

WGS CONNECT

Women's & Gender Studies / Issue 8 / May 2022

feminism in motion



gold little shorts



Exploring Queerness and Gender Diversity in Video Games

Queering Gender ♀



Reproductive Justice

reframes + expands the reproductive rights narrative



Intersectionality of body positivity movement



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NEVER
masculine
enough



~~IF I WERE A
GGYTT...~~
IF RAPE CULTURE DIDN'T
EXIST...

TRANS
VISIBILITY



abolition
is
creative

IN THIS ISSUE



COLLABORATIVE ART IN A FEMINIST POCKET UTOPIA

BY PRISCILLA THOMAS (SHE/HER)
WITH SUPPORT FROM
DR. CLAIRE CURTIS (SHE/HER)

Feminism in Motion (FeMo) is an annual event featuring student scholars and their cross-disciplinary projects that explore gender-related issues. It is a celebration of feminism in motion, in movement, in a state of flux and change. And yet, phenomenologically speaking, it is much more. This annual event serves as an everyday and pocket utopia. As described by Davina Cooper in her book, *Everyday Utopias: The Conceptual Life of Promising Spaces*, everyday utopias are “fruitful places from which to think differently and imaginatively about concepts, particularly when such thinking is orienting to a socially transformative politics” (p. 11).

The expansive scope of topics presented at FeMo range from gender politics to health and wellness, from patriarchal logics to activism and solidarity. The array of themes in addition to roundtable discussions surrounding these issues create bubbling “hotspots of innovative practice” (p. 9).

In addition to being an everyday utopia, FeMo also serves as a pocket utopia. Prof. Claire Curtis elaborates, “FeMo is a pocket utopia, a space where we can come in for a cupcake and conversation and leave with ideas about how to change the world. Additionally students’ presentations are bringing what they have learned and applied in the world, a world that might offer up challenges to the work that they are doing, into a space where that work will be celebrated and affirmed.”

It is within this space that visions of a feminist utopia are imagined and are celebrated, even manifested. This immersion and exchange of utopian imaginings fosters tangible, creative interpretations in the form of collaborative artwork by attendees.

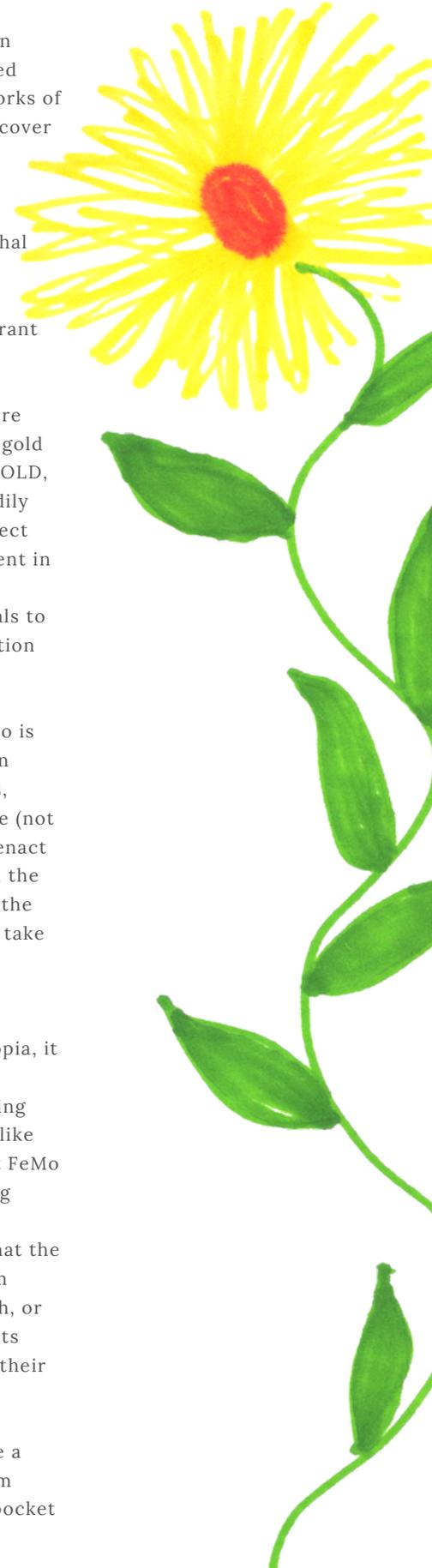
It is with strokes of color markers upon white butcher paper that the unadorned tablescape transform into inspired works of art, which are featured on this issue’s cover and peppered throughout the summer newsletter’s pages.

These illustrations subvert the kyriarchal constructs of our existing world - confronting and resisting harmful ideologies. They come packaged in vibrant hues, whimsical doodles, and words of empowerment that echo the spirit of a feminist utopia. From sketching the bare curves of the female form to outlining gold little shorts that challenge one to be BOLD, these concepts of self-affirmation, bodily autonomy, and self-authority are a direct affront to antifeminist rhetoric prevalent in our dystopian reality. But within the boundaries of FeMo, these are the ideals to be uplifted and the conceptual foundation for the utopia that we hope for.

The reality of a pocket utopia like FeMo is that one cannot remain in that space in perpetuity. Prof. Claire Curtis explains, “FeMo is a space away from the outside (not utopian) world, within which one can enact a utopia, albeit temporarily.” However, the event’s impermanence does not dilute the inspiration and exchange of ideas that take place and imprint on everyone that is present.

Once leaving the space of a pocket utopia, it becomes one’s charge to take what is learned and begin (or continue) changing the everyday world to be a little more like the utopia. It is the ideals embodied at FeMo that WGS is committed to materializing within our campus and Charleston communities. It is these same ideals that the program’s students also embrace. From organizing events, conducting research, or even launching a podcast, WGS students have accepted the charge of changing their realities.

So, join us in this issue as we celebrate a selection of student presentations from FeMo 2022 as well as evidence of the pocket utopia in the art we created.



SENIOR SHOWCASE

PHOTOS BY PRISCILLA THOMAS (SHE/HER)



DAVID DUVALL (THEY/THEM)

David Duvall is a senior majoring in Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies. One of their passions is to understand how/why/in what ways human interaction works. Some of their favorite WGS classes at CofC include (but are not limited to) Sociology of Mental Health, Sociology of Sexualities, Genetics and The Good Society, Contemporary Gender Politics, Queer Law, and Prejudice. After college, they hope to work in social service or social research, particularly in LGBTQ+ rights and/or mental health.



MARISSA HAYNES (SHE/HER)

Marissa Haynes is a double major in Sociology and WGS with a minor in Spanish. After graduation, she plans to enter into social services and fight for the most vulnerable members of society, children from marginalized families of lower socio-economic status. She plans to advocate for better support and more effective systems that proactively and sustainably assist those in need and prioritize keeping families together. Marissa has also worked in Charleston's hospitality industry and sings with a local bluegrass cover band and with The Charleston Vibes, an acappella group.



KEKE HUMPHREY (SHE/HER)

Keke Humphrey is a double major in Women's and Gender Studies and Psychology. She is also a double minor in Sociology and African American Studies. Some of her favorite course topics in WGS are sexuality, reproduction, and gender. While at the College Keke has enjoyed her internship with the EMPOWER Program at MUSC, during which she helped facilitate lessons on topics of sexual health, relationships, and drug and alcohol abuse. She plans to obtain her Masters in Social Work (MSW) and aspires to work in the school system as a school social worker.



GILLIAN KELLEY (SHE/HER)

Gillian Kelley is a major in Women's and Gender Studies with a minor in Psychology. She is interning at Planned Parenthood and plans to continue working there after graduation. She switched her major at the beginning of her junior year after taking many WGS classes as electives and felt very passionate about them. When she's not working or going to class, she's going to the park with her dogs, brunching with friends, and relaxing at the beach.



LAINey KOMEROFSKY (SHE/HER)

Lainey is a double major at the College of Charleston studying Jewish Studies and Women's and Gender Studies. She credits WGS in helping her discover her passion for social responsibility and community organizing, which will ultimately lend to her goal of becoming a rabbi. After graduation Lainey will be working at a synagogue in Austin, Texas where she will most definitely be using her knowledge from WGS to create a safe and welcoming environment for Jewish youth.



DEL LAMERE (THEY/THEM)

Though Del studied WGS throughout their college career, they only recently declared it their major, and are minoring in English. Through WGS, Del has developed a passion for advocating for equality, equity, and empowerment. Their favorite WGS courses have been Queer Kinship, and Comparative Gender Politics. They will be graduating in the fall and hope to cultivate a career in which they can combine their passion for writing with their WGS knowledge, perhaps in non-profit or social work.



AHMIRA LUCAS (SHE/HER)

Ahmira Lucas is a Women's and Gender Studies major whose eyes have been opened through the lenses she's been equipped with by WGS. Ahmira hopes to use her claimed knowledge to explore primary rape prevention possibilities as well as the effects of socialization. She also looks forward to utilizing her education to educate others and bring awareness to issues that otherwise would be obscured.



SARAH CLAIRE MULLIS-MCCORD (SHE/THEY)

Sarah Claire is a Women's and Gender Studies student who is passionate about reproductive choice, identity development, and sustainable healthcare systems. After graduation, she intends to be trained as a birth and postpartum doula, as well as continue her experience as an herbalist and medicinal herb farmer. WGS gave her the opportunity to explore her interest in childbirth, including an internship with Charleston Birth Place and courses such as The Sexuality of Childbirth and History of Reproduction.



JERONIMO ORTEGA (HE/EL)

Jeronimo is pursuing a dual major in Psychology and Women's & Gender Studies with a Latin American & Caribbean Studies minor. Following his internship as a Social Media Ambassador for one of South Carolina's only BIPOC and Latinx Mental Health Outreach Programs, his aspiration to be of service to underserved communities was confirmed. It is through his passions of mental health advocacy and self-empowerment that he hopes to foster a change in the world.



MADELEINE TEEMS (SHE/HER)

Madeleine is double majoring in Women's and Gender studies and Political Science. She is hoping to put both degrees to use working in a field that lies at the intersection of advocacy and law. Madeleine has experience working as a temporary staff assistant in the Senate and her time there informed a yearning to pursue either law or graduate school to become an informed voice in advocacy. In her spare time, she enjoys discovering vegetarian recipes, drawing and painting, and watching movies.



ANNALISE WAHLER (SHE/THEY)

Annalise is a Women's and Gender Studies and International Studies double major. Her international concentration is with Asia. They also are pursuing a minor in Sociology. Annalise's main goal in life is to help improve the lives of others through social work. A dream job for them would be working at a shelter for victims of domestic violence and homeless queer youth and adults. Some of Annalise's favorite classes she took at CofC were Sociology of the Family with Dr. Bakanic and the special topics class Women and War with Dr. Delay.

2022 AWARDS & 2022-23 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

KETNER-CRUNELLE LGBTQ+ ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Rose Dennis

ALISON PIEPMEIER ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Magnus Enlow

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCE SCHOLARS, 2022

Marissa Haynes
Jeronimo Ortega

SKIRT. MAGAZINE ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Lily Andrews
Jillian Gray

KETNER EMERGING LEADERS ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

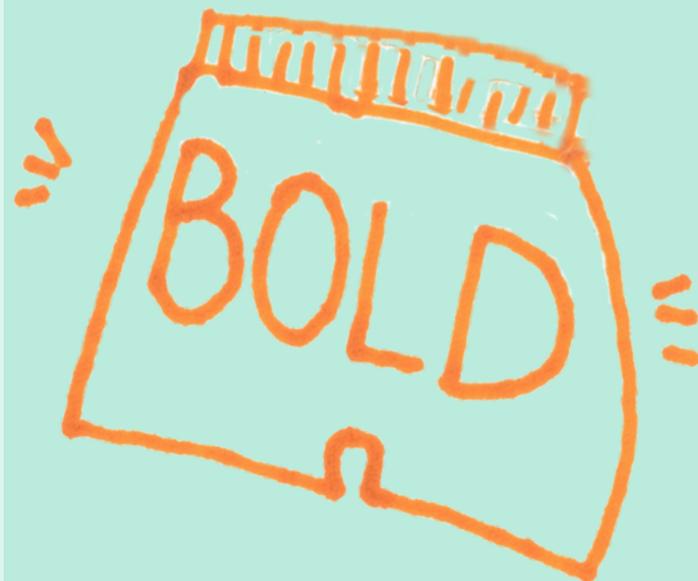
Jody Bell
Marissa Haynes
Sara Solan

WGS ENGAGED STUDENTS AWARD, 2022

Keke Humphrey
Sarah Claire Mullis-McCord

OH THE PLACES GOLD SHORTS CAN TAKE YOU

BY JERONIMO ORTEGA (HE/EL)



It was the fall of my freshman year and a few days leading up to my first ever Pride parade. I had long debated on wearing these little gold shorts. I had the details of my outfit all planned out from these gold little shorts to the glitter I'd wear over the arch of my eyebrows. Coming from a very uptight household with strict conservative beliefs, thoughts of my parents catching sight of what I planned to wear stirred an internal sense of unease. "What if somehow they saw me?" I had bought these gold little shorts two years in advance thinking they'd be perfect for my first ever Pride after I had my heart settled on attending the College of Charleston.

The night prior to Pride, I picked out a more modest alternative and thought "in the morning, I will make up my mind". The following morning I got up to start getting ready. In the mirror, I caught a glance of my younger self. I saw my younger self who would watch Pride parades on YouTube with awe and admiration. I could

not let that younger self down. I put on my gold little shorts and the rest of the entire Pride ensemble of my dreams, glitter and all. Throughout the entire parade, I was emotional from all the compliments and kind words that I received. For the first time in my life, I was called "bold".

Fast forward to my sophomore year Pride prior to COVID-19, I could not help think back to my earlier experience from my Freshman year. Again, I had my entire ensemble prepared and decked for the occasion. Only this time I had discovered... BODY GLITTER! Before heading into formation to begin the parade, a photographer pulled me to the side and asked if I was ok with him taking some photographs. With no hesitation, I POSED! Little would I or my freshman-year-self guess that that next morning my boss would have a copy of the Post and Courier with my picture on the cover! I have carried that memory with me all throughout my time at the College.

Undertaking my undergraduate studies in the midst of a pandemic has been anything but easy. Plans had to pivot, dreams had to be adapted to a new reality, and the future of tomorrow grew uncertain. When it came time to search for internships in my field of interest, there were many organizations that had to withdraw their internship offers or lacked the resources to offer internships. Through a local organization, I was able to network and get in contact with a Mental Health Center in Spartanburg that had just established one of South Carolina's only BIPOC and Latinx Mental Health Outreach Programs.

In my first meeting with my prospective supervisors, they asked me to propose

what I would do for them as their intern. Again, I found myself (metaphorically) putting on those gold little shorts! I professed my love for communication, my experiences of managing social media accounts for an organization on campus that promoted mental health, as well as my role as a campus peer counselor. After our meeting, they agreed to take me on as their first ever **Social Media Ambassador**. For nearly six months, I created content in both Spanish and English, crafted social media campaigns targeting specific mental health topics and issues, and assisted in facilitating support groups remotely! Little did I know all the places those little gold shorts would take me!

Examples of Jeronimo's social media campaign/internship

BIPOC & LATINX OUTREACH PROGRAM

¿CÓMO PUEDES PARTICIPAR EN LA PREVENCIÓN DEL SUICIDIO?

- Créele**
Escuchar activamente a la persona que expresa su situación difícil o sus desafíos puede ayudarte a sentirte escuchado y no solo.
- Aprende sobre Los Factores de Riesgo y Las Señales de Advertencia**
Los factores de riesgo son características que hacen más probable que alguien considere, intente o muera por suicidio. Las señales de advertencia indican un riesgo inmediato de suicidio. Aprender sobre las cosas que le dará una mejor comprensión de qué hacer cuando vea factores de riesgo y señales de advertencia.
- Guíale a Buscar Ayuda Profesional**
Guiar a una persona en riesgo de suicidio hacia la búsqueda de apoyo profesional puede ayudarte a comprender sus luchas y encontrar formas adaptadas de sobrelevarlo.



#ESPERANZAINTHEBURG
#HUBCITYHOPES

BIPOC & LATINX OUTREACH PROGRAM

ACCORDING TO MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA, 20% OR 1 IN 5 OF ALL PEOPLE WILL EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER IN THEIR LIFETIME.



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BIPOC & LATINX OUTREACH PROGRAM

Después de Hablar de Mi Salud Mental...

¿Está bien que yo me sienta...?

- Aliviado
- Feliz
- Ansioso
- Agobiado



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BIPOC & LATINX OUTREACH PROGRAM

- Menos interés en socializar
- Perder interés en pasatiempos & otras actividades
- Falta de motivación
- Poco apetito
- Dolores y molestias generales
- Cansancio / Fatiga
- Tristeza continua



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BIPOC & LATINX OUTREACH PROGRAM

"PUEDE(S)..."

- DARTE LA SENSACIÓN DE SER APOYADO
- AYUDARTE A EMPEZAR EL PROCESO DE SANAR
- AYUDARTE A ENTENDER QUE NO ESTÁS SOLO
- PONER LA MENTE EN BUENA CONDICIÓN PARA BUSCAR RECURSOS DE SALUD MENTAL
- REDUCIR LOS ESTIGMAS DE SALUD MENTAL
- MOTIVARTE PARA BUSCAR RECURSOS DE SALUD MENTAL
- MEJORAR Y MANTENER UN ESTADO SALUDABLE DE BIENESTAR



#ESPERANZAINTHEBURG
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BIPOC & LATINX OUTREACH PROGRAM

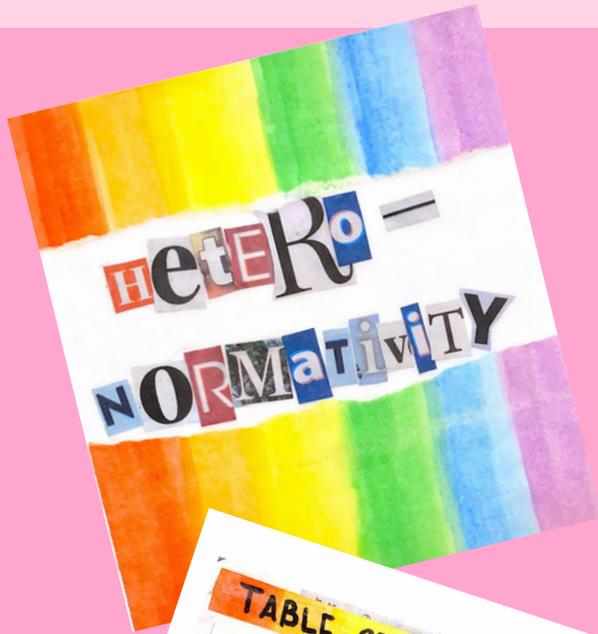
SAD IS A TYPE OF DEPRESSION THAT IS RELATED TO CHANGES IN SEASONS. SYMPTOMS MAY START OUT MILD AND BECOME MORE SEVERE AS THE SEASON PROGRESSES.



#ESPERANZAINTHEBURG
#HUBCITYHOPES

HETERONORMATIVITY

BY BAILEY BREWER (SHE/THEY)



Heteronormativity is a prejudiced concept that automatically assumes the gender binary and heterosexuality. The term implies normalcy of the gender binary and that sexual and marital relations should only be between people of the opposite sex.

The foundation of society has formulated individuals to believe heterosexual relationships are the only way to lead a mentally and physically healthy lifestyle. This belief highlights the institutionalization of heterosexuality, and how it is organized through gender and distributed throughout racial, class, and sexual hierarchies.

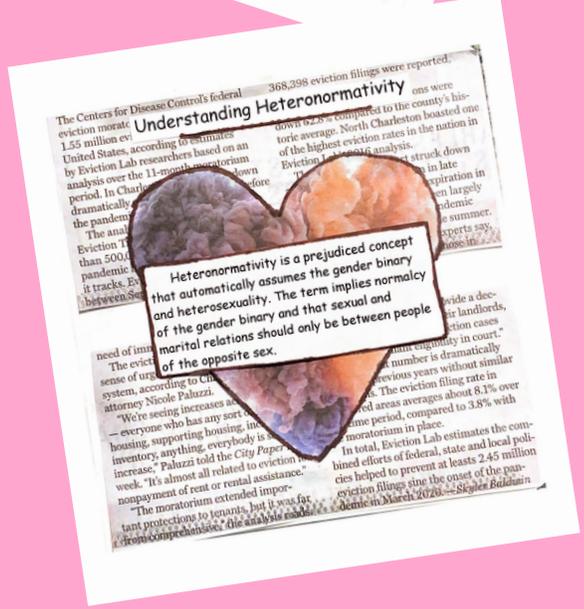
The concept of heteronormativity imprints in the brains of adolescents and young people through toys, books, and educational items. These tools assume that children will adhere to traditional gender roles and sexualities.

Within the education system, heteronormativity prevails especially in sexual education, which exclusively discusses heterosexual sex and relationships and fails to mention safe sex and contraceptive use for same-sex couples.

Heteronormative concepts are also reinforced within many religious and secular organizations, which assume the heterosexuality of its members by treating heterosexuality as the norm or the "correct" way to be.

Until recently, heteronormativity has dominated media platforms in television, radio, newspaper articles, magazines, social media, digital media, and the internet.

My zine confronts the ideology of toxic heteronormativity in an artistic way. It expresses the belief the societal norms should not promote exclusively this idea of a heterosexual, cisgender individual. Instead, we, as a society, should come together to create equality. This project highlights true human nature - in the sense of what genders we choose to present ourselves as, and the people we choose to love. That it is not something genetically wrong. That it is a freedom and uniqueness that should be celebrated rather than oppressed.



MISOGYNY & PATRIARCHY IN THE ASYLUM SYSTEM

TRIGGER WARNING:
SEXUAL VIOLENCE

BY LEA NEUFELD (SHE/HER)



In order to claim asylum in a country a person has to prove without a doubt that they have been discriminated and persecuted against.

The 1951 UNHCR Refugee Convention lays out the categories that are deemed as grounds for persecution: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Notice that sexual violence is not on this list.

When seeking asylum, legally it's all about persecution. The male experience regarding persecution involves sexual violence less often, and since the Geneva Conventions and UN Refugee Convention are catered to the male experience this creates a gendered analysis and response to forced migration.

"A man was tied to a chair and forced at gunpoint to watch his common-law wife being raped by soldiers. In determining the case for refugee status, he was deemed to have been tortured. His partner was not." - Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Elena, Gil Loescher, Katy Long, and Nando Sigona. 2014. *The Oxford handbook of refugee and forced migration studies*.

Catherine MacKinnon's Dominance Theory can also be applied to the immigration system. The theory outlines that "men's physiology defines most sports, their needs define auto and health insurance coverage, their socially designed biographies define workplace expectations and successful career patterns, their perspectives and concerns define quality in scholarship, their experiences and obsessions define merit, their objectification of life defines art, their military service defines citizenship, their presence defines family, their inability to get along with each other—their wars and rulerships—defines history, their image defines god,

and their genitals define sex." (MacKinnon, p.22). We can definitely look at the UNHCR convention and protocols as androcentric in that way.

Can sexual harassment or sexual assault be reason enough for someone to be granted asylum? The courts are inconsistent about this.

- "Requiring treatment to be severe, proven and documented"
- How do you prove gender based persecution claims? How do you prove SV happened and that it was persecution and not a "one off event?"
- Persecution vs harassment
- Sexual assault, rape, and domestic violence are consistently seen as outside of the purview of protection of the UNHCR and national asylum systems.

Changing the definition of a refugee is nearly impossible. Countries would object. At this point, our best bet is to advocate for added a protocol.

Canada is one of the countries that more consistently recognizes sexual violence as grounds for asylum, but it still has this many failed claims. What about less progressive countries?

There are 31 countries at the moment who have protocols in place for gender based persecution (the U.S. is not one). This does not mean it's easier to prove gender based violence as persecution in these countries, but it's a start.



IF RAPE CULTURE DIDN'T EXIST

BY TAYLOR MCELWAIN (SHE/HER)

things i would do if i was a man

things i would do if rape culture didn't exist:

jog on the bike path sleep on the beach go dancing by myself

park in parking garages take the trash out at night

not reach for my pepper spray when a man is behind me for two or more blocks not have pepper spray at all

never look at my three closest friends and wonder which one of us will be a victim of sexual violence (one in four, right?)

never pass my friend's assaulter on the street and have to swerve off into the bushes to calm my breathing

(never worry about what, who, could be lurking in the bushes)

wear whatever i wanted without wondering how a judge and jury would react to my outfit, wondering if they'd deem my skirt too short and infer that i was therefore asking for it

say "i'm not interested" instead creating a fictional boyfriend because being another man's possession isn't safer than just not being into him

walk down the street holding hands with my girlfriend without enduring calls of "y'all sexy" from cars speeding by

walk down the street without being catcalled by a middle aged man and then, seconds later, slut-shamed by his wife

be unburdened, not knowing a million little tips so i don't "let myself" be assaulted (throw up, men don't like gross girls.) (scream "fire"— no one cares if it's "rape.") exist in a world that is safe

exist in a world where my continued bodily safety, and the safety of every woman, is not up in the air.

SELF-DEFENSE THROUGH THE ART OF BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU

BY MARISSA HAYNES (SHE/HER)
PHOTOS BY REESE MOORE (SHE/HER)



It was the beginning of the first semester at CofC, and I was longing for some sort of direction in my college career. I was also desperate to make sense of my feelings of resentment I had towards ... I didn't know what. Myself? My body maybe? Or resentment towards my upbringing during which I felt closeted in more ways than one. It was the semester that I took my Intro to Women's and Gender Studies class.... And it was during the same semester that I was introduced to feminist self-defense ... finally some of my questions began to be answered.

For my required First Year Experience class I was lucky enough to get into the feminist self-defense class. Two days a week we were on the mats in Silcox gym and the third day we spent with Dr. Kaj Brian learning about physical feminism. In the class Pat and Maggie McGuigan share their knowledge of and love for the art of Brazilian jiu jitsu.

Unlike other forms of self-defense that rely on strength, force, and striking tactics, Brazilian jiu jitsu uses leverage and physics to help a person overcome their opponent. The artform was first invented by Helio Gracie in the early 20th century. He was known to be a weak, frail young person and was often left out when his

brothers would train the Japanese martial art judo. In order to compete with his brothers who were much bigger than he was, he began to manipulate the tactics from judo so that they would be more effective for someone his size. From this was born Brazilian jiu jitsu.

After that first semester, I enjoyed training sport jiu jitsu with Maggie at their gym in James Island. The semester after that, I took over as the new teacher's assistant, and now it is one of the best jobs I've ever had. Now, as a senior WGS major, I can help incorporate important feminist theory into each class.

The issue of self-defense and its effect on the movement to combat rape culture can be one of debate. I often have to grapple with or defend questions like: Is teaching someone how to fight off an attacker just a way of perpetuating the very violence that we are trying to avoid? Or are we making progress in the movement for sexual assault awareness? To this, I say that there are many forms of self-defense.

In the class we have a motto "**I learn self-defense, not because it is my responsibility, but because it is my reality.**" Some self-defense classes use language that implies a culture of

victim-blaming. These same classes often teach particularly young women to poke the attacker in the eyes or kick them in the groin in order to avoid harm, even though we know that fight imitates fight, meaning, unless you have the upper hand, striking your opponent will only encourage them to strike back.

I argue that effective, feminist self-defense is about much more than just physical safety. In our class at the college, we teach a holistic approach to self-defense- one that is all-encompassing and accepting of all bodies.

From day one, we aim at not just teaching students something they don't know, but we value helping them reimagine ways to use the tools that they already have. We guide them while they look within themselves to use the body they were born with to protect themselves in ways that don't require strength but just slight manipulation. We emphasize the importance of strengthening their ability to listen to their instincts in a society that has socialized them to constantly doubt their instincts for the sake of someone else's comfort, and trust that they are more powerful than they may think. A little jiu jitsu goes a long way. We teach proven ways to stop a fight before it happens. This is about proactive ways of



defending ourselves as much as it is about the reactive.

At Feminism in Motion, I gave a demonstration of what I mean when I say that self-defense through the art of Brazilian jiu jitsu is about working smarter not harder, and that no matter what body houses you, you can utilize it to work in your favor.



Self defense...
because it is
... my reality ...

BEYOND THE BINARY

BY CHELS HAGAN (SHE/HER) & MADDY LANDA (SHE/HER)



A lot of people often find themselves confused as to what the actual definition of gender expansiveness is because of how vague it is. But that is what it is meant to be; gender expansiveness encapsulates any form of gender that lies beyond the binaries of Western patriarchy.

However, this definition also brings up another question: what binary? Well, we have this deeply entrenched belief that there can only be two sexes: male and female, which we also correlate to gender. But gender and sex are actually two different things. Gender is a societal construction, a set of performed actions that don't correspond to sex, which is biological. Unfortunately, we live in a world where the dominant belief is that both must be connected.

This ideology is harmful to everyone who is affected by it. When we live by binaries, one group is always privileged while another is marginalized. And when it comes to gender, these binaries force people into boxes that just reproduce hierarchies of oppression and cut people out of their own narratives.

What's worse is that this binary, as we know, also connects to all other hierarchical structures. Gender affects and is affected by race, class, ethnicity, and a whole host of other factors. This is why we have to look at gender

expansiveness through an intersectional lens. We have to be able to see all of the other interlocking factors and social structures that combine to create these unique forms of oppression because they are all inextricably linked. If we fail to notice this, then we cannot fully address the issues.

Now, let's consider gender expression and identity. Since gender is a social construct, it is really, partially a presentation of how one perceives themselves. It is performing a set of actions. So, based on your own unique gender identity, you'll have your own form of gender expression. And this is where pronouns come in. **Every person expresses their gender differently**, which means that they may have different sets of pronouns or use a combination of pronouns. All that we have to do to respect their identity is use them.

Both of us began and are continuing discussions with students and staff about the significance of gender expansiveness and legislative bills that effect the classroom. We learned that it is of the utmost importance that everyone at the college has at least a basic understanding of these ideologies. When we cultivate inclusive learning environments, we are able to grow the leaders of tomorrow.

EXPLORING QUEERNESS & GENDER DIVERSITY IN VIDEO GAMES

BY ALEX TATE-MOFFO (HE/THEY)

Imagine looking at the people depicted in movies, TV, or video games and not being able to fully relate to a single one of them on something as important to your identity as your gender or sexuality. For some of you, this may be a little hard to imagine, but for people in the LGBTQ+ community, this is an all-too common feeling.

Nuanced representation of all types of people is important to all mediums. This type of representation is particularly important for gender diverse and non-binary people (people who do not identify as solely a “man” or solely a “woman”) because media depictions are often used as a cultural foothold both for people to both understand themselves and to explain their experiences to others.

In my research, I have been specifically focusing on looking into the **lack of representation of gender diverse people in video games**. It is difficult to quantify the gap in this medium, but out of the over one-thousand two-hundred and fifty (1,250) games currently listed on the LGBTQ+ Games Archive, only 20 video game characters are tagged “non-binary or genderqueer (explicit)”, which is their gender diverse label, with multiple characters from the same game or series. This archive is not exhaustive, but it shows that these types of characters are certainly lacking.

In working to help fill this gap, I have been not only doing subject area research, but actually trying to create a video game that focuses on a gender diverse character and uses game mechanics to explore their experiences. The game, which I have titled FIT, is a 2D puzzle platformer. Throughout the different levels in FIT, the player is forced to choose different outfits, and thus ways of presenting their gender identity to others, in order to “fit” in, overcome obstacles, interact with NPCs, and reach the end of

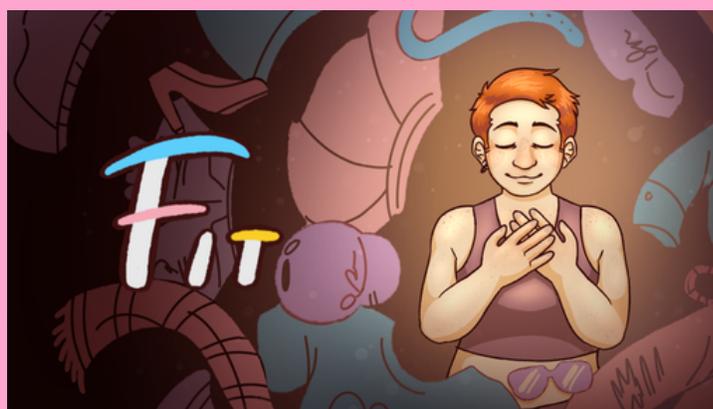


Illustration credit: Alex Tate-Moffo

the level. Each piece of clothing provides the player with a different movement set and way of interacting with characters and the environment, with some combinations making it much easier to progress than others. Certain levels may only be cleared by using a certain set of clothing, while other rooms may permit multiple completion methods. Which method a player chooses may have an impact on the broader story, though this is still a very prospective feature.

I have three main goals of this research and game - 1) to be able to spark conversations surrounding issues non-binary and gender diverse people face in real life regarding representation in media, 2) to provide explicit representation of a gender diverse character in a video game that is meaningful to gender diverse people themselves, 3) to (hopefully) provide an enjoyable game experience.

This research is still on-going, and FIT is not currently available to play, but I hope to have a short demo available soon. And, I hope that those of you who have the opportunity to work in creative mediums, or even those of you that simply like to watch a lot of TV or play a lot of video games, think carefully about the types of people those media choose to represent.

JEWISH WOMEN & SOCIAL ACTION

BY LAINEY KOMEROFSKY (SHE/HER)



ORTHODOX CONGREGATION B'NAI DAVID SISTERHOOD OF DETROIT, MICHIGAN, CA. 1950. PHOTO FROM JEWISH WOMEN'S ARCHIVE



Today there are dozens of international organizations and initiatives that connect Jews through shared goals rooted in justice and positive change, and some of the most prominent of these have been founded/led by women.



Justice-oriented Jewish values:

- Jews are commanded in the Torah at least 36 times to "love thy neighbor"
- Tikkun Olam (תיקון עולם): Jewish value of repairing the world through action
- Tzedakah (צדקה): moral obligation of Jewish people to give to charitable causes
- Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof (צדק צדק תרדוף): "Justice, justice you will pursue" - Deuteronomy 16:20



INSPIRING WOMEN

Abby Stein: Transgender rabbi, author, activist, blogger, model, & speaker raised in a Hasidic community in New York.

Anat Hoffman: Israeli activist, executive director of the Israel Religious Action Center, and founder of Women of the Wall

Pnina Tamano-Shata: Ethiopian-Israeli lawyer, activist, and politician serving as the first Ethiopian woman in the Knesset.

ISRAEL

Women of the Wall: Jewish feminist organization whose central mission is to "attain social and legal recognition of women's rights to wear prayer shawls, pray, and read from the Torah, collectively and aloud, at the Western Wall."

Emunah: women's organization that aims to "provide education and Jewish values to children, young women and new immigrants, and to enhance the status of women and family life in Israeli society."

UNITED STATES

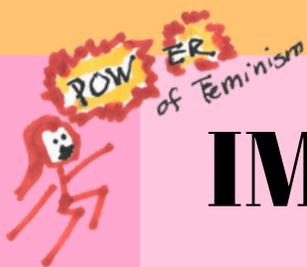
Jewish Women International: social service organization that aims to empower Jewish women through "healthy relationship education, financial empowerment, and women's leadership."

Religious Action Center: Political/legislative outreach branch "dedicated to working across lines of difference to organize and advocate for social change that alienates systemic injustices, especially those that primarily impact marginalized communities."

ETHIOPIA

Friends of Ethiopian Jews: relief and advocacy coalition that "assists grassroots Ethiopian-Israeli organizations working for equality, education and employment for the Ethiopian Jewish community."

Jewish Women's Archive: foundation dedicated to "collecting and promoting the extraordinary stories of Jewish women."



IMMIGRATION ACTIVISM

WITH JODY BELL (SHE/HER) & SARA SOLAN (SHE/HER)

JODY BELL

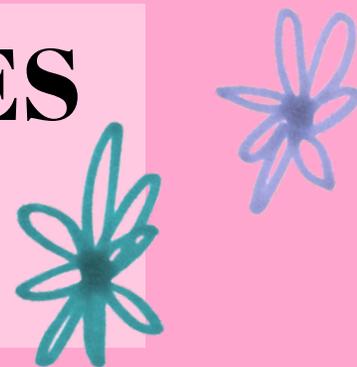
Jody released her first venture, In Case of Deportation, in 2017 as a tool to inform and support mixed-status families preparing for potential parental deportation. she built this organization using a foundation of entrepreneurship - leveraging a 12-week business plan, structured press release, and more. Jody, a current Ketner Scholar, recently presented on this project at TEDx Charleston. You can view her TEDx Talk here: <https://youtu.be/XdJImv7UXVA>.

SARA SOLAN

Sara's immigration advocacy began in high school when she worked as part of an interfaith refugee resettlement team to support a pregnant, single mother and her six kids who immigrated to Nashville from the DRC via a Tanzanian refugee camp. Now as a Ketner Scholar, she started the Cougar Refugee Alliance, a student organization to help integrate newly resettled refugees into the Charleston community. They currently are focused on the Afghani refugee families recently arrived in Charleston.

EVERY BODY DESERVES SOME LOVIN' YOGA

ORGANIZED BY KEKE HUMPHREY (SHE/HER), DEL LAMERE (THEY/THEM), AHMIRA LUCAS (SHE/HER), & JERONIMO ORTEGA (HE/EL)



With support from the WGS Student Opportunities Fund, we invited a local yoga instructor and inspirational speaker, Kanae Miller, to guide a yoga class and engage in a dialogue that could aid us all in **destigmatizing natural bodies and encourage unconditional embracement of bodies of all sizes, shapes, and colors.**

It is through a WGS lens that we hoped to relieve some societal pressures people feel in regards towards their bodies by

1. Holding a safe space for them and hosting our guests
2. To embrace their bodies in a place of appreciation with no limitation of shape, size, colors, or ability.

Our key goal for this project and event was to engage in a practice of yoga that addresses the stigmas surrounding bodies—what is a “normal” body, what is a “healthy” body, what is a “good”, and “beautiful” body—and to equip others with the knowledge and the tools necessary to work to deconstruct these ideas in their own lives.

The event, attended by dozens of students, served to materialize the concept of “body positivity” as well as how society works to resist the acceptance of all bodies and actually markets beauty (fitness/health/fashion) as a conditional commodity. The body positivity movement is growing, and we hope this community event inspires future gatherings embracing this concept.



Photo credit: Dr. Kris De Welde



Student organizers with Kanae Miller. Photo credit: Dr. Kris De Welde

ORAL HISTORY OF WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

BY ASISIA ADDISON (SHE/HER)



METHOD

Data were analyzed from transcripts among 3 midwives who participated in a(n) oral interview. Eligibility criteria included women's healthcare providers (OB/GYNs, Doulas, Midwives, etc.). This study provides qualitative data that provides intimate conversation and unique narratives and cultural experiences before, during, and after the pregnancy and birthing process. The methodology provides a platform for the origin of midwifery, to preserve and revive its historical context(s) and inform others. CofC's institutional review board (IRB) approved this study protocol.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- The education of clients on lifestyle changes during pregnancy is strongly based on the pregnant woman's current routine.
- During the postpartum period pregnant women benefit from support systems (emotional, physical, informational, belonging).
- Traditional healthcare providers can help ensure pregnant women are being heard and not ignored in the healthcare settings.
- Cultural competency and environmental influences play a major role in the sources of health and beliefs for pregnant women.
- Women have seemed to gravitate towards one another as a support system regardless of geographical location or time period
- Prioritizing health education during pregnancy can play an important role in counteracting downward trends for women's health issues (i.e., maternal mortality).

DIVERSITY OF MIDWIFERY STUDENT POPULATION IN 2018



0.42%	American Indian
2.44%	Asian
11.43%	Black
7.20%	Hispanic
0.11%	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
3.50%	Two or more races
72.65%	White
2.25%	Race Unknown

DIVERSITY OF US POPULATION



N/A	American Indian
5.2%	Asian
12.6%	Black
16.9%	Hispanic
N/A	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
2.3%	Two or more races
62.0%	White
N/A	Race Unknown

Chart comparing race of the midwifery student population in ACME Accredited Midwifery Programs with US population (US Census Bureau, Statisticalatlas.com 2018)



Click to listen to an audio excerpt from the interview with midwife, Helena or here: <https://bit.ly/3wbHzzx>

LOSS, BIG & SMALL: COLLEGE STUDENTS' GRIEF DURING COVID-19

BY JAY GULICK (HE/THEY)

Jay received an EXPO 2022 Outstanding Poster in Social Sciences Award for his research project entitled, "Loss, Big, and Small: College Students' Grief During COVID-19." Below are some of his findings.

METHOD

Anonymous Survey

- 36 questions
- Multiple choice
- 0 - 10 scales
- Optional short answer

Participants

- CofC sophomores - seniors
- 1,000 student random sample
- 90 responses total
- 9% response rate = .9% of student body

FEELING LOSS OF KINSHIP

Differences based on Sexual Orientation

LGBTQIA+: 7.5/10
Heterosexual: 6.1/10



DEPRESSION RESULTS

Gender Differences

Non-Binary: 8.7/10
Female: 6.2/10
Male: 5.7/10

Sexual Orientation Differences

LGBTQIA+: 7.6/10
Heterosexual: 5.5/10

SUFFICIENT SCHOOL SUPPORT?

Heterosexual

Yes: 56.8%
No: 43.2%

LGBTQIA+

Yes: 27.6%
No: 72.4%

NEW COURSES FALL 2022

WOMEN, GLOBIZATION, & MIGRATION

DR. MALIA WOMACK (SHE/HER)

Women are vulnerable to poverty and commonly lack access to adequate social, cultural, institutional, and material resources necessary for survival. The collective identity “woman” comprises more than half of the world’s population yet is regularly marginalized in local, transnational, and global economies. The collective identity “woman” is also internally diverse. Many women endure compounded oppression (which makes them more vulnerable to impoverishment) related to identity traits including but not limited to sexuality, gender expression, sex, race, skin color, languages, age, geographic location, education, familial relationships, and gender-based violence. This course explores the experiences of diverse and intersectional women in an increasingly globalized world and in various geographic locations. In this class students will consider how gender discrimination, intersectionality, migration, economies, and globalization are deeply and intimately related. Students will reflect on their own positionality within global power hierarchies and will engage in the course material in a self-reflexive and investigative manner.



Photo credit: Dr. Malia Womack

LATIN AMERICAN FEMINISTS & HUMAN RIGHTS

DR. MALIA WOMACK (SHE/HER)

International human rights are designed based on the ideology that all people deserve basic rights because of their shared humanity. However, Latin American feminists commonly argue that the international human rights processes are rife with inequalities at the local, transnational, and global levels, are not effectively enforced, are resources for Western imperialism, and are Western and male centric. This class problematizes human rights failures. In particular, the class explores how human rights treaties and operations (in their present form) cannot adequately address the complexity of lived experiences, diversity, and intersectionality. This course documents how feminists throughout Latin America have mobilized against colonialism, poverty, gender discrimination, and other inequalities by engaging in domestic as well as transnational activism around international human rights. Latin American feminists have unrelentingly promoted equality and are transforming how human rights are understood throughout Latin America and the world.



Photo credit: Reuters

QUEER FRIENDSHIP, KINSHIP, COMRADESHIP, & COMMUNITY AS LIBERATION PRAXIS

CRISTINA DOMINGUEZ (THEY/THEM)

This course is an immersive and experiential study of the ways in which LGBTQ+ people engage queer friendships, kinship, comradeship, and community as liberation praxis. Centering WOC, QTBIPOC, and white anti-racist feminists and the traditions they have co-created including healing, disability, and transformative justice among others, we will explore theories, perspectives, and approaches to queer friendship, kinship, coalition, and community. Honoring our particular situatedness, a substantial portion of the course will highlight historical and contemporary examples of relational social justice work among QTBIPOC and white anti-racist LGBTQ+ social justice collectives and grassroots community organizations in the South. Lastly, we will take up somatic and relational culture informed community building practices as a part of in-class activities and outside-of-class assignments, experientially learning with one another and others ways of fostering and sustaining queer friendship, kinship, comradeship, and community.

INTRODUCING WGST 250: APPROACHES TO RESEARCH & PRACTICE IN WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES

DR. KRIS DE WELDE (SHE/ELLA)

This is an inquiry-based course that offers a primer to the theoretical, conceptual and methodological frameworks in Women's and Gender Studies. Students will engage with intersectional and interdisciplinary approaches to research and activism in an effort to understand more fully concerns of power, oppression, and liberation that are central to the discipline. The goals for this course are to engage students with scholarship in the interdisciplinary field of WGS to develop an understanding of the relationships between theory, methodology and methods (in research and in activism) and with attention to the cornerstone concept of intersectionality. Required for students declaring the major in Fall 2022 and beyond, counts as an elective for all other WGS majors and minors.

STAY CONNECTED



**VISIT THE WGS PROGRAM BLOG:
WGS CONNECT!**

**VIEW PHOTOS FROM FEMO 2022 ON OUR BLOG, WGS
CONNECT, AT [HTTPS://BIT.LY/3WIBMVZ](https://bit.ly/3wibmvz)**



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PROGRAM**



[HTTPS://WGS.COFC.EDU/GIVING/](https://wgs.cofc.edu/giving/)

SAVE THE DATE!

Yes!
I'm a Feminist.

Benefitting the Alison Piepmeier Scholarship and the
College of Charleston Women's and Gender Studies Program

Friday, November 4, 2022

WHAT IFF?

*Exploring Intersectional
Feminist Futures at CofC*

[HTTPS://WHATIFF.BUZZSPROUT.COM/](https://whatiff.buzzsprout.com/)

NEW WGS PODCAST!

What IFF?, is a podcast dedicated to sparking discussion about making change in our campus community and beyond by centering intersectional feminist thought and uplifting members of our community who are actively moving toward justice, and inspiring those of us who want to learn more.

Special **THANK YOU** to all the professors who mentored students on their presentations and projects. Thank you to President Hsu, Provost Austin, Vice President Caudill, and Dean Knotts for their support and attendance at FeMo. And, we are grateful for all the faculty and staff who helped organize this year's Feminism in Motion.