask WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON YOUR LEAVE?, I thought I would tell you here.

The leave has been very helpful for my new book project, and I am grateful for it. Most first scholarly books evolve from a graduate dissertation, which has been extensively critiqued by a committee of professors. Usually, the challenge of a second book is to develop a new project without this kind of support system, and the leave made this possible for me.

I knew when I began that I wanted to work on classic camp films, but I was not sure exactly what I wanted to say. These are films that have become integral to queer culture, sometimes because they are about queer folks, but more frequently because they are about other oppressed people whom queers can relate to, and because way they are told and the way that they look somehow speaks to a queer population. My first goal was to familiarize myself with the current literature on these questions. To do this actively, I wrote a couple of book reviews, one of which has come out, and one that is still in the editorial process. I also published an article of my own, “Down South in Peckerwood: Auntie Mame and Anti-Mom,” on a classic camp film, Auntie Mame from 1958. Auntie Mame is an unusual camp film, as it is not bitter nor over the top (well, maybe a little bit over the top. Well maybe a little bit more), and yet has maintained its queer appeal for more than half a century. I started working on Auntie Mame after I moved to Winston-Salem, and as such, I ended up writing about the South—not the “real” South, but the extraordinarily fake NY/Hollywood version found in the film. I finished revising the article while on leave, and it came out in May 2020 in the anthology The Queer South on Screen.

While working on Auntie Mame, I started looking in queer archives to see if I could find any quantifiable records of what films the queer community watched—in queer film festivals, in theatres in queer neighborhoods—or frequently referenced, either in memoirs, or in, say, drag queen performances. I stated focusing on mass-market films that had been adopted by the queer population, and then on gay men in particular, since I found so much documentation that these men were especially attached in mass-market artifacts, such as disco and Hollywood musicals. Consider Judy Garland. Her death may have sparked the Stonewall Rebellion, but she herself was relentlessly heterosexual, and her production both as an actress and a singer was never situated in the “underground” but was firmly in the mainstream.
This queer interest contradicts common assumptions that oppressed groups are drawn to the obscure and un-commercial: to what are sometimes called “hidden transcripts,” and what is sometimes called “the underground.” For instance, when we talk about gay men at mid-century, we often discuss “the gay underground,” and in terms of cinema, experimental filmmakers like Andy Warhol and Kenneth Anger. But of course most queers, like most people everywhere, are not sophisticated and do not live in a metropolis where they can access the underground. Queer engagement with the mass market still held true at the end of the twentieth century. Consider how television shows like The Golden Girls, which was not about gay men, had at least as much if not more of a gay audience than those with overt gay content, like Will and Grace. These questions about the queer appeal of the mass market ended up being organizing the research project, which is now called The Gay Overground.

I spent most of the leave in Los Angeles, which has a great number of film archives and some important queer archives. I also took some trips to archives in other cities, at least until the city and then the state instituted stay-at-home orders. I spent a lot of time trying to find ways to establish a canon of camp films. Often, scholars do not “prove” that a particular work of art speaks to a subcultural community—anecdotes and sensibility are considered sufficient—but perhaps because I am so poor with numbers, I like to include quantifiable data in my work. Incidentally, I was at the archive in The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Community Center in New York’s West Village when, at my break, I was admiring an exhibit of comics about lesbians and cats... when I noticed that the exhibit had been curated by our own Visiting Professor Rachel Corbman! Who knew? And what better way to end this article than with lesbians and cats?

I look forward to seeing everyone at the graduation, howsoever virtually and briefly. GO FORTH WGSS!
I am sometimes asked why it is that I do what I do in law. During my recent sabbatical leave, I completed the manuscript for my fifth book, *Ground Truth*, which goes a way toward answering this question.

The term “ground truth” comes from the military context. It is a term used by troops in war zones to describe the reality or “truth” of a situation contra the official propaganda coming from Washington or other interest groups. I think it captures the spirit of this book, which aims to expose the real needs of everyday citizens who happen to identity as gay or lesbian—as opposed to the official party line coming from groups like the Human Rights Campaign or the anti-communitarian advocacy coming from queer theory academics.

The book redefines the narrative by looking at the way existing “gay theory” (to converge the existing literature) deals with several situations prominent in the lives of ordinary gay people, including coupling, HIV stigma, and pornography. In the process, it creates an agenda for action by focusing attention on critical problems in a post-same-sex marriage world and providing tools for resolution that are sometimes political, sometimes legal, and sometimes both. Also, in this process, the book reflects on my career over the past two decades, including drafting the statute to repeal *Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell*, various successful efforts to repeal draconian “HIV exposure” laws, and my work on more recent controversies, including the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* litigation.
Dr. Gupta Publishes First Book, *Medical Entanglements: Rethinking Feminist Debates About Healthcare*

In October of 2019, Dr. Kristina Gupta’s first book, *Medical Entanglements: Rethinking Feminist Debates About Healthcare*, was published by Rutgers University Press (https://www.rutgersuniversitypress.org/medical-entanglements/9781978806597). In the book, Gupta uses intersectional feminist, queer, and crip theory to move beyond “for or against” approaches to medical intervention. Using a series of case studies – sex-confirmation surgery, pharmaceutical treatments for sexual dissatisfaction, and weight loss interventions – the book argues that, because of systemic inequality, most mainstream medical interventions will simultaneously reinforce social inequality and alleviate some individual suffering. The book demonstrates that there is no way to think ourselves out of this conundrum as the contradictions are a product of unjust systems. Thus, Gupta argues that feminist activists and theorists should allow individuals to choose whether to use a particular intervention, while directing their social justice efforts at dismantling systems of oppression and at ensuring that all people, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, class, or ability, have access to the basic resources required to flourish. Gupta also argues that we should move beyond the language of “disease” and “medical necessity” in favor of language such as “livability,” “fulfillment,” and “flourishing.”

The book has been received very positively. In the spring, before COVID-19, Dr. Gupta gave a book talk at Elon University and spoke with students in the class, “Health and Social Justice,” taught by Dr. Lauren Guilmette. Post COVID-19, members of the Disability Studies Interdisciplinary Faculty Seminar, sponsored by the Humanities Institute at Wake Forest, discussed the book via Zoom. The discussion focused on a number of concerns, but one that stood out was the issue of who should be the gatekeepers for medical procedures. Seminar members agreed that the current system places too much power in the hands of medical professionals, but were less sure how to change the system to allow bodily autonomy within safe parameters.

In part as a result of this book, Dr. Gupta was recently awarded Wake Forest’s Faculty Award for Excellent in Research. In announcing the award, the Wake Forest Dean’s Office Digest states: “Scholars have hailed her work as ‘an absolute jewel’ and ‘a shining example’ to which researchers aspire. Others have described her work as ‘not only smart and accessible, but also urgently needed by feminists’ around the world. Her reputation as an ‘outstanding scholar’ is truly remarkable for one so early in her academic career.”

Dr. Gupta was also recently tenured and promoted to Associate Professor. She is looking forward to returning to campus in the fall as an Associate Professor of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies!
Sponsored by the Department of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, the Department for the Study of Religion, IPLACe, and the Humanities Institute, Dr. Kimberly Wortmann (Religion) and I organized the performance of UNVEILED by award-winning Chicago playwright and solo performance artist Rohina Malik in fall 2019. UNVEILED, a critically acclaimed one woman play written and performed by Malik, has been presented at theaters in the United States, Canada, and South Africa, as well as in universities, churches, mosques, and synagogues across the United States. The play tells the stories of five Muslim women in a post-9/11 world where ignorance, stereotypes, prejudice, and racism join forces to create an environment of hate and violence. Malik’s play brings about the importance of engendering an artistic and activist dialogue regarding issues of race, religion, and gender discrimination that helps to illuminate the possibilities for social, cultural, and political change. At Wake, Malik’s one woman play not only stimulated a discussion about social justice regarding Muslim women and Islam but also unpacked how theater, and in particular solo performance, can be used as a site of activism for women performers that actualizes their intersectionality of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. A post-performance talk-back interdisciplinary panel with Malik opened the discussion to faculty, students, and the Winston-Salem community at the Ring Theatre during which Dr. Cindy Gendrich (Theater), Dr. Wortmann, former president of the Muslim Student Association, Noor Alghanem and I pondered the work and issues pertaining to religion, social justice, and feminism. In addition to the performance event, Dr. Wortmann and I organized a pre-performance workshop with Malik to enable students from our courses “Social Justice in Islam” and “Feminism and Theatre” to experience her life trajectory as a theater artist who imagined and performed a call for social justice on and off stage. Students who participated in the workshop and saw the performance expressed newly found insights that changed their thoughts and feelings stating how the play made them believe in the need for intersectionality in theatre for all women of color to find truthful representation with no exclusions. Moreover, students mentioned that the performance made them realize how the media influenced their views in a negative way and perpetuated the notion that all Muslim women are oppressed. One student, Cydney Meadows (20), stated that the play was “a successful embodiment of intersectionality in feminism,” that made her want to expand her education so she could “become a better advocate for marginalized groups.” As part of an assignment, every student’s performance review revealed an understanding of racism, sexism, Islamophobia, and their interrelated system of oppression. Ultimately, this event led students to experience the power of theatre and its capability to bring insights about current social, political, and cultural issues through a feminist awareness.
Artivism@Wake is a new art and performance event series organized by Dr. Wortmann and myself in collaboration with Wake departments and programs in the Arts and Humanities. This new series will include more events and performances by activists, artists, and scholars committed to bridging the gap between art and activism. With this inaugural event for Artivism@Wake series, future events and activities will continue to invigorate our learning and doing feminisms and social justice through art.

UNVEILED was produced on Saturday October 19, 2019 with the support of Cindy Gendrich, Dean Franco, Lynn Neal, Simone Caron, Chris Yon, and the Ring Theatre team.
In summer and fall Wanda Balzano had two papers accepted, respectively, at the Women of the Mediterranean Conference, Istituto Sant’Anna, Italy, and at the American Conference for Irish Studies in Oregon.

She completed an essay ("In Women’s Hands: Remembering the White Art") for the upcoming book entitled Women of the Mediterranean, and is preparing an edited volume: The Volcanic Aesthetics of Maria Orsini Natale. She received a WFU international grant to work on this Neapolitan author’s archive. In the spring she was invited by the Department of Gender Studies at CEU, Budapest, to address the symposium on the “Struggle for Identity in Contemporary Europe.” The journal of Italian Studies invited her to write on Representations of Naples in Literature and Cinema. Balzano developed two new courses, a Film Lab in WGSS and a seminar on Gender in Italy. For the latter course, she invited the founder of anti-racist ‘Blaq Italiano’, Fred Kuwornu, to inaugurate Black History Month at Wake Forest last February.

Wanda Balzano with Blaq Italiano founder and activist Fred Kuwornu and with Divinity students pursuing the Graduate Concentration in WGSS: Jasmine Evans (left) and Genesis Adams (right)
In summer and fall Wanda Balzano had two papers accepted, respectively, at the Women of the Mediterranean Conference, Istituto Sant’Anna, Italy, and at the American Conference for Irish Studies in Oregon. She completed an essay (“In Women’s Hands: Remembering the White Art”) for the upcoming book entitled Women of the Mediterranean, and is preparing an edited volume: The Volcanic Aesthetics of Maria Orsini Natale. She received a WFU international grant to work on this Neapolitan author’s archive. In the spring she was invited by the Department of Gender Studies at CEU, Budapest, to address the symposium on the “Struggle for Identity in Contemporary Europe.” Two more papers were accepted at the VI Congresso Internazionale sugli Studi di Genere in ambito italiano e lusofono (Università degli Studi di Foggia, May 25-28, 2020) and at the Canadian Association of Italian Studies, June 4-7, 2020). The journal of Italian Studies invited her to write on Representations of Naples in Literature and Cinema. Balzano organized a panel for the American Association of Italian Studies and developed two new courses, a Film Lab in WGSS and a seminar on Gender in Italy. For the latter course, she invited the founder of anti-racist ‘Blaq Italiano’, Fred Kuwornu, to inaugurate Black History Month at Wake Forest last February. This summer, in collaboration with the Sant’Anna Institute of Sorrento, Italy, Wanda Balzano is co-organizing an international virtual symposium: “Re-thinking Marginalized Identities in Pandemics” (July 27th, 2020). For more information on the symposium click here.
Congratulations to Our Faculty

Dr. Kristina Gupta celebrating earning and receiving tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor.
Devin Kidner

My name is Devin Kidner, Class of ’08, and I was so proud to have a minor in WGSS! My professors were the best and my experience at Wake was made better by being a part of the programme.

After leaving Wake Forest, I pursued and earned my Masters degree in Journalism at Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, but I did not pursue that field. Instead, in 2014, after never having been a bartender or a mixologist, I won a national cocktail competition as a complete amateur through Slow Food America.

In 2015, I launched what has become the Midwest’s (we are based in Chicago) the #1 ranked cocktail/mixology class, HOLLOW LEG, and teach folks, with Julia Child-like conviction, how to make cocktails based on science. I’ve worked on national campaigns in the field of mixology education with CB2, Jack Daniels, and World of Whirlpool, am the largest corporate provider in the Midwest for cocktail classes, and am so so passionate about what I do.

The WGSS Department was pivotal to my success at Wake Forest and fuelled my confidence after: I knew I could start a business in a majority male-dominated field if I ignored the barriers to entry and charged forward. That’s the best part about WGSS: Learning about power dynamics and the trailblazers who came before us to light the fires makes it easier to know that you can set the world ablaze with your dreams, too.
Alumni Updates

Bianca Hightower

I had a wonderful experience as a Women and Gender’s Studies minor while at Wake.

After graduating from Wake in 2011, I earned my Master's in Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I began working at the University of Mary Washington after graduating in 2013. During my time with the university, I began my career as a Career Advisor in the Office of Academic and Career Services. I went on to pursue and obtain my Master's in Business and now I serve in a dual role as the Assistant Director in the Career Center where I primarily work with student internships, and as Director of the James Farmer Scholars Program. In my work with the program, which focuses on outreach to about 250 underrepresented students from four counties surrounding the Fredericksburg Virginia area, I often rely upon my background in both Sociology and Women and Gender Studies. The analytical skill set for access situations has served me well in my role and helps me to relate to program participants. In my role in the Career Center, I also often utilize the frameworks we learned as I help students begin to navigate their first steps into the world of work. I feel like much of the coursework completed during my time in undergrad has been such an asset to me as I continue my journey.
Alumni Updates

Corinne Catarozoli

After graduating from WFU with a major in psychology and minor in WGSS, I received my Master's Degree in Psychology from NYU and my Ph.D. from Fairleigh Dickinson University in clinical psychology. I subsequently completed a fellowship at Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM) and now work at WCM as an Assistant Professor of Psychology in Clinical Psychiatry and Pediatrics and Attending Psychologist. I specialize in pediatric anxiety and the application of behavioral health interventions for children and adolescents coping with acute and chronic medical illness.

Akosua Tuffuor

After I graduated Wake Forest in 2016, I worked at Credit Suisse (New York, NY) in international tax compliance for two years. In the fall of 2018, I enrolled in The George Washington University Law School (Washington, DC), where I am currently a second year student pursuing a concentration in health law. During law school, I have interned at Bristol-Myers Squibb's Research & Development Legal Department (Princeton, NJ), the US Department of Health & Human Services (Washington, DC), and the Whitman-Walker Legal Clinic (Washington, DC). This summer, I will intern at Buchanan, Ingersoll, and Rooney (Philadelphia, PA) in the firm's healthcare practice.
After two years in AmeriCorps, I moved to NYC for law school. My passion for reproductive justice really grew while I was a WGSS student, and I carried that into law school where I helped establish my school's first chapter of Law Students for Reproductive Justice, worked for the ACLU of NJ, and volunteered with the Planned Parenthood Action Committee. After law school, I clerked for a judge for a year to hone my legal writing skills. For the last five years, I have worked as an attorney with Bronx Legal Services in the housing unit, focusing primarily on eviction defense and tenants' rights. I feel really fortunate to have a career that I love with an organization that has a mission to seek social, racial, and economic justice.

My experience as a WGSS student helped me gain the confidence to pursue a line of work that I feel truly passionate about and inspired me to continue to educate myself on intersectional social justice issues. It's a great privilege to be a WGSS alum.
Since being at Rowan, I have won awards including the 2016 National Faculty-Led Digital Learning Initiative Award from the OLC, the 2012-13 Rowan-Cabarrus Excellence in Teaching with Technology Award, and the 2014 Rowan-Cabarrus Outstanding Employee Award. She was named a Top 10 finalist for the 2018 Bellwether Award, and NROC Specialist for North Carolina’s RISE Redesign for 2019-20. She also is a two-time president of the Rowan-Cabarrus Community College Faculty Association and a Cengage Learning Faculty Partner.

Here’s an example of a recent article: https://www.independenttribune.com/cit/rowan-cabarrus-community-college-english-chair-is-a-statewide-star/article_8ee63fdc-a6f9-5682-9d16-b40b72853c1e.html

I earned my Doctorate in Higher Education Administration (Community College focus) in December 2017.
My name is Andréa Becker, a proud WGS major from class of 2016.

After WFU, I went on to Vanderbilt where I earned a Master’s in Sociology. I am now at CUNY in New York City working towards my PhD in Sociology as an NSF GRFP fellow. I am happy to say gender and sexuality studies still is a very big part of my life, as I’m training to become a gender and health sociologist. I have published a few papers in these subjects and I am recruiting participants for my dissertation on hysterectomies (can be found on my website andrea-becker.com). I’ve also been working as an adjunct lecturer at Lehman College where I am teaching undergraduate sociology majors in methods and sociology of health. This summer I’ll be dipping my toe into non-academic research at Facebook as a UX Research intern.

Majoring in WGS happened by chance; I signed up for WGS 101 with Dr. Balzano and Dr. Phillips on a whim and my career trajectory swerved from aspiring gynecologist to, as my mom calls it, a “professional feminist.” The department became a sort of sanctuary on a campus that often did not feel quite welcoming and introduced me to wonderful people and opportunities I wouldn’t have otherwise found. Big shout out to Dr. Harnois and Dr. Gupta, whose classes and mentorship continue to shape my outlook and work today.
Kellie Cavagnaro

My name is Kellie Cavagnaro, and I hold a BA in Spanish and Gender Studies and an MA in Global Studies from Wake Forest. I am a current Fulbright Scholar to Peru, and a Ph.D. Candidate, graduate researcher and teaching assistant with Vanderbilt University's Department of Anthropology. My broader theoretical specialties include Environmental Anthropology, Andean Studies, the Digital Humanities, Gender and Sexuality and the Anthropology of Religion.

My experiences as a WGS scholar at Wake Forest have continuously shaped my career path. After taking a senior seminar in Feminist Activism, I began working in women’s rights in Mexico City when I graduated in 2007. After working in the NGO anti-trafficking sector, I found that instead of executing projects designed—often culturally insensitively—by others, I wanted to undertake community research on the ground, learning how to problem solve beginning from the worldviews of those served. My work as an anthropologist gives me the broadest hope of contributing to women’s rights efforts on a global scale while allowing me to engage in women’s wellbeing on an inter-personal basis. I study anthropology to answer burning questions about the human experience, and I analyze patterns in cross-cultural behavior to understand the social conditions that best support gender equity and women’s wellbeing. My decision to engage in a Joint-Ph.D. program focused on media analysis and production draws upon my recognition that these democratizing platforms can help expand women’s voices within the public sphere. On April 1, 2020, just after an abrupt end to my field research at the outbreak of Covid-19, I received word that I will be honored with a 2020 – 2021 P.E.O. Scholar Award to complete my multimedia dissertation over the next two years.

Upon completing my joint-doctorate, I aim to become a tenured anthropology professor at an American university; teaching undergraduates, directing graduate research and expanding my research into global gender rights movements. Gender studies are the premiere social concern of the 21st century, though they remain the least-emphasized, least-funded discipline at most elite institutions. I hope to empower women through my contributions to the field, and my work in—and beyond—the classroom.
I believe I was the very first person to graduate WFU with a Women’s Studies minor - Dec ’89 (my official class is ’90, I got out a semester early).

My path took me to business school at Wake (MBA FT ’94) then a 25-year career in retail and brand management, culminating as EVP Consumables, Health & Wellness for Walmart, where I was responsible for an $85B line of business. I currently enjoy a portfolio career of consulting, board work and volunteering. I am the first female chair of the Board of Visitors for Wake’s School of Business, an executive-in residence with AT Kearney consulting, and executive board chair of Sneez - the first real-time illness tracker app (headquartered in W-S NC!) and serve on the advisory boards of two other healthcare companies.

My time in the women’s studies program taught me you should look at all situations through lenses that you can deliberately change. This helped me greatly when I lived and worked overseas as the chief merchant for Walmart China.
Event Highlights 2019-2020

UNVEILED a one woman play by Rohina Malik

The performance discloses stories of racism, hate crimes, love, Islam, culture, language and life through five Muslim women’s voices in a post-9/11 world.
On November 13th, 2019, Steph Trilling (Director of the Women's Center) and Wanda Balzano (Associate Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies) co-sponsored one of the tables at the Annual Luncheon of the Women's Fund of Winston Salem, and invited a cohort of WFU colleagues, students, and staff to join them. The mission of the Women's Fund is to engage our community to build economic security for women and girls in Forsyth County. They do this through encouraging women's philanthropy, grant-making, and advocacy. At the table, marked as "Wake Forest Feminists" sat members of our community who believe in the importance of leadership and demonstrated advocacy to support women and girls, while promoting gender equity on campus. See the two attached pictures.
On February 4th, 2020, Wanda Balzano and Remii Lanzoni collaborated to bring Fred Kuwornu to Wake Forest during Black History Month to present his documentary film and project on Black Italy and Black Italians.

Kristal Trotter wrote an article about the event titled "At the Intersection of Feminism, Blackness, and Italian Culture". You can read the full article by clicking here.
The Following films were screened with sponsorship from WGSS

February 2020: Iron Jawed Angels

October 2019: The Empathy Gap

The following films were screened with sponsorship from WGSS:

February 2020: Unbought & Unbossed

On October 16, 2019 WGSS sponsored the Trans Studies in Process: Scholars Interpret Trans Language, Identity, and Archives. The following presented on the panel:

- **Mir Yarfitz** - Celebrity Pickpockets "Dressed As Women" in Early Twentieth Century Buenos Aires: What was Trans before "Trans gender"?

- **Rachel Corbman** - Gay Power is Trans History: A 1970 interview with Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera

- **Anson Koch-Rein** - "As a Trrrans Women": Transgender Rhetorics and Linguistic Affect on Youtube

- **Will Mosley** - Marsha's Plate: Black Trans Talk: Podcast of Radical and "Diviiine" Intervention

Moderated by Kristina Gupta - WGSS
Congratulations to Our Graduating
WGSS Seniors
2019-2020

Sunny Calhoun
Hannah Cook
Nichole Czuber
Kianna Garcia
Laura Golfo
Alice Graham-Welton
Madeline Katsarelis
Fadima Konate
Ilaria Lampson

Cydney Meadows
Catherine "Cat" Mizzi
Vera Mudry
Jarnesheia "Neicy" Myers
Landis Pujol
Mariam Syed
Natalie Valdes
Yuzi Zhang
Chunyu "Charlotte" Lu

Welcome Newly Declared
WGSS Majors and Minors

Gabbie Albert ('22)
Kyra Corcoran ('22)
Zenia Grzebin ('22)
Leilani Fletcher ('22)
Catherine Knipp ('22)
Steven Liao ('22)

Sidnee Moyer ('22)
Zachary Potter ('22)
Leah Rodman ('22)
Grace Taylor ('22)
Olivia Thonson ('22)
2018-2019 WGSS Award Recipients

The Academic Award for Outstanding Senior in WGSS:

Leedan Rukstalis graduated in 2019 with a major in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Marissa Whitaker graduated in 2019 with a minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

The Leadership Award for Outstanding Senior in WGS:

Eun Hye Kim graduated in 2019 with a major in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
Reed Van Schenck graduated in 2019 with a minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Elizabeth Phillips Award for Best Essay Written in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies

2019-2020 WGSS Award Recipients

The Academic Award for Outstanding Senior in WGSS:

Madeline Katsarelis graduated in 2020 with a major in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

The Leadership Award for Outstanding Senior in WGS:

Catherine Mizzi graduated in 2020 with a major in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Elizabeth Phillips Award for Best Essay Written in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies

Meara Waxman (Undergraduate): "This Little Boat of the Language": Language Repression as a Vechile of cultural and Sexual Marginalization in Hush-a-Bye Baby and The Blackwater Lightship"

Anne Boyle Award

Quynh-Nhu T. Vu (Undergraduate): "The Assumption of Medusa"

Click here to read the full article about her award winning work.
Congratulations to Catherine Mizzi for receiving honors in WGSS. The title of her honor's thesis "Remember".

My honors project was based on the use of art therapy, specifically transitional art therapy and its impact on healing of survivors of relationship violence, specifically for teen survivors. I created a zine documenting my own experience as a survivor of a severely abusive relationship during my teenage years in addition to research on art therapy for trauma survivors and documented my own healing process through it. Though my work's main focus was my own healing, I decided through its creation process that I wanted to clearly establish that my story was just one of many stories of teen relationship violence, which has led to my current efforts for publication. Through incorporation of statistics, legal documents, quotations from people in my life during the abuse and now, and my own telling of my story, I hope to be able to bring attention to the severity of teenage relationship violence and increase visibility of teen survivors, our stories, and the need for us to be heard and seen and supported.
WGSS Student Engagement
By Kristina Gupta

WGSS majors and minors have been working hard to transform our world for the better. In the fall, the department began offering WGS 397: Public Engagement in WGSS, as a replacement for our internship course, which the department had not offered in several years. Students taking the course complete an independent internship or activist project related to the field of WGSS, and also read related academic scholarship and engage in reflective writing. In the fall, major Hannah Cook received credit for an internship she completed with the Foster Care Alliance in Atlanta, GA, an organization that works to reunited women with their children. Major Nichole Czuber received credit for an internship she completed with the North Star LGBTQ Community Center in Winston-Salem.

In the spring, minor Illaria Lampson received credit for an internship she completed with the Wake Forest Women’s Center, helping the Center to craft an effective social media strategy. Major Irene Cho received credit for an internship she completed with the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea’s Trade, Industry, Energy, SMEs, and Startups Committee. Through that internship, she worked with a company called Marymond, which sells products such as cellphone cases decorated with graphics designed by former “comfort women” – women who were victims of sexual violence during World War II. As part of her internship, Irene interviewed former comfort women and transcribed the interviews into English. For her project, major Valdes organized a “Queer Prom” for Winston-Salem area LGBTQ+ college students, with over one-hundred attendees. The prom provided a social space for LGBTQ+ students who often feel marginalized in mainstream campus social spaces. In addition, the event raised around $500 for the North Star LGBTQ Community Center. Finally, major Mariam Sayeed created a curriculum for a training on Islamophobia. Designed to educate faculty and staff about the concerns and needs of Muslim students, Mariam plans to offer the training at Wake Forest in the fall.
Student Updates Continued

WGSS Student Engagement
By Kristina Gupta

WGSS major Cat Mizzi also undertook a significant public engagement project for her honors project in WGSS. As a founding member of the Supporting Survivors student group, Cat has long been a leader on campus on the issue of sexual assault and intimate partner violence prevention and response. For her honors project, Cat created an online zine on the topic of teen dating violence, in order to promote healing for victims and to increase awareness of the high rates of relationship violence among teenagers, a demographic that is often overlooked when it comes to this issue. Her committee members felt that the project exemplifies the best of WGSS student work – a thoughtful reflection on individual experience, informed by rigorous feminist scholarship, and reaching outward to challenge systemic oppression.

Other WGSS students have been active in a variety of ways. For example, major Maggie Kuhn curates “End the Silence WFU” (https://endthesilencewf.wordpress.com/), a blog that aims to raise awareness and build support for survivors of sexual violence, particularly on Wake’s campus. Minor Neicy Myers has undertaken significant work as a leader of the Wake chapter of WE3: Women Encouraging Empowerment through Exploration, as the President of Wake’s chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha, and as a member of the President’s Commission on Race, Equity & Community at Wake Forest. Major Leilani Fletcher recently published an article about the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ students during COVID-19 (https://whosoever.org/queer-in-quarantine-the-reality-for-lgbtqi-students-during-covid-19/).

We are so impressed by all of the wonderful social justice work undertaken by our majors and minors!
Meet our Graduated Seniors

Madeline Katsarelis

I'm Madeline, a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Psychology double major from Tampa, Florida.

My favorite thing about being a WGSS major was being a part of a close-knit department and developing relationships with professors such as Dr. Gupta, Dr. Lee, and Dr. Balzano. These professors always supported me academically and personally and created a homey atmosphere on campus!

After graduation, I will be teaching middle school English at a charter school in Washington, DC and pursuing my master's degree in teaching. My understanding of white privilege and intersectionality, as well as the passion for social justice that I cultivated as a WGSS major at WFU will be critical to my success.
My time in the WGSS department has honestly shaped me into the person I am today. From the first day of my into class to my honors project/thesis defense yesterday, our department has been there for me every step of the way. The courses and experiences through WGSS have fostered so much growth for me as an academic and person and I could never be more grateful for this department. As I look back on my four years at Wake. I genuinely don't think my time would've been the same had I not gotten to know professors like Dr. Gupta, Dr. Solomon and Dr. Lee and been a major in our department. The one moment that will forever stick with me was during the Survivor Walkout in the Fall of 2018: I had spent a lot of time organizing it with close friends and was set to be the opening speaker, which was so terrifying for me because I wasn't sure how I would be received.

I remember walking up the stairs and looking out in Tribble courtyard and seeing a cluster of WGSS professors all there, standing in support. I can't explain how much that moment meant to me and I don't think I ever said thank you for that, but it's a moment that stuck with me for the rest of time here. And I think a moment that just beautifully captures the amazing environment in our department and the remarkable people who are part of it.

Right now, with everything going on in the world, my next steps after graduating are unclear...but that doesn't scare me as much as I thought it would and that's in large part because I know that I'll be prepared for whatever comes next, in large part because of WGSS.
A Message from the Graduate Program Director

By Wanda Balzano

It is with much pride and admiration that I announce the first class of graduate students at Wake Forest who completed the Graduate Concentration in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Though graduation this year is not what we all pictured, we want to recognize and celebrate the achievement of these courageous, earnest, and eager students who, while deepening their studies, have refined a lens through which to view the world. I am deeply grateful for their hard work, their commitment to justice, and their enthusiasm in embracing activism, advocacy, and knowledge, as well as compassion and care. It is truly inspiring, especially in this historical moment, to be able to transform education into tools that will re-shape our world into something that is worthy of us in all of our differences. I am so excited for the next chapter in their lives.

My warmest congratulations!

Please click here to watch the celebratory video to the students who completed the concentration.

Click here to read a poem written by Wanda Balzano titled “The Quarantine's Other Heroes”; written for her Wake Forest Students.
Congratulations to our Graduate Students

Genesis Adams

As we write another hashtag of another Black man unjustly murdered by someone called to protect and serve all people, I cannot help but think of my time within the walls of Wake Forest’s School of Divinity. I think about my professors who taught me to view Jesus as a radical social justice leader who was vocal and strong for the marginalized. I think about how I was taught to point out the oppression, not just the liberation, in the biblical text and sit in it, teach it, and illuminate it. I think about how my educational experience at Wake Divinity has inspired action against racism and classism. I think about the books and the methods that led me to tear down the patriarchal lens of the holy book and call out the names of the women who grace those pages and stood side-by-side with Jesus. And if I do that - remember and honor the stories of the women of the text, I cannot forget my experience with the Women’s Gender and Sexuality Studies department (WGSS).

It is through my concentration with WGSS that I became a more well-rounded minister in preparation for my position as a hospital chaplain that is for all bodies, all colors, all genders and sexualities. From reading Feminism is for Everybody by bell hooks to watching A Fantastic Woman about a trans woman in mourning to learning about the inhumane practice of sterilization in North Carolina, I have been inspired to - made to - remember the voices, the stories, the realities of those that are often silenced by society and systems at work. I have been inspired to see, to hear, to learn and to love more than I ever have. My work, my readings, my writings and my professor, Dr. Wanda Balzano, taught me that there is more work to be done and more to understand about the people around me, and the people God has called me to minister to.

My experience as a divinity student with a concentration in Women’s Gender and Sexuality has been one of pruning, and one of social justice. There were constructs and ideals that I needed to tear down. I had to break free of what I was being taught to believe about myself as a Black woman and minister. I had to come to a place of what it means to advocate for others and be in the ministry of healing. Maybe what I have learned most through it all is one of God’s greatest commandments, “Love neighbor as yourself.”
Congratulations to our Graduate Students

Genesis Adams

Future Plans:

Genesis Adams will begin her journey as a Resident Hospital Chaplain at Moses Cone H. Memorial Hospital in Greensboro, North Carolina in August of 2020. In the future, Genesis plans on becoming a board certified chaplain working on the federal level, and gaining her credentials as an Association for Certified Chaplains Educator.

Click here to watch Genesis Adams' completed Graduate presentation.
Taylor Jade Brough graduated from Wake with an M.A. in Communication, including a graduate certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Their thesis, entitled "Counter-Insurgency, Liberalism, & the Transmogrification of Radical Meaning" explored the expansion of the politics of representation, multiculturalism, and the affirmative action mandate over the last fifty years, to the detriment of revolutionary speech and theory by Black and Native people. In this work, Taylor tracked the rhetoric of privilege, intersectionality, and "the personal is political" as terms whose coinage evoked a more radical conversation fifty years ago than contemporary use of these terms now signify. Their studies in WGS were extremely helpful for this project, as the feminisms that gave rise to these terminologies have themselves shape-shifted alongside regime of liberalism, in the form of institutional diversity work, the domestication of radical meanings, and the increasing prevalence of representational politics within academic and social media contexts. Studying these transmogrifications of radical meaning is important for all projects dedicated to social justice and revolutionary insurgency. In the fall, Taylor will be pursuing a Ph.D. in Communication at the University of California, San Diego. Their previous research remains indispensable to their future work, which will explore the relationships between the global security apparatus, counter-insurgent state violence, and revolutionary uprisings around the world.

Click here to watch Taylor Brough's completed Graduate presentation.