

MIT Program in Women's and Gender Studies

Goals, Objectives, and Priorities

Entering its 33rd year, the [MIT Program in Women's and Gender Studies \(WGS\)](#) continues to build on its success as an interdisciplinary undergraduate program, providing a community for students, faculty, and staff to participate in scholarly inquiry focusing on women, gender, and sexuality. Through teaching, research, and programming, WGS provides a structural framework that is specifically focused on examining and analyzing the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. The faculty of WGS engages in cutting-edge research on a range of subjects related to historical and contemporary questions of gender and sexuality in the United States and across the globe. Its mission is to educate undergraduates on the importance of gender equity, and to promote critical thinking about the role of gender across disciplines, not only in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, but in science, engineering, and technology as well. WGS also plays an important role at the Institute in organizing rich and stimulating programming to facilitate the examination and discussion of gender and women's issues among faculty, students, staff, and the broader MIT community, and to support women students. In these various aspects of our educational mission, whether through teaching, research, or programming, WGS seeks to support the Institute's efforts to promote community, equity, and inclusion, while preparing students for an increasingly diverse workplace.

WGS can also play a pivotal role in helping the Institute to develop strategies to deal with sexual assault, and with gender and sex discrimination. With the increasing social and political focus on these issues, and on campus sexual assault in particular, the involvement of WGS in dialogue and in strategies for change is critical. As national attention has turned to matters of racial justice and activism, WGS has been involved in fostering the discussion of and engagement with these issues, and in outreach to women students of color through programming and collaborating with the [Institute Community and Equity Office \(ICEO\)](#), the [Office of Minority Education \(OME\)](#), and the [Office of Multicultural Programs \(OMP\)](#).

Ongoing goals for the program have been student outreach and the development of courses to meet student needs and interests. Interest and enrollment in WGS subjects continued to be high this year, with 387 enrollees in the 22 subjects offered, including 44 active concentrators, five minors, and four majors—two of whom have completed and presented WGS theses.

Another central objective for WGS as an interdisciplinary program is to serve as an important resource and support for faculty with advanced knowledge of women's and gender studies within their areas of scholarship who want to enrich their research by collaborating across disciplinary lines. The [WGS Intellectual Forum](#), a monthly platform for sharing faculty work in progress, brings the community together for interdisciplinary conversation on topics of shared concern, and also provides engagement with outside guest speakers who bring new expertise and insights to our intellectual community. This year's presentations included talks by our two newest affiliates, Justin Steil

("Locked Out: Criminal Convictions, Housing, and Gender") and Heather Hendershot ("Chivalrous Pugilism: How William F. Buckley Tried to KO Feminism"). In the effort to highlight feminist work in the arts we invited photographer Karin Rosenthal to present a slide talk about her work and process entitled "Journeying Within the Human Landscape," and Kurdish-Iranian artist Mino Emami, who presented a talk and pieces of her work about women in war entitled "Art as Manifesto." We also invited feminist scholar Leigh Gilmore of Wellesley College to discuss her recent book in a talk entitled "Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives." We also hosted a joint presentation by two of the Institute's Diversity Predoctoral Fellows. WGS fellow Channon Miller presented part of her dissertation, completed during her time with us, in a talk entitled, "State Violence and Black Motherlines of Resistance Conceived from Disparate Roots." Finally, Kishonna Gray, MLK Visiting Professor in WGS and Comparative Media Studies/Writing (CMS/W), presented on her current research to the forum in the talk, "Black Masculinity in Contemporary Gaming Culture."

WGS-sponsored conferences and symposia also serve as invaluable opportunities for interdisciplinary inquiry and collaboration, represented this year in our fall mini-conference titled Making Feminist FITNA: Islamic Feminist Disruptions. This half-day event was the first physical meeting of Feminist Islamic Troublemakers of North America (FITNA), an online feminist Muslim community. The event attracted local Muslim feminists, allies from academia and art spaces, and activists to share, discuss, and strategize about creating and maintaining feminist Islamic spaces and community. We aimed to expose a wide range of people—particularly undergraduate and graduate students—to ideas not often addressed in Islamic spaces or in media portrayals of the Muslim community. The event was attended by over 200 people and was considered groundbreaking in the topics broached and the breadth of community involvement. The daytime symposium was followed by an evening open mic, which featured Islamic spoken word poetry, song, and dance.

WGS also helped our MLK Visiting Scholar Kishonna Gray to organize a conference, Diversifying Barbie and Mortal Kombat: 20 Years Later. This event, revisiting a conference that introduced race and gender analysis into the largely white and heterosexual game space 20 years earlier, brought together gamers and game designers, race scholars, media scholars, and feminists to examine the progress and failures of gaming culture and design to diversify its portrayal of humanity in racial and gendered terms. The day-long symposium was live streamed and included three panels with discussions and keynotes over the course of the day. It was attended by over 75 people, many of whom had been a part of the original conference held at MIT in April 1997.

Along with teaching and research, programming is essential to the WGS mission. WGS regularly collaborates with other academic units, student groups, and offices across the Institute to create events on myriad topics, such as the history and current status of women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); gender equity; queer and transgender issues; racial inequality; global development and migration; medicine and health; harassment and violence prevention; and women's contributions to literature, arts, and the media. The goal of this programming is to foster crucial conversations on issues of gender, sexuality, diversity, inclusion, and equity, while attracting students to our classes.

The program's commitment to the study of women, gender, and sexuality extends beyond MIT to reach the broader Cambridge and Boston-area communities. In AY2017, WGS continued to work with the [Consortium for Graduate Studies in Gender, Culture, Women, and Sexuality \(GCWS\)](#), which is currently based at MIT. Founded in 1992, the GCWS consists of nine local universities (Boston College, Boston University, Brandeis University, Harvard University, MIT, Northeastern University, Simmons College, Tufts University, and UMass Boston), whose faculty members offer interdisciplinary, team-taught graduate courses. Professor Sandy Alexandre (Literature) continued to serve as the MIT representative to the GCWS in AY2017.

The current goals of WGS are as follows:

- To foster diversity within the program, extend our outreach and support to underrepresented students, and inspire engagement and activism regarding issues of social justice;
- To strengthen collaborative and interdisciplinary research initiatives in WGS, build on the success of the Intellectual Forum and WGS-sponsored symposia to fostering intellectual community across academic units at MIT;
- To recruit new faculty affiliates;
- To continue to update and reinvigorate the WGS curriculum in alignment with current directions in the broader field of women's and gender studies, with special attention to underdeveloped areas of the curriculum, such as gender and health, gender and public policy, gender and race/ethnicity, and gender and socioeconomic class; and,
- To continue to collaborate with other units and with student groups, and with offices such as OMP, OME, ICEO, the Student Affairs Office including LGBTQ Services, the Office of the Dean of Graduate Education (ODGE), Violence Prevention and Response, the MIT Libraries, the Priscilla King Gray Public Service Center, the Development Lab, and Global Education and Career Development (GECD). As set forth below, WGS undertook numerous activities in AY2017 to support these goals.

Personnel Information

AY2017 was the second year in which Helen Elaine Lee, professor of CMS/W, served as director of WGS. Professor Lee serves as chair of the OME Faculty Advisory Committee and chair of the Community Service Fund Board. She is a member of the selection committee for the MLK Visiting Professors and Scholars Program and the editorial board of the faculty newsletter. She also serves as liaison to PEN New England, which makes its home at MIT. In AY2017, she served as a diversity orientation facilitator for incoming freshmen and participated in other student-oriented events, such as addressing the incoming freshman Interphase Edge students and the parents of incoming freshman minority students, and co-organizing (with Joaquin Terrones) the first of a series of gatherings of queer and transgender students and faculty members of color in spring 2017. For the second consecutive year, she organized a panel of MIT's black women alumnae to discuss their career paths and choices for black women students and alumnae, including members of My Sister's Keeper. She organized an event for [MIT's](#)

[Day of Action](#) in April 2017, entitled, "Literature: Light in Times of Darkness," at which eight colleagues read from and discussed transformative selections of literature. Professor Lee was also involved in representing MIT in the broader community, serving on the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Public Face of Science Initiative's Boston-Cambridge Public Engagement Working Group, and leading a workshop at the Women of Color in the Academy Conference, held at Northeastern in February 2017, and then starting a series of community gatherings for that group by organizing the kickoff event at MIT in April 2017.

Emily Neill completed her third year as WGS program manager. She continued to develop and refine new initiatives from AY2016, including My Sister's Keeper (MSK), an organization dedicated to the support of black women students, faculty, and staff at MIT, and re:Vision, a women writer's reading series co-sponsored by PEN New England, the MIT Libraries, Literature, and CMS/W. Together with Professor Lee, Neill helped to establish outreach to queer communities of color on campus; connect, co-sponsor, and support programming for the Black Students' Union (BSU) and the Black Women's Alliance (BWA); and lay the groundwork for WGS to support and work more extensively in AY2018 with Latinx students on campus. Neill continued in her roles as School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS) liaison to the Council on Staff Diversity and Inclusion, active member of the Diversity Think Tank, and member of the Connectedness Committee for MindHandHeart. She was also a founding member of a new group on campus, the White Person's Accountability Group (WPAG), which was formed after many MIT diversity officers attended the White Privilege Conference in Philadelphia, in spring 2016. This group helped to organize an MIT-wide teach-in about white privilege, called "But I'm not a Racist!," and after several post-event debrief meetings with attendees, helped to form two new WPAG groups on campus. She is also working with the ICEO and other institute stakeholders to develop an ongoing series of Institute-wide working groups and events focused on racial equity.

WGS was able to hire a part-time program assistant at the end of AY2016 for help with financials, programming, and new outreach efforts. Sophia Hasenfus, formerly of the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics, joined WGS mid-August. The addition of Hasenfus enabled WGS to plan and implement its events more smoothly and efficiently. Although it continues to have student workers, this new staff position has been of critical importance. The AeroAstro connections of Hasenfus presented WGS with the opportunity to collaborate on a film screening of *Hidden Figures*, followed by a Q&A with Margot Lee Shetterly, who authored the book the movie was based on. Additionally, she has been able to relieve the SHASS fiscal officers from handling daily financial tasks, such as procurement card posting and Concur report approval. This included a large amount of travel and budgeting for MLK Visiting Scholar Kishonna Gray. Hasenfus also played an important role in planning and executing the Women Take The Reel (WTTR) film festival. Additionally, she has taken over website updates and started designing posters for events.

WGS continued to employ an active group of lecturers this year. Dr. Sarah King initiated the teaching of a WGS thesis tutorial for the two WGS majors. Dr. Brittany Charlton returned for a third year to teach her popular course WGS.151 Gender, Health, and Society. Returning lecturers Drs. Chivi Kapungu, Abha Sur, KJ Surkan, and Andrea Walsh continued to teach for WGS.

As mentioned briefly above, as part of our Intellectual Forum offerings WGS hosted its second Diversity Predoctoral Fellow, Channon Miller, in AY2017. She spent the year completing her dissertation, "Black Fragmentation Disrupted, Black Motherhood Recast: Black Women's Resistance on the Borderlands of Cross-Ethnic Interaction." As suggested in the AY2016 Report to the President, Miller's project dovetailed beautifully with the establishment and work of My Sister's Keeper, in which she fully participated throughout her year at the Institute. The presentation of her research and the way in which it informed her participation in WGS programming proved vitally resonant with the new initiatives of WGS to foster activism and alliance building, especially as MIT's community of black women has many members of Caribbean and African origins. She successfully defended her dissertation in April and received her PhD from Boston University. She has accepted a two-year postdoctoral position at the University of San Diego.

In AY2018, WGS will host its third Predoctoral Diversity Fellow, Nneka Dennie, from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Dennie will work to finish her dissertation, "(Re) defining Radicalism: The Rise of Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability, 1831–1895." Dennie's work explores how black women in the United States and the Caribbean have interrogated and given meaning to concepts including liberty, justice, equality, rights, and power. Professor Lee will serve as Dennie's mentor.

This year WGS nominated, jointly with Literature, and spearheaded by Professor Sandy Alexandre, an MLK Visiting Scholar for AY2018. WGS will be hosting Kimberly Juanita Brown, a professor at Mount Holyoke College, who works in both the English and Africana Studies departments. Her research engages the visual as a way to negotiate the parameters of race, gender, and belonging. She will teach a newly developed course for WGS in the spring entitled WGS/.S10 Sex, Race, and the Visual, which will explore "categories of race, gender, sex, and sexuality through the lens of the visual." She will also present in the WGS Intellectual Forum and participate in My Sister's Keeper events throughout the coming year.

As for new faculty members, WGS will continue to support and work with Amah Edoh, who has been appointed assistant professor in Global Studies and Languages (GSL) after completing a teaching postdoctoral fellowship in that department. She has been an invaluable resource for our black undergraduates, as an active participant in WGS programming and through her contributions as an MIT alumna. She is a committee member of My Sister's Keeper, and both her academic work and contributions to the community have been a very meaningful asset to WGS and other programs.

The WGS committee structure consists of a Steering Committee, Programming Committee, Curriculum Committee, and the Committee for the Louis Kampf Writing Prize in Women's and Gender Studies. In AY2017 the members of these committees were as follows:

Steering Committee

Director: Helen Elaine Lee (CMS/W)

WGS Program Manager: Emily Neill (WGS)

Senior Faculty Representative: Ruth Perry (Literature)

Junior Faculty Representative: Bettina Stoetzer (GSL)

Lecturers' Representative: Joaquin Terrones (Literature)

Graduate Student Representative: Jia-Hui Lee (History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, and Society [HASTS])

WGS Liaison: Jennifer Greenleaf (MIT Libraries)

Curriculum Committee

Helen Elaine Lee (CMS/W)

Diana Henderson (Literature)

Lerna Ekmekcioglu (History)

Andrea Walsh (WGS and CMS/W)

Abha Sur (Program in Science, Technology and Society [STS])

Louis Kampf Prize Committee

Chair: Andrea Walsh (WGS and CMS/W)

Jennifer Greenleaf (MIT Libraries)

Helen Elaine Lee (CMS/W)

Research Activities

WGS faculty affiliates conduct research in a broad range of topics, extending from theories of justice and feminist philosophy to the anthropology of reproduction, French adoption policy, the implications of domestic deindustrialization and long-term unemployment, the politics of the production and consumption of food, women in Mongolian electoral politics, South Asian immigrant communities in the United States, gender and technology, Vladimir Putin and Russian masculinity, Taiwanese women politicians, the history of Turkish and Armenian feminism, and the changing cultural politics of nature and citizenship. WGS faculty affiliates continued to make active contributions to their individual disciplinary fields, as well as to the interdisciplinary field of women's and gender studies. Their accomplishments and service are listed in the reports of their home departments. In addition, faculty participated in the following WGS collaborative research initiatives:

The Borders Research Initiative (BRI) in Women's and Gender Studies at MIT brings together an interdisciplinary group of MIT faculty members and graduate students in the humanities, arts, and social sciences who are dedicated to examining issues of border crossing and citizenship, especially as they intersect with gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and religion. Launched in 2011, the collaborative research group seeks to understand national borders and border crossings in terms of historical and comparative perspectives, analyzing how concepts of citizenship, identity, gender, and race have evolved over time. Participants in the BRI have included the following WGS affiliates and associates:

Coordinators

Christopher Capozzola (History)
 Bruno Perreau (GSL)
 Emma Teng (GSL and History)

Participants

Azra Aksamija (Program in Art, Culture and Technology)
 Sana Aiyar (History)
 Vivek Bald (CMS/W)
 Manduhai Buyandelger (Anthropology)
 Catherine Clark (GSL)
 Ian Condry (GSL, CMS/W, and Anthropology)
 Sasha Costanza-Chock (CMS/W)
 Isabelle de Courtivron (MIT Professor Emerita)
 Frédérique Donovan (GSL)
 Amah Edo (HASTS graduate student)
 Lerna Ekmekcioglu (History and WGS)
 Malick Ghachem (History)
 Diana Henderson (Literature)
 Erica James (Anthropology)
 Heather Lee (GSL)
 Lucas Müller (HASTS graduate student)
 Hiromu Nagahara (History)
 Kym Ragusa (CMS/W)
 Margery Resnick (Literature)
 Sarah Song (former faculty member, Political Science)
 Chuong-Dai Vo (WGS visiting scholar)
 Tess Wise (MIT alumna, Harvard graduate student)
 Elizabeth Wood (History)

The WGS Intellectual Forum provides an opportunity for faculty affiliates and visiting scholars, as well as the occasional outside colleague, to share research and present their work in progress. WGS hosted a very successful forum series in AY2017, featuring the work of Heather Hendershot, Justin Steil, Kishonna Gray, Karin Rosenthal, Mino Emami, and Leigh Gilmore.

Teaching and Curriculum

WGS offers a range of undergraduate subjects, including many that are cross-listed in a range of departments: Anthropology; CMS/W; GSL; History; Linguistics and Philosophy; Literature; and the Program in Science, Technology and Society. Students may concentrate and minor in WGS, and they may petition for an interdisciplinary major, either for a split degree with science or engineering (21E/S) or as a full humanities degree (21). WGS offered 22 subjects during AY2017, including two each of WGS.101 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies and WGS.111 Gender and Media Studies and enrolled a total of 387 students. It also offered WGS credit for a gender-themed seminar, 21L.435 Literature and Film: Queer Film, taught by WGS lecturer KJ Surkan in Literature, and one in history co-taught by WGS affiliates Lerna Ekmekcioglu and Elizabeth Wood listed here, but not included in our enrollment numbers.

Subjects for AY2017

WGS.101 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

WGS.109 Women and Global Activism in Media and Politics

WGS.110 Sexual and Gender Identities

WGS.111J/CMS.619J Gender and Media Studies

WGS.125J/CMS.616J Games and Culture

WGS.140/21L.504 Race and Identity in American Literature

WGS.145J/21L.020J Globalization: The Good, the Bad and the In-Between

WGS.151 Gender, Health, and Society

WGS.155 Global Sexualities

WGS.190/21H.106/21L.008/21W.741 Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies

WGS.220 Women and Gender in the Middle East and North Africa

WGS.222J/21H.381J Women and War

WGS.225/21A103/STS.046 The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender

WGS.228 Psychology of Sex and Gender

WGS.229 Race, Culture, and Gender in the United States and Beyond: A Psychological Perspective

WGS.231J/21W.742J Writing about Race

WGS.271/21A.302 Dilemmas in Biomedical Ethics: Playing God or Doing Good?

WGS.275/21G.057 Gender in Science, Technology, and the Environment

WGS.276/21A504/STS.086 Cultures of Computing

WGS.301J/24.237J Feminist Thought

WGS.S10 Marginalized Masculinities

WGS's ongoing curriculum development prioritizes subjects tailored to meet the needs of MIT students, including gender and STEM-related subjects, as well as the global and comparative study of women and gender, with special attention given to the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class. In response to student demand, WGS continued to offer two sections of WGS.101 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, a required course for all WGS concentrators and minors, enabling approximately 50 students per year to explore the field at the introductory level. WGS developed a new course on queer cinema with lecturer KJ Surkan, offered under a literature number for its first year, which enrolled well. It will be offered again in AY2018 with a WGS number. WGS.151 Gender, Health, and Society continued to enroll well for its third year, and will be offered along with some new public health oriented subjects currently in development for AY2018. These courses, as well as the newly split courses WGS.228 Psychology of Sex and Gender and WGS.229 Race, Culture, and Gender in the United States and Beyond: A Psychological Perspective support the preparation of premed students for new MCAT requirements on gender and race analysis instituted in AY2015.

Program Highlights and Accomplishments

WGS programming reflects the wide spectrum of academic disciplines and issues related to the field of women's and gender studies, and our commitment to collaborative work with groups across the Institute and the Cambridge and Boston communities. In AY2017, WGS collaborated on programming with academic units such as Anthropology, CMS/W, GSL, History, Literature, Political Science, and STS, as well as nonacademic units, such as OME, ICEO, OMP, GECD, ODGE, Residential Life, LBGTQ Services and the Rainbow Lounge, Sloan School of Management, the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, the LIST Visual Arts Center, the Media Lab, MIT Libraries, MindHandHeart, Chaplain to the Institute, Dean of the Arts, Center for International Studies, Provost for International Activities, Office of International Activities, the Office of Religious Life, and PEN New England. WGS also worked with and supported student groups, such as BWA, BSU, Mujeres Latinas, LBGTQ@MIT, Graduate Women at MIT, the Margaret Cheney Room, GCWS, and Sloan Women at MIT.

WGS sponsored and helped organize the half-day symposium Making Feminist FITNA: Islamic Feminist Disruption. As indicated earlier, this was the first actual meeting of an online Islamic feminist network, designed to foster local community among Muslims and open dialogue about Muslim feminist spaces in traditionally patriarchal religious space. The event was attended by over 200 local activists, artists, and scholars, and featured two interactive panels, a break-out community discussion, and a coffeehouse open mic in the evening. It was the first event of its kind on MIT's campus and was co-sponsored by the chaplain to the Institute, dean of the arts, Center for International Studies, provost for international activities, Office of International Activities, the Office of Religious Life, Political Science, the ICEO, and GCWS.

My Sister's Keeper, established in fall 2015, is an organization of black women students, faculty, and staff that is based in WGS. It was initiated as a collaborative effort of Professor Lee, OME director DiOnetta Jones Crayton, OMP director La-Tarri Canty, Student Support Services dean Ayida Mthembu, and former Assistant Dean for Graduate Education Eboney Hearn. It has been governed by a committee consisting of the founding members, WGS program manager Emily Neill, administrative staff

members Karinthia Louis and Daria Johnson, GSL postdoctoral fellow Amah Edoh, and several undergraduate students.

MSK was established to foster community among MIT's black women and to support our black women students with social, professional, and mentoring relationships. MSK hopes to provide emotional and psychological support, foster kinship and community, strengthen academic performance, and cultivate engagement in social, political, and cultural matters beyond the classroom. Through the creation of six-person sister circles, each of which included a mix of faculty, staff, and students, MSK aimed to provide smaller support networks and create ways to gather independently to talk, get to know one another, and support each other at MIT. The MSK Committee is engaged in rethinking the mentoring model employed in AY2017 to devise better ways to connect students with faculty and staff members.

In AY2017, MSK hosted a welcome back BBQ, a wellness event consisting of a half-day gathering during which members participated in a program about wellness, balance, and identity entitled, "Embrace Yourself: A Woman's Guide to Surviving College and Beyond," led by Kadzo Kangwana, a psychotherapist and parent of a first-year MIT student. In concert with the BWA, which celebrated its 20th anniversary with an alumnae celebration, MSK again organized an alumnae career panel featuring three generations of black women graduates. MSK wrapped up the year with an end-of-term celebration featuring Caribbean food, music, and local black vendors who shared their wares and artistry. These anchor events were supplemented with smaller, student-driven activities to which all members were invited, such as trips to theater events and a vision board workshop. A November 2016 [MIT News article celebrated MSK's meaningful and important work](#). Overall, MSK had a very successful second year, and is working to plan its activities for AY2018.

The re:Vision Women Writers Reading Series was established in spring 2016 to bring women fiction writers to MIT. It is a collaboration between WGS, PEN New England, CMS/W, the MIT Libraries, and Literature. Five writers read in this series in AY2017. Joanna Rakoff read from her book, *My Salinger Year*. Experimental writer Can Xue read and discussed her work with novelist Porochista Khakpour and writer John Donatich, director of the Yale University Press—one of Can Xue's English language publishers. Heidi Pitlor, fiction writer and editor of the *Best American Short Stories* series, read from a novel in progress, and Jennifer Haigh read from her award-winning novel, *Heat and Light*. Finally, Kanchana Ugbabe, who was at Harvard's Scholars at Risk program this year, read from her collection of short stories, *Soulmates*.

WGS partnered with Course 16 to host a prerelease screening of the film *Hidden Figures* at the Kendal Square Theater, followed by a Q&A with Margot Lee Shetterly, the author of the book on which the film was based. She was joined in a lively discussion by panelist Professor Sheila Widnall (Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics), the first female secretary of the US Air Force; and moderator Deborah Douglas, MIT Museum's director of collections and author of the book *American Women and Flight Since 1940*. With the support of the MIT Libraries, students were able to receive a free copy of *Hidden Figures* and have it signed by the author, who was very gracious in speaking individually to every student who wanted to meet her.

The Biannual McMillan-Stewart Lectures on Women in the Developing World continued to attract attention and attendance across the Institute and beyond. In the fall, a lecture entitled “The Arab War Against Rape as a Weapon of War,” was delivered to a large audience by Miriam Cooke, Braxton Craven Professor of Arab Cultures at Duke University. In the spring, Dr. Karen Offen, Senior Scholar at the Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research, presented a talk entitled, “Can the ‘Woman Question’ Be Answered?: The Curious Case of France 1400–Present.” The talk was followed by a faculty dinner with colleagues from neighboring universities (Harvard, Boston University, and Northeastern), all of whom were eager to join in conversation with Offen about her current research and forthcoming tome. Lerna Ekmekcioglu organized Offen’s visit to MIT, during which time Offen visited two of Ekmekcioglu’s classes to lecture on relevant topics.

WGS again partnered with the GCWS to produce Boston’s eighth annual Women Take the Reel Film Festival, held during Women’s History Month. Films were screened throughout the month of March at the nine participating academic institutions, with screenings followed by discussions with film directors and producers, film protagonists, and faculty members. This year WGS was able to highlight several politically timely films by women, including an opening event hosted at the Bartos Theater by the LIST Visual Arts Center featuring Ava DuVernay’s documentary *13th* and featuring speaker Melina Abdullah, one of the activist scholars featured in the film. WGS was also able to screen the fully restored film by Julie Dash, *Daughters of the Dust*, the first feature-length film directed by an African American woman, commemorating the 25th anniversary of its release. WGS worked in tandem with the LIST Visual Arts Center to screen the film with a discussion by Professor Sandy Alexandre, whose research focuses, in part, on visual representations of the African American community. In response to an intensifying political climate regarding reproductive rights and women’s access to clinics that perform abortions, WGS invited director Maisie Crow to show her documentary *Jackson*, before its major release. Her documentary focuses on the lives of three women—a clinic manager, a clinic patient, and a proselytizing Christian—around the fate of the last remaining abortion clinic in Mississippi. And finally, WGS brought transgender filmmaker Sam Feder to discuss their documentary portraying the life and politics of a gender and trans activist in *Kate Bornstein is a Queer and Pleasant Danger*. The WTTR film festival has been an important way for WGS to bring pertinent and difficult material to campus in a setting that allows for open discussion and dialogue, while providing exposure for women directors who are often ignored by the larger film industry. On average, each screening draws 50 to 75 people from across MIT and other participating schools and is highly anticipated by the communities that have come to rely on its screenings for exposing them to new filmmakers and providing dialogue about challenging issues.

WGS helped the BSU to organize and present a panel discussion, “What Does Black Lives Matter Have To Do With You?” The event was very well received and was attended by 75 people. Panelists included Professor Malick Ghachem; Carole Bell, assistant professor of communication studies at Northeastern; Karlene Griffiths Sekou, of Black Lives Matter, Boston; and DiDi Delgado, of Black Lives Matter, Cambridge. It was moderated MIT undergraduate Isaiah Borne, who represented the BSU as its main organizer.

WGS co-sponsored a series of events organized by Professor Ian Condry, entitled "Bridge Wednesdays," designed to defend the MIT values of equity and inclusion, as well as foster dialogue and engagement regarding the current political climate through a mini protest rally in Lobby 10. The events were held every Wednesday to provide a bridge between different voices of political resistance and provided an opportunity for collaboration, connection, and WGS button making. WGS collaborated with [MIT Resist](#), a student group organizing on campus, and hosted a heartily supported Women's Day event.

WGS presented its annual Louis Kampf Writing Prize to MIT senior Vincent Anioke, from Enugu, Nigeria, for his story, "New Light." He majored in Course 6, with a concentration in creative writing. The prize included a cash award and a celebratory luncheon with Professor Emeritus Louis Kampf, in whose honor the prize was established, and other WGS faculty members.

Administrative Initiatives

Diversity Initiatives

In AY2017, WGS continued to develop its new initiatives, My Sister's Keeper and the re:Vision Women Writers Reading Series; participated in the MLK Visiting Professors and Scholars Program by hosting Kishonna Gray; sponsored Predoctoral Diversity Fellow Channon Miller, and successfully applied to sponsor an AY2018 Predoctoral Diversity Fellow, Nneka Dennie. WGS worked with student groups, other units, MIT organizations, and members of the community beyond MIT. WGS also began specific outreach to LGBTQ communities of color and Latina students.

Regarding diversity in the curriculum, fundamental to the approach of WGS subjects is the analysis of the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, and other identity categories. Examples of such courses from AY2017 include:

WGS.109 Women and Global Activism in Media and Politics;

WGS.140 Race and Identity in American Literature;

WGS.155 Global Sexualities;

WGS.190 Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies;

WGS.225 The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender;

WGS.229 Race, Culture, and Gender in the United States and Beyond: A Psychological Perspective;

WGS.231 Writing about Race; and,

WGS.S10 Marginalized Masculinities.

Reenvisioning and Reorganization

In AY2016 WGS began working to become more inclusive and to strengthen and broaden its community. It reached out to underrepresented communities, and both expanded and diversified its programming. It revamped its physical space in order to accommodate its community of students, lecturers, faculty members, and administrative staff members. It created a workspace for lecturers who do not have their own offices,

and created a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive place to attract students and build community. WGS also redesigned its website to reflect its new priorities, to be in keeping with the current state of the discipline, and to better reflect the faculty research, the WGS curriculum, programming, and other endeavors. The new, part-time program assistant has helped to build and expand the WGS social media presence and reach across the institute to draw more and diverse students, faculty, and staff to the unique programming offered by WGS. WGS looks forward to continuing and fine-tuning these efforts in the coming year.

Finances and Funding

In addition to its base budget, WGS receives generous support from the SHASS Dean's Office for classes, conferences, and other programming, and furthermore benefits from programming co-sponsorship with various units across MIT, as noted above. An additional source of funding has been the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Professorship in the Study of Women in the Developing World and the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Lecture Series on Women in the Developing World, established in 1996 and generously endowed by Geneviève McMillan, a passionate believer in equal justice and opportunity. The McMillan-Stewart Chair is held by WGS affiliate professor Lerna Ekmekcioglu (winner of the Levitan Award for Excellence in Teaching in AY2016), who teaches two WGS courses, WGS.222J/21H.381J Women and War and WGS.220 Women and Gender in the Middle East and North Africa, and organized a new graduate level theory course on gender for this past year with WGS affiliate Elizabeth Wood. As chair, she organizes the Geneviève McMillan-Stewart Lecture Series.

WGS looks forward to continuing to work with the SHASS development office to identify potential donors, and to helping to make the capital campaign a success.

WGS received an important five-year commitment from the SHASS Dean's Office, starting in AY2018, for an additional two subjects per year so that it may develop new course offerings based on student interest and demand without having to drop other popular offerings. For AY2018 WGS has developed three new offerings: one on women's access to health care and reproductive rights, one on the history of women in science and engineering, and one on queer literature.

As has been under discussion for several years, WGS continues to advocate that the Cheney Room be reconfigured to provide event and classroom space over which WGS would have priority, in order to support more inclusive WGS programming. Finally, while WGS has been able to rework its physical space to accommodate its community members, it continues to lack storage space, and it looks forward to the completion of the Building 14 renovation plan, which included the return of the other half of the conference room, which is currently library space, to WGS.

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