ANNUAL REPORT
2014-2015
Table of Contents

Summary 3
Council Members 5
Provost’s Office for Faculty Diversity and Inclusion 9
Sexual Respect 9
Gender and Human Rights and Feminist ‘Zines 10
African American Religion, Sexual Politics and Social Justice 11
Transgender Identity, Vulnerability, and Resilience 11
Keywords: Trans* 12
WGSSC Website 13
Future Plans 14
The Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Council was founded in August 2013 by Alondra Nelson, then Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies and Director, Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality and Yasmine Ergas, Director, Gender and Public Policy Specialization (SIPA). It is a network of leaders from centers, institutes, and initiatives at Columbia University dedicated to women’s, gender, and sexuality studies.

The goal of the WGSS Council, founded with the generous support of the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Planning and the co-sponsorship of the Office of the Dean at SIPA and the Office of the Executive Vice President for Arts and Sciences, is to bring researchers from across the university together in one room, so that they may get to know one another, and learn about the various projects and initiatives in which their institutes, programs and centers are actively involved. The hope is that these conversations will yield a better understanding for each of us about the broader scope of gender and sexuality studies at Columbia, and possibly also lead to even more fruitful interdisciplinary collaborations in curriculum, research, and programming.

The fall meeting of the Council’s second year took place on October 20, 2014 at the Faculty House, and was attended by twenty members from Barnard College, Teacher’s College, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Mailman School of Public Health, the Medical Center, SIPA, the Columbia Libraries, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of the President. At this meeting, we heard short presentations from Dennis Mitchell, Senior Associate Provost for Faculty Diversity and Inclusion; Pamela Graham, Director of the Center for Human Rights Documentation & Research; Sarah Witte, Liaison for Gender, Women and Sexuality from Columbia Libraries; and Suzanne Goldberg, Executive Vice President for University Life.

The spring Council meeting took place on February 9, 2015 at SIPA, and was attended by eighteen representatives from women’s, gender, and sexuality studies from the schools mentioned above as well as the Columbia Business School. At this meeting, Josef Sorett, Assistant Professor of Religion and African-American Studies, Associate Director of the
Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life (IRCPL), and founding Director of the Center on African American Religion, Sexual Politics and Social Justice (CARSS); Walter O. Bockting, Professor of Medical Psychology (in Psychiatry and Nursing), Research Scientist, New York State Psychiatric Institute, and Co-Director, LGBT Health Initiative at the Division of Gender, Sexuality, & Health, NYS Psychiatric Institute / Columbia University Department of Psychiatry with the Columbia University School of Nursing; Jenna Freedman, Associate Director of Communications and Women’s Studies Librarian at Barnard College; Suzanne Goldberg, Executive Vice President for University Life; and Dennis Mitchell, gave brief presentations on their programs.

Also in the spring, the Council cosponsored our second panel with the Center for the Study of Social Difference around a “keyword” that women’s, gender, and sexuality studies scholars could approach from their distinctive disciplinary practices. The “Trans” panel featured Jack Halberstam (American Studies and Ethnicity, Gender Studies and Comparative Literature, University of Southern California), Jack Pula (Psychiatry, College of Physicians & Surgeons, Columbia University), and Yasmine Ergas (International and Public Affairs, SIPA) and was moderated by Jean Howard (English and Comparative Literature).
2014-2015

Council Members

Lila Abu-Lughod
Director, Gender, Religion and Law in Muslim Societies Project, Center for the Study of Social Difference

Walter Bockting
Co-Director, Initiative for LGBT Health, Medical Center

Andrew Davidson
Vice Provost for Academic Planning (Ex officio)

Tina Campt
Professor of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Co-Director, Barnard Center for Research on Women

Laura Ciolkowski
Associate Director, Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality

Patricia Dailey
Director, Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality and Professor of English and Comparative Literature

Vishakha Desai
Special Advisor for Global Affairs, Office of the President (Ex officio)

Anke A. Ehrhardt
Director, Initiative for LGBT Health, Medical Center

Yasmine Ergas
Director, Specialization on Gender and Public Policy, SIPA and Lecturer in the Discipline of International and Public Affairs
Kathryn Kolbert  
Director, Athena Center for Leadership Studies, Barnard College

Sharon Marcus  
Orlando Harriman Professor of English and Comparative Literature and A&S Dean of Humanities (Ex officio)

Jenny McGill  
Lecturer in discipline and Assistant Director of the Economic and Political Development Concentration, SIPA

Dennis Mitchell  
Senior Associate Provost for Faculty Diversity and Inclusion (Ex officio)

Connie Nathanson  
Co-Director, Population Research Center

Alondra Nelson  
Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies and A&S Dean of Social Science

Richard Parker  
Director, Center for the Study of Culture, Politics, and Health, School of Public Health

Elissa Perry  
Professor of Psychology and Education, Teacher’s College

Katherine Phillips  
Paul Calello Professor of Leadership and Ethics and Senior Vice Dean, Columbia Business School
Tonya Reid
Assistant to the Director, Division of Gender, Sexuality, and Health, Medical Center

Raymond Smith
Director of Communications, Division of Gender, Sexuality and Health, Medical Center

Josef Sorret
Director, Center on African American Religion, Sexual Politics and Social Justice

SWG Project
Teachers College

Anne Waters
Special Projects Advisor, Columbia University

Sarah Witte
Reference Librarian/Women's Studies Selector, Columbia University Libraries
Dennis Mitchell, Senior Associate Provost for Faculty Diversity and Inclusion, talked about the initiatives at the Provost’s office to increase diversity among faculty. There is ongoing funding for the faculty pipeline initiative and the junior faculty awards will be maintained. He said that an additional $3 million dollars will be earmarked to LGBT scholarship. It will allow the university to bring in new scholars over the next three years. There will also be some funding for conferences on women, gender, race, diversity and LGBT issues.

Suzanne Goldberg, Executive Vice President for University Life, Herbert and Doris Wechsler Clinical Professor of Law, Co-Director of the Center for Gender & Sexuality Law, and Director of the Sexuality and Gender Law Clinic, gave a presentation about the new Sexual Misconduct policy at Columbia during the Fall 2014 meeting. The policy can be found here: http://sexualrespect.columbia.edu/gender-based-misconduct-policy-students.

In the Spring 2015 council meeting, she introduced the Sexual Respect and Community Citizen Initiative, that was rolled out through CourseWorks and asked all Columbia students to participate in examining the link between sexual respect and membership in the University community. Students were given various options to fulfill the requirement.
LIBRARY RESOURCES

Gender and Human Rights and Feminist ‘Zines

During the Fall 2014 council meeting, Pamela Graham, Director of the Center for Human Rights Documentation & Research, gave a brief presentation about their thematic collection, which took on storing the archives of major human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, who deposit their internal records with the collection. The data goes beyond external reports and documents such as memos, campaigns, and decisions, making this a unique transparent resource not available anywhere else. She said that they recently took in 60 boxes from the Human Rights Watch Women’s Division and that Amnesty also has a lot of campaign records related to gender. She said that it is interesting to see how gender is gradually becoming involved in human rights studies. They have a variety of materials on gender issues on a global scale and some domestic as well and are happy to work with faculty and classes.

Sarah Witte, the Liason for gender, women and sexuality at the libraries introduced herself and the resources they have to offer. The Humanities and History Division at Butler Library provides instruction in research methods and resources, as well as in software applications; builds strong research collections; works as liaisons with faculty to strengthen and refine library resources to meet the needs of researchers; and provides reference assistance to students, faculty, staff and visiting readers across diverse media.

During the Spring 2015 council meeting, Jenna Freedman, Associate Director of Communications and Women’s Studies Librarian at Barnard College presented the Feminist ‘Zine Collection, which has about 4,000 ‘zines. Jenna explained what a ‘zine was and showed examples, including self published collages of image and text and political self expressions. The zines are very well catalogued at the Barnard Library and they use categories that are generally not used by librarians, such as genderqueer. It is important to do this because ‘zines are often published by underrepresented groups and it is important for people to be able to find them. On March 7, 2015, they held a Feminist ‘Zine Fest, showcasing the work of artists and ‘zine makers of all genders who identify on the feminist spectrum. Jenna also said she is happy to come to faculty classes to introduce the ‘zines to students.
CENTERS AND INITIATIVES

African American Religion, Sexual Politics and Social Justice

Josef Sorett, Assistant Professor of Religion and African-American Studies; Associate Director of the Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life (IRCPL); and Founding Director, Center on African American Religion, Sexual Politics and Social Justice (CARSS), gave a brief presentation on CARSS and its recent conference, “Are the Gods Afraid of Black Sexuality?” at the Spring 2015 council meeting. CARSS is focused on research at the intersections of religion, race and sexuality. They are currently conducting a big study organized around focus groups that function more like community conversations by partnering with communities on the ground and religious leaders from a multitude of traditions. At the recent conference there were representatives from many different religions including Muslims, Buddhists, etc. It also featured different perspectives including film makers and musicians. It was live screened and videos were posted to the new center website at http://carss.columbia.edu.

Transgender Identity, Vulnerability, and Resilience

Also during the meeting Walter Bockting, Professor of Medical Psychology (in Psychiatry and Nursing); Research Scientist at the New York State Psychiatric Institute; and Co-Director of the LGBT Health Initiative at the Division of Gender, Sexuality, & Health in the NYS Psychiatric Institute / Columbia University Department of Psychiatry with the Columbia University School of Nursing, discussed his transgender health initiative, “Project Affirm: Transgender Identity, Vulnerability, and Resilience Across the Lifespan.” Access to transgender health care is increasing with changes in Medicare exclusion and new treatment options for youth. He said that previous research focused very much on the binary categorization of gender, while today there is much more diversity (ex. gender neutral, chest surgery without hormones, hormones without surgery, etc.). His study is focusing on trans identity across the lifespan from the age of 16. They have a cohort of around 500 people in New York, San Francisco and Atlanta. The objective is to better understand what are the challenges and trajectory of developments. They are using qualitative methods but also quantitative instruments. The final deliverable will ultimately be about how well people acknowledge and find a way to live with their gender/sexuality.
On April 9, 2015, the Council cosponsored our second panel with the Center for the Study of Social Difference around a “keyword” that women’s, gender, and sexuality studies scholars could approach from their distinctive disciplinary practices, “Trans*.” The panel examined the prefix, especially the suggestion of fluidity—of movement, identity, signification—it implies. The participants explored the challenges and possibilities posed by transgendered subjects in the domains of law, public health, and public policy and how we think about transgender in relationship to other concepts that pivot on “trans,” such as translation, transnational, transportation. The “Trans” panel took place on April 9, 2015 at SIPA and featured Jack Halberstam (American Studies and Ethnicity, Gender Studies and Comparative Literature, University of Southern California), Jack Pula (Psychiatry, College of Physicians & Surgeons, Columbia University), and Yasmine Ergas (International and Public Affairs, SIPA) and was moderated by Jean Howard (English and Comparative Literature). There was standing-room only with an audience of more than 60 people for the conversation that cut across the arts, the sciences, social sciences, and humanities.
The Council is working on a new website which will integrate the University’s new events calendar, Bedeworks. The Council will send a press release when the new site launches.
Future Plans

Continuing the work of the WGSS Council will generate even more fruitful interdisciplinary collaborations in curriculum, research, and programming. In future meetings, the Council would like to exchange pedagogical knowledge and faculty syllabi for courses related to women, gender and sexuality, as well as build our network and connect with gender and sexuality related forums happening on campus (ex. Women in the World and the Global Leaders Forum). We hope to convene this group together again for the 2015-2016 academic year. As before, we would hold one meeting each in the fall (October 2015) and spring (February 2016) semesters. We would also like to open one of the Council meetings to student groups and will work with Suzanne Goldberg and the Office of University Life and Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA). We will also launch our new website, which will be a hub for member events, campus resources, and scholarship.