In Spring 2015, the Women and Gender Studies office in O’Kelly Hall 133 received a much-needed renovation and transformation, thanks to a commitment from the College of Arts and Sciences. Our outdated and uncomfortable office fixtures were replaced with modern, bright, and inviting furnishings. A gathering space has been created at the front of the office for students to stop by, peruse our library, grab a cup of coffee, read quietly before and after classes, and collaborate with classmates and faculty on their projects.

We also have abstract art from the UND Art Collections adorning our freshly painted walls, so the space is also a mini-gallery for all to enjoy. The beauty, comfort, and visual interest of our working and learning environments absolutely make a difference, and we see our new colorful space as a herald of a bright future in Women and Gender Studies!
Meet our dedicated faculty

Nikki Berg Burin is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History and the Women and Gender Studies Program. Nikki teaches a combination of face-to-face and online courses including Introduction to the Study of Women, American Women’s History 1865, U.S. Social and Cultural History, and the American History survey courses. Nikki received her Ph.D. in History from the University of Minnesota in 2007. Her first research focus was on antebellum slavery and female plantation management in the American South. More recently she has commenced a research project on sex trafficking and prostitution in North Dakota both past and present. Nikki serves as the advisor for the UND’s feminist student organization The Third Wave, is a member of the advisory committee for North Dakota’s anti-sex trafficking coalition FUSE, and is active on various university committees including the President’s advisory council on Women’s Issues (PAC-W) and the Committee for Sexual Violence Prevention. Outside of work, Nikki enjoys spending time with her husband and young children, watching *Project Runway*, and baking bread.

Kacie Jossart has taught the Study of Women and Introduction to Gender Studies for Women and Gender Studies at UND. She is also pursuing her PhD in English and WGS, with research interests related to girls and literacy, media studies, transnational and indigenous feminisms, and religious fundamentalism in literature produced for women and children. Kacie recently accepted a tenure-track faculty position chairing the Dept. of Languages and Fine Arts at Eastern New Mexico University in sunny Ruidoso, New Mexico! We will miss her very much at UND but wish her exciting new adventures at ENMU.

Dr. Rebecca Rozelle-Stone, Women & Gender Studies Director

Rebecca Rozelle-Stone is the Director of Women and Gender Studies as well as an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion. Rebecca teaches a wide range of classes in an interdisciplinary fashion, including Feminist Theory, Introduction to Gender Studies, Ethical Theory, Existentialism, Phenomenology, and an Introduction to Philosophy class that highlights themes of love, sex and desire. She received her Ph.D. in philosophy from Southern Illinois University Carbondale (2009), and her research focuses on feminist and phenomenological analyses of bodily experiences, including attentiveness, pain, and fatigue. She also specializes in the thought of Simone Weil, a 20th century French philosopher, mystic, and social activist—having published two books on her, and currently editing a third. Beyond her academic life, Rebecca spends a lot of time doting on her 6-year old tuxedo cat, Manny, and she loves traveling to new places and trying new vegetarian cuisines.
Cassandra Scherr has been part of the Women and Gender Studies program since the fall of 2013 and she currently teaches Introduction to Gender Studies. She received her B.A. from Carleton College, Minnesota, in Political Science. After graduation she worked as an activist and fundraiser, running several offices that were focused on raising awareness for environmental issues and the Human Rights Campaign. She left this work to pursue her Master’s degree, graduating from Rutgers University, NJ, with her M.A. in Women and Gender Studies. Cassandra’s research interests include representations of beauty in media and literature, identity construction in political movements, LGBTQ activism, identity in fairy tales and folklore, Feminist Theory, Queer Theory, and popular culture studies, to name a few. Her current research project focuses on representations of gender identity in popular culture with particular interest in cosplay, costuming, and performance, as well as an appreciation for Steampunk fashions.

Cassandra has just been accepted to her top choice Ph.D. program—SUNY-Buffalo’s English doctoral program with a focus on innovative writing. She has received a generous teaching assistantship, and will begin her Ph.D. coursework there in Fall 2016. We will miss Cassandra’s outstanding Gender Studies classes, but are excited for her as she embarks on this new endeavor!

Audrey D. Johnson is a lecturer in the Department of English at the University of North Dakota where she also teaches in the Women and Gender Studies Program. She earned her Ph.D. at Washington State University. Her main scholarship focuses on early-twentieth century British women writers, specifically Virginia Woolf, and feminist historiography, and her other scholarly interests include women in media fandoms as well as gender in film, television and comics.

..it has always seemed strange to me that in our endless discussions about education so little stress is ever laid on the pleasure of becoming an educated person, the enormous interest it adds to life. To be able to be caught up in the world of thought – that is to be educated.

— Edith Hamilton, American translator, classical scholar, writer, 1867-1963
BODIES, SPACES, AND POWERS

October 27-28, 2016

University of North Dakota Memorial Union

The 16th Annual Red River Women’s Studies Conference will focus on the theme BODIES, SPACES, AND POWERS. This interdisciplinary conference will examine gendered human bodies’ interactions with the political and social spaces in which they operate.

We invite proposals for panels, individual papers, workshops, posters, and creative presentations for this year’s conference. Possible topics for presentations include but are not limited to:

- Colonization, occupation, gentrification: contestation and negotiation
- Intersectionality of oppressions
- Prisons, incarceration, surveillance of bodies, and the modern police state
- Depictions of the body in media and popular culture
- Modes of self-disciplining, training, or containing the body
- Rape culture, issues of consent, trespass, bodily integrity and boundaries
- Women and minorities in academic spaces
- Reproductive rights, medical and legal powers
- Parental and caretaker rights
- Postmodern/fluid/plastic/virtual bodies
- Access to health care
- Human trafficking

UND’s Women and Gender Studies Program invites students, faculty, independent scholars, and community activists to submit proposals for panels, papers, and workshops that address any of the key areas above, or other themes relevant to the fields of Women and Gender Studies. Panel proposals should include a 250-word description of the panel topic, as well as 250-word abstracts of each paper/presentation. Proposals for individual presentations should provide a 250-word abstract of that presentation/poster. Electronic proposals are preferred, and should be emailed to RRWSC2016@gmail.com. All proposals will be evaluated on a competitive basis through the peer-review process.

Deadline for proposal submissions: May 1, 2016

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Danya Qato:
“At the Margins: Women’s Health Under Occupation”

Qato is currently a Fulbright Scholar based at the Institute of Community and Public Health at Birzeit University in Palestine. She holds a PhD in Health Services Research (Brown University), a PharmD (University of Illinois), and a Master of Public Health with a concentration in International Health and Humanitarian Studies (Harvard University). Her major areas of research pertain to health and pharmaceutical policy, global health, epidemiology, and health disparities, particularly in relation to Palestinians.

Dr. Ladelle McWhorter:
“In Perpetual Disintegration: A Foucault-Inflected Look at How Machine-Bodies Became Normalized Bodies”

McWhorter is the author of Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization, Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America, and more than three dozen articles on Foucault, Irigaray, and race theory. She holds the Stephanie Bennett Smith Chair in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and is also Professor of Environmental Studies and holds an appointment in the Philosophy Department at the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia. She is currently working on a book tentatively entitled The End of Personhood on a Postmodern Planet.
Meet the 2015 Award Winners…

Undergraduate Award (on left)


The selection committee was impressed with the ways that Tess drew connections between Atwood’s story, the history of the Moral Majority, and scriptural references. They also remarked on the clarity of her writing.

Graduate Award (on right)


The selection committee was impressed with the clarity of Laura’s argument and intellectual framework, and the effective manner in which she applied feminist methodology.

Honorable Mention (on left)

Michele Willman, “Feeding”

The committee found Michele’s piece on breastfeeding to be emotionally powerful, and applauds her creative approach to this hot-button topic. She raised important issues including maternal guilt, competition and shaming among mothers, as well as policies surrounding breastfeeding and pumping in public spaces.

Our thanks to Dr. Cindy Prescott for the presentation of the awards; to Dr. Sarah Mosher for photography; and to PAC-W for hosting the beautiful reception in the North Dakota Museum of Art.
Nikki Berg Burin was awarded from the UND Arts & Sciences Undergraduate Research/Creative Activity Fund to hire an undergraduate research assistant for the 2015-2016 academic year. Nikki and senior, Laurie Freid (Social Work) are collaborating on a project exploring North Dakota’s response to the sexual exploitation of women and children during the state’s economic booms in the late 19th century and early 21st century. By putting North Dakota’s past into conversation with its present, this project provides guidance for those engaged in today’s anti-sex trafficking movement. Nikki and Laurie will explore how the state’s private citizens, faith groups, activists, and elected officials actively combatted prostitution and sex trafficking during its first economic boom at the end of the nineteenth century and how these groups conduct similar work today. In the midst of a contemporary anti-sex trafficking movement in North Dakota that is rapidly gaining momentum, the long, varied, and imperfect history of this state’s action and inaction on the commercial sexual objectification of women and children has never been more pertinent or timely.

Cassandra Scherr will be presenting her paper, “Impossible Subject: How concepts of Authenticity used Fashion to Shape, Create, and Deny Personal Identity” in the Fashion, Style, Appearance, Consumption and Design area of the National Popular Culture & American Culture Association Conference, Seattle, WA, March 22-25, 2016. Throughout the paper, Cassandra argues that the concept of “authenticity” is used as a necessary measurement to designate one’s “true” identity. However, the concept of authenticity exists at a problematic juncture, being viewed paradoxically as both constructible (something an individual can become) and yet somehow naturally legitimate (something one “just is” and thus something one can legitimately be judged by). The paradox guarantees that the systems that shape our identity, experience, and place in our society significantly affect us, while at the same time blur us to their existence. In her discussion, Cassandra is going to focus on the concepts of authenticity in fashion. She argues that these concepts of authenticity use fashion to shape, create, and deny personal identity, and she pays particular attention to how this dynamic affects concepts of an “American Ideal.”

Rebecca Rozelle-Stone is organizing, chairing, and presenting at the 36th Annual Colloquy of the American Weil Society, April 15-16, 2016, in downtown New Orleans, Louisiana. This annual conference is dedicated to examining the thought and life of Simone Weil, a 20th century French philosopher and social activist who wrote about and fought against various systematic oppressions in the post-industrial modern world. Rebecca is currently researching the concept of fatigue in Weil’s writings, bringing her insights to bear on common 21st century phenomena like “crisis fatigue” and “compassion fatigue.” As a result of these inquiries, she is also exploring feminist pedagogies of resistance via “slow teaching” and “slow scholarship” especially in light of neoliberal temporal regimes that demand seemingly continuous communication, accelerated productivity, and an ability to “make time” with one’s body.

Nikki Berg Burin has recently been awarded a grant for Applied Research to Address the State’s Critical Needs Initiative by the UND College of Arts and Sciences. She will work with her undergraduate research assistant, Becca Devine, (Women and Gender Studies major) to investigate and suggest best practices and alternative recommendations for reducing sex trafficking in North Dakota triggered by the oil boom.
“I am in my Junior year of my undergraduate education. I am studying English and Women and Gender Studies and have been accepted into the UND Honors Program. Building on a platform of activism, I lead within several student organizations on campus: UND College Democrats, The Third Wave, Adelphi Literary Society, and Allegro Women’s Choir. In the past years I have volunteered with the UND Writers Conference and plan to continue that work. Some selected achievements of mine are the William Budge scholarship from the English Department and Starcher Award Nominee within the Honors Program. Recently I presented a paper titled “Contemporary Feminism and Lingering Biological Essentialism” at the Red River Women Studies Conference at MSUM (October 23, 2015). After earning my bachelors, I intend to pursue Masters/PHD work in English.”
Congratulations to our 2015 WGS Major Graduates!

~Madelyn Halada & ~Loni Muus

Please support Women & Gender Studies at UND!

Your contributions to our program help us:

- Continue supporting students’ research
- Organize and deliver the high quality and open-to-the-public Red River Women’s Studies Conferences
- Provide outstanding instruction and smaller classes to our dedicated students
- Bring well-known scholars to campus to share their academic and advocacy work
- Enhance our faculty’s research opportunities
- Fund educational/conference trips and out-of-classroom experiences for students
- And much, much more!

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Online giving is also available at:
http://www.UNDalumni.org

For more information on Women & Gender Studies, check out our website:
http://arts-sciences.und.edu/women-and-gender-studies/index.cfm

Find us in O’Kelly Hall, room 133!