A Message from the Director...

Welcome back to campus! I hope you all have enjoyed a restful and peaceful winter break and that your new semester is off to a good start. WGSS is celebrating its first anniversary as editorial home of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. This first year with Signs has been an enormously productive (if hectic!) one—we’ve hit the ground running with several new initiatives, most crucially the Feminist Public Intellectuals Project, which includes the Short Takes series, Currents, and Ask A Feminist. You can read more about each of these in this newsletter (page 2). Meanwhile, our minor has continued to grow and our Intro to WGSS class launched an incredible “Zine (http://issuu.com/moyabailey/docs/huntington_crossroads).

We are also excited to introduce a wonderful new co-op student, Natalya Jean, and a new visiting scholar, Stu Marvel, to our group. Read more about Natalya and Stu on pages 6 and 7.

This spring promises to be another exciting semester for WGSS as we offer three brand new classes (Digital Feminisms, Sexuality, Gender, and the Law; and Gender and Sexuality in World History) along with a number of other cross-listed courses. We will also host our annual Women’s History Month Symposium on Friday, March 18. This year’s theme, in keeping with our Humanities Center-sponsored collaborative research cluster, is Sex, Gender, and the Carceral State. We are looking forward to welcoming a number of academic scholars and community organizers to campus to engage with our faculty, students, and staff in provocative dialogue throughout the day. More information on the symposium can be found in this issue on page 5. We are also hosting a number of other exciting events this semester, which you will find listed on pages 3 and 4. We hope you will join us at one or more of these events.

Wishing you all the best for this new semester!

*Suzanna Danuta Walters*  
Editor-in-Chief of SIGNs Journal  
Director of Northeastern’s Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program
In its first year under the editorship of Suzanna Danuta Walters, *Signs* implemented an exciting initiative: the Feminist Public Intellectuals Project. Made up of three separate open-access pieces (Short Takes, Currents, and Ask a Feminist), the Public Intellectuals Project is consistent with the mission of *Signs* to matter in the world by engaging feminist theorizing with pressing political and social issues beyond the world of academia. Given the fragmentation of feminist activism and the persistent negative connotations of the moniker “feminist,” the project seeks to genuinely reimagine what role a journal can play in provoking activism. This multi-pronged tack brings into conversation feminist public intellectuals with academic experts, activists with scholars in an effort to spark conversation, debate, and critical feminist discourse.

**Short Takes: Provocations on Public Feminism**

*Short Takes* is a new open-access, online-first feature of *Signs* that examines books that have shaped popular conversations about feminist issues. In *Short Takes*, a book that has had wide-ranging impact and reach is examined in short commentaries from leading feminist public intellectuals and activists. Rather than traditional book reviews, commentators take on broader questions of reach and resonance: Why this? Why now? And what does this say about the state of the feminist zeitgeist?

To date, *Short Takes* has examined Roxane Gay’s *Bad Feminist* and Katha Pollitt’s *Pro*.

You can read more about Short Takes at [signsjournal.org/short-takes/](http://signsjournal.org/short-takes/)

**Currents: Feminist Key Concepts and Controversies**

*Currents* engages key feminist concepts and debates in essays by prominent feminist scholars. This is decidedly not an encyclopedia series, but rather potentially controversial “white papers” that offer a nuanced and edgy take on a key issue circulating in the feminist definitional landscape. Each *Currents* piece is accompanied by a multimedia Digital Archive which includes links and bibliographic information (including podcasts, filmographies, YouTube links, and TV clips, as well as traditional books and articles) that speak to the concept in question. The inaugural *Currents* features Janet Halley writing on the concept of consent.

For more on *Currents*, visit [signsjournal.org/currents-affirmative-consent](http://signsjournal.org/currents-affirmative-consent)

**Ask a Feminist: A Dialogue Between Activism and Academia**

*Ask A Feminist* features interviews with leading feminist thinkers on some aspect of current political life or social justice issue. *Ask A Feminist* will allow *Signs* to create an ongoing conversation among feminist scholars, media activists, and community leaders. The first *Ask a Feminist* features Cathy J. Cohen in conversation with Sarah J. Jackson on feminism, Black Lives Matter, and contemporary activism.

Read their interview and more on this initiative at [signsjournal.org/ask-a-feminist-cohen-jackson](http://signsjournal.org/ask-a-feminist-cohen-jackson)
UPCOMING WGSS EVENTS

2/18, 3 PM at 909 Renaissance Park

Join us for this lecture by Japonica Brown-Saracino (Associate Professor at Boston University) analyzing an ethnography of four small cities with growing populations of lesbian, bisexual, and queer-identified (LBQ) women and introducing the concept of “sexual identity cultures,” thereby revealing the defining role of cities in shaping their contours. A reception will follow.

**Film Screening, “The Amazing Nina Simone”**
2/29, 5 PM at 90 Snell Library

Join us for a screening of this provocative documentary of jazz legend Nina Simone and a post-screening talkback with filmmaker Jeff Lieberman (mediated by William Miles, Professor of Political Science), along with the Northeastern Humanities Center, the Departments of Political Science, African American Studies, and Music, and the Programs in Jewish Studies and Media and Screen Studies.

**Women Take the Reel Film Festival, “She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry”**
3/1, 6 PM at 135 Shillman

This year, Northeastern will screen SHE’S BEAUTIFUL WHEN SHE’S ANGRY as part of the GCWS Women Take the Reel film festival, followed by a panel discussion (facilitated by program director Suzanna Walters) with landmark health and human rights organization Our Bodies Ourselves co-founders Joan Ditzion, Judy Norsigian, and Wendy Sanford. SHE’S BEAUTIFUL WHEN SHE’S ANGRY resurrects the buried history of the outrageous, often brilliant women who founded the modern women’s movement from 1966 to 1971. Artfully combining dramatizations, performance, and archival imagery, the film recounts the stories of women who fought for their own equality, and in the process created a world-wide revolution. Refreshments will be served. Don’t miss this exciting opportunity.

**Women Take the Reel Film Festival Kick Off Event, Black Lives Through the Arts**
3/3, 4 PM at Brattle Theatre

The opening event for the Women Take the Reel film festival is devoted to reflecting on and celebrating Black Lives through film, music, poetry, and dialogue. All of the contributing artists and filmmakers will be present to talk about their works that day and will be featured in a concluding roundtable discussion and Q&A with the audience. For more information about the films and the festival, visit web.mit.edu/gcws/news+events/2016women_reel_kickoff.html
UPCOMING WGSS EVENTS

Josh Gamson, “The Belly Mommy and the Fetus Sitter”  
3/17, 4 PM at 909 Renaissance Park

In this talk, Josh Gamson (Professor of Sociology at the University of San Francisco) examines novel forms of intimacy opened up by contemporary reproductive medicine, especially for those for whom the choice to parent remains institutionally and socially controversial, as well as the troubling structural inequalities that underwrite much alternative family creation. A reception will follow.

WGSS Annual Symposium, Sex, Gender, and the Carceral State  
3/18, 9 AM-5:30 PM at the Cabral Center, John D. O’Bryant African American Institute

The WGSS program celebrates Women’s History Month with a day-long symposium featuring panels of speakers in dialogue with one another and their audience. Join us in exploring the relationship between feminist and queer activism and scholarship as it challenges the logics that support an increased reliance on criminal laws, policing, and surveillance. A reception will follow at Dockser Hall. For more information and a full schedule of events, visit http://www.northeastern.edu/cssh/wgss/event-landing/annual-symposium/sex-gender-carceral-state/

Visiting Scholar Talk: Stu Marvel’s “The Infertility Trap: Reproductive Exceptionalism and the Queer Family”  
4/04, 3 PM at 270 Holmes

By placing LGBTQ participant voices at the fore, Stu Marvel’s talk aims to think through questions of infertility and technological intervention to offer a fresh analysis of parentage, child-rearing, and the legal regulation of intimacy. Join us for this talk that examines the sociality and legal bonds created by queer families and the decoupling of sex from reproduction.
Each year the WGSS program hosts a symposium bringing together academics and activists from Northeastern and beyond in discussion over a centralizing topic, springing out of the work of the WGSS Humanities Center-sponsored collaborative research cluster. This spring, the symposium theme is *Sex, Gender, and the Carceral State*. The event will be held this **Friday, March 18** in the **Cabral Center** at the **John D. O’Bryan African American Institute** and will be sponsored by the WGSS program, the Forum on Feminist Thought, the Northeastern Humanities Center, the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Humanities Center Collaborative Research Cluster on Sex, Gender, and the Carceral and co-sponsored by the School of Law; the Departments of English, History, Philosophy & Religion, and Sociology & Anthropology; and the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice. Tickets are free, but seating is limited and a reservation is required. Please visit [https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sex-gender-and-the-carceral-state-tickets-20908891056](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sex-gender-and-the-carceral-state-tickets-20908891056) to make your free online reservation.

**Sex, Gender, and the Carceral State**

The growth of the U.S. penal system and its consequences, including mass incarceration, has generated scholarship and activism analyzing the rise of the carceral state. **Sex, Gender, and the Carceral State** is a one-day conference that explores the relationship between feminist and queer activism and scholarship as it challenges, or, is perhaps complicit with, the logics that support an increased reliance on criminal laws, policing, and surveillance. This conference will provide an opportunity for scholars and activists to discuss a range of critical issues, including:

- How have feminists and queer activists and scholars challenged or reproduced the ideas that support the increased use of criminal law?
- What are the lived experiences of individuals in prisons or prison-like conditions?
- How does carcerality expand outside of the formal penal system and into broader forms of social control?
- How are ideas and practices exported by the United States?
- What are alternatives to the carceral state?
- What is the role of race, class, and gender in shaping scholarship, activism, and people’s lived experiences of the carceral state?

The day-long event will feature academic and activist speakers from Northeastern University and beyond, including: **Mimi Kim** (California State University, Long Beach), **Jessica Pilley** (Texas State University), **Allegra McLeod** (Georgetown University), **Frederick Ginyard** (FIERCE), **Monica Jones** (Activist and Advocate), **Shannon Erwin** (Muslim Justice League), **Gabriel Arkles** (Northeastern University), **Amahl Bishara** (Tufts University), **Jill McCorkel** (Villanova University), **Jason Lydon** (Black & Pink), and **Andrea Ritchie** (Soros Justice Fellow). Panels include: History and Context, Profiling and Incarceration, Social Movements and Alternatives, and a concluding roundtable conversation. The day will also feature an activist table at lunch.

We will conclude with a reception held at the Northeastern University School of Law, with a welcome by Dean **Jeremy Paul**.
Meet Stu Marvel...

Stu Marvel is a Visiting Scholar in WGSS at Northeastern. Most recently, she was a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Vulnerability & Human Condition Initiative at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. She writes and teaches on sexuality, law, family, and gender. Marvel received her PhD from Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto, Canada and was invited as a PECANS visiting scholar to the Centre for Law, Gender, and Sexuality at Kent Law School in Canterbury, England as well as to a visiting scholar position with the Feminism and Legal Theory Project at Emory Law. She graduated from the University of East Anglia with a master’s degree in gender analysis for international development before receiving a master’s of law from Osgoode Hall.

The WGSS team asked Stu a few questions about her work, her interest in WGSS, and her intentions for her time with Northeastern. See her answers below!

What are you studying, and what unique insights do you bring to this subject? Why is it an important contribution to feminist scholarship?

My research examines the regulatory history and current provision of reproductive technology to LGBTQ communities in Canada, based on interview data generated by a pilot study. As part of the first-ever research project to interview lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans-identified families about their experiences with reproductive technology, I travelled widely across the province to interview a racially and economically diverse population and capture both urban and rural experiences with fertility clinics, sperm banks, doctors, and hospitals. My work argues for the overall utility of a queer lens in thinking through issues of kinship, identity, and justice in the context of assisted reproductive technology (ART). Technology has effectively decoupled sex from reproduction and yet despite this seismic shift in reproductive modes, the law and culture of reproduction has remained strangely fixed on a biologist model.

How does your formal field of training intersect with WGSS? And how did you become interested in WGSS?

I think of myself as a feminist sociolegal scholar. My research is undertaken from an interdisciplinary perspective that looks at the relationship between family law, queer theory, and kinship studies. My work argues that queer families offer a useful vantage on the workings of ART, as – in some ways – they represent the ideal clientele for an industry built upon baby-making without sex. I am also interested in the role that law plays in producing societal outcomes and theorize ‘the family’ as not merely a social relationship but also – and crucially – a legal formation. By placing queer voices at the fore, I believe that a refreshed analysis may be gained on thorny questions of parentage, child-rearing, and the legal regulation of intimacy in the context of ART.

What are your plans for your time working with WGSS?

I am keen to work on manuscript revision and development and look very much forward to expanding my work in conversation with the broader research community of the WGSS Program. The interdisciplinary sweep of WGSS represents precisely the sort of academic environment in which I thrive as a humanities scholar working at the intersections of law, family, culture, and society toward the goals of reproductive justice.

Who is your favorite feminist author (academic or popular)?

This is a very hard question! Academically: Dorothy Roberts, Sarah Franklin, Marilyn Strathern, Laura Mamo, and Sheila Jasanoff have all been very influential for me, as well as Martha Fineman, Kathy Abrams, and Janet Halley. Popular: I am all about Roxane Gay, Ijeoma Oluo, Britney Cooper, Lindy West, and Mia McKenzie.
Summer WGSS Course

WMNS 1101: Sex, Gender, and Popular Culture

Semester: Summer I
Instructor: Professor Margot Abels
Schedule: Mondays & Wednesdays, 8:00 - 11:30 AM

This course examines the “making” of masculinities and femininities (and everything else in between) within popular culture. Through a variety of theoretical perspectives (but primarily through feminist cultural studies), we will explore representations of gender and sexuality in American film, television, and other cultural forms. We will study the work of media scholars in various genres to see what media production and reception can tell us about cultural constructions of gender and sexuality. The goal is for you to learn a different way of “seeing” popular culture and your own relationship to it. Using feminist film theory, you will gain a better understanding of how a range of media construct, maintain, and challenge gender and sexuality norms.

Co-op Student: Natalya Jean

Natalya Jean is currently a second-year English major with an art minor and a likely minor in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Hailing from both England and New York, she hopes to go into publishing and to continue addressing both feminist and queer issues in a professional setting. As a first-time co-op, she’s very excited to spend the next five months working as the WGSS Program Assistant and the Signs Editorial Intern.