

# MIT Program in Women's and Gender Studies

## Goals, Objectives, and Priorities

Now in its 35th 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 its 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.

As national attention has turned to matters of racial justice and activism as well as gender discrimination and reproductive justice, WGS has been involved in fostering 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 subjects to meet student needs and interests. Interest and enrollment in WGS subjects continued to be high this year, with 441 enrollees in the 25 subjects offered. This year WGS had 29 active concentrators, nine minors, and two majors.

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 series in which faculty members share work in progress, brings the community together for interdisciplinary engagement on topics of shared concern and also provides exchange with outside guest presenters who bring new expertise and insights to the WGS intellectual community. This year's presentations included a talk by WGS affiliate, Professor M. Amah Edoh of Global Studies and Languages titled "Our Grandmothers' Cloth: West African Agency and Labor in the Makings of Dutch Wax Cloth." MLK Visiting Professor Lorgia García Peña gave a presentation titled "Intra-Colonial Migrations and Black Bodies in Contemporary Italy," and Rachel Gross, a Knight Science Journalism Fellow at MIT, presented "Re-Membering the Clitoris: A Story of Cultural Amnesia." Finally, WGS

hosted a joint presentation by two of the Institute's Diversity Predoctoral Fellows. WGS predoctoral diversity fellow Misty De Berry presented part of her dissertation in a talk called "In Due Time: Performance, Debt, and Habitual Violence." Literature predoctoral diversity fellow Judith Rodríguez presented "Africana Profunda: The Aesthetic Blackening of Puerto Rico and its Diaspora," an excerpt from her dissertation.

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 STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), 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 WGS 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 AY2019, 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. WGS affiliate professor Lerna Ekmekçioğlu served as the MIT representative to the GCWS board in AY2019. Program Manager Emily Neill also serves on the Cambridge Women's Commission and helps to promote and foster collaborations between their local efforts and the MIT student body as well as inviting the broader Cambridge women's community to participate in WGS programming on MIT's campus.

The current goals of WGS are as follows: to foster diversity within the program; extend outreach and support to underrepresented students; inspire engagement and activism regarding issues of social justice; strengthen collaborative and interdisciplinary research initiatives in WGS; build on the success of the Intellectual Forum and WGS-sponsored symposia; recruit new faculty affiliates; 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 collaborate with other units and offices. These include the Office of Multicultural Programs, the Office of Minority Education, the Institute Community Equity Office, the Student Affairs Office (including LGBTQ+ Services and the Margaret Cheney Room), the Office of Graduate Education, MindHandHeart, Violence Prevention and Response, the MIT Libraries, the Priscilla King Gray Public Service Center (PKG Center), the Development Lab (D-Lab), Global Education and Career Development, the LIST Visual Arts Center, and the ARM Coalition (Assessing Resources at MIT).

WGS also collaborates with and supports the programming of many student groups that represent students from underrepresented minority groups on campus. In AY2019, WGS worked with the Black Students' Union, the Black Women's Alliance, Mujeres

Latinas, LUCHA, Stop Our Silence (SOS), and Class Awareness, Support, and Equality (CASE). WGS also collaborated with the Society of Women Engineers, the Arab Student Organization, the Armenian Society at MIT, the Asian American Association, the Assistive Technology Club, Graduate Women at MIT, Palestine at MIT, the Women Graduate Association of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Women in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, PLEASURE@MIT (Peers Leading Education about Sexuality and Speaking Up for Relationship Empowerment at MIT), and the annual Valentine's Day production of the *Vagina Monologues*.

### Personnel Information

In AY2019 Elizabeth Wood, professor of history, took over as interim director of WGS while Professor Helen Elaine Lee was on sabbatical. In her capacity as interim director, Professor Wood presented the accomplishments of the program to the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS) Visiting Committee; she hired Jungmin Lee (Harvard PhD 2018) to teach WGS.118 Gender in the Visual Arts in AY2020; and she continued the long-standing WGS commitment to gender and diversity in curriculum, programming, and student organizations.

In her own scholarship she submitted four articles and chapters to leading journals and books: "Right-Wing Populism as Gendered Performance: Janus-Faced Masculinity in the Leadership of Vladimir Putin and Recep T. Erdoğan," (co-authored with Betül Eksi) submitted to the refereed journal *Theory and Society*; "Gender and Imagination in the Russian Revolution: Backward Women and Forward Men in Iconic Perspective, 1919–1923," a chapter for *The Russian Revolution of 1917: Memory and Legacy* (forthcoming from Routledge); "Best Practices in Sustaining U.S.-Russian Scientific Collaboration" (co-authored with Irina Dezhina and Ellie Immerman) submitted to *Minerva: A Review of Science, Learning and Policy*; and "Zhenotdel (The Women's Section of the Russian Communist Party), 1918–1930" submitted to *The Routledge International Handbook of Gender in Central-Eastern Europe and Eurasia*. In AY2019 Professor Wood also gave four public talks: "Toward a Theory of Populism and Gender: The Janus-Faced Masculine Performance of Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan" (New York University, September 2018); "When Emotions Become Sacred: Moving beyond the Instrumental in Studying WWII and Memory" (Memory and History Conference, Sarajevo, Bosnia, October 2018); "NATO, the Balkans, and Ukraine" (with Una Hajdari in the Starr Forum at MIT, January 2019); and "Gender and Imagination in the Russian Civil War: Backward Women and Forward Men in Iconic Perspective, 1917–1922" (at a conference on the Russian Civil War, European University of Saint Petersburg, Russia, June 2019). Within MIT she served as a member of the hiring and tenure case for Kate Brown (Science, Technology, and Society), on the tenure committee for Lerna Ekmekçioğlu (History), and was chair of the promotion committee for Caley Horan (History). She continued her work as co-founder and organizer of the Gender, Socialism, and Post-Socialism speaker series at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University.

Emily Neill completed her fifth year as WGS program manager. She oversaw the work of the program's team of lecturers and met regularly with the program's majors, minors, and concentrators, helping them to select courses and keep on top of their requirements. Together with Professor Wood, she spearheaded the hiring of a new lecturer for a subject

on gender and visual arts. She also served on a search committee under the leadership of Abigail Francis to fill the program manager position in LGBTQ+ Services. She continued to mentor and encourage the two leading WGS student initiatives, My Sisters' Keeper (for African American women students) and Hermanas Unidas (for Latinx women students), bringing the students together on a regular basis with faculty and staff at MIT and helping them in their organizational and personal life skills.

Neill maintained ongoing relations with a range of administrative and student-based institutions throughout MIT, from the Office of Minority Education to the Rainbow Lounge, the Black Students' Union and the Black Women's Alliance, the D-Lab and PKG Center, as well as helping to establish outreach to queer communities of color on campus. Neill continued to serve as SHASS liaison to the Council on Staff Diversity and Inclusion and to serve as an active member of the Diversity Think Tank. She served as a search committee member for three searches in AY2019. She also continued as a member of the White Person's Accountability Group (WPAG), helping to sponsor and launch two new groups on campus that grew out of the work of the WPAG. The support and expansion of the MIT CASE network has been another initiative that Neill has been integrally involved with and which led to the inclusion of WGS as part of the ARM Coalition. In May 2019, Neill and Program Assistant Sophia Hasenfus were awarded the SHASS Inclusion Award for their commitment to diversity in curriculum, programming, and student support. The WGS community takes enormous pride in their accomplishments, their dedication and their creativity. Across the Institute, 21 faculty and staff signed a letter nominating them, as well as submitting individual letters of support. Finally, Neill successfully defended her doctorate of theology at the Harvard Divinity School in May 2019 and will start developing a new WGS subject on feminist theology for AY2021.

With the support of the provost and the SHASS Dean's Office, WGS was able to continue supporting Sophia Hasenfus full time in AY2019. Hasenfus assists with financials, programming, social media upkeep and output, and new outreach efforts. She also recruits and oversees the management of the WGS student workforce in the office. The addition of Hasenfus has helped WGS to fulfill its programming mission on campus while meeting the increased operational demands associated with an expanding slate of programming. Hasenfus played the lead role in operations for WGS events, including the new Taco Tuesday inspirational documentary film series, the My Sister's Keeper Alumnae Career Panel, the McMillan-Stewart biannual lectures, and the coordination of visitors for other WGS programming and course support throughout the year. She applied for and secured a large grant from the de Florez Fund for Humor to bring comedienne Amanda Seales, a major up-and-coming star, to campus as part of My Sister's Keeper programming, and executed a large contract with the MIT contracts office as part of that event (our largest event to date). She also initiated a second large contract process for a WGS fall event with comedian Tig Notaro for which WGS received the largest grant ever issued from the de Florez Fund for Humor. As she does every year, she played the central coordinating role in planning and executing the Women Take the Reel (WTTR) film festival. Additionally, she maintained the WGS website and has continued honing her graphic design skills in support of WGS subject offerings and programming outreach. She was an active member of the Diversity Think Tank and was instrumental in bringing WGS into the ARM Coalition.

WGS continued to employ an active group of lecturers this year. Karl Surkan took over the WGS capstone seminar WGS.301J Feminist Thought this year. The subject enrolled 60 students in the fall and had to be reduced to 35 to make it more manageable. Surkan also offered for the second year his recently designed subject WGS.108 Queer Cinema and Visual Culture, as well as the annually offered QGA.111 Gender and Media Studies. Brittany Charlton returned for a fifth year to teach her popular subject WGS.151 Gender, Health, and Society. Elizabeth Janiak returned for a second year to teach her subject WGS.224 Race, Gender, and Social Inequality: Reproductive Healthcare in the United States. Joaquín Terrones, who also teaches in Literature, offered WGS.245J Identities and Intersections: Queer Literatures for a second year and taught for the first time his newly developed subject, commissioned by WGS with new Provost funds, WGS.250 HIV/AIDS in American Culture. In addition, returning lecturers Chivi Kapungu, Abha Sur, and Andrea Walsh continued to teach for WGS.

WGS hosted its fourth MLK Visiting Professor, Lorgia García Peña. García Peña is the Roy Clouse Associate Professor of Latinx Studies at Harvard University and the co-founder of Freedom University. She specializes in Latinx studies and Hispanic Caribbean literary and cultural studies with a focus on the Dominican Republic and its diaspora. Her research combines insights from the fields of history, literature, and cultural studies, paying close attention to questions of marginality, migration, and racial and ethnic identity formation. She served as a mentor to the WGS student group Hermanas Unidas as they created their mission statement and planned the structure of their new organization. She presented her new work in a WGS Intellectual Forum (“Intra-Colonial Migrations and Black Bodies in Contemporary Italy”) and in a public MLK Luncheon Seminar (“Mother *and* Whore: Colonialism, Immigration, and Black Womanhood in the Diaspora”).

WGS hosted its fourth Pre-Doctoral Diversity Fellow, Misty De Berry, in AY2019. She spent the year working on her dissertation, “In Due Time: Performance, Debt, and Habitual Violence.” De Berry was an active member of both the WGS and My Sister’s Keeper community. Professor Diana Henderson (Literature) served as her mentor. This summer she will work with the Office of Minority Education with the 2019 Interphase EDGE (Empowering Discovery-Gateway to Excellence) cohort. The Dean’s Office has granted De Berry an additional year at MIT as a postdoc, so she will remain with WGS in AY2020.

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 AY2019 the members of these committees were as follows:

### Steering Committee

- Elizabeth Wood (History), director
- Emily Neill (WGS), WGS program manager
- Ruth Perry (Literature), senior faculty representative
- Caley Horan (History), junior faculty representative

- Joaquín Terrones (Literature), lecturer representative
- Emma Atherton (Linguistics and Philosophy), graduate student representative
- Jennifer Greenleaf (MIT Libraries), WGS liaison

### **Curriculum Committee**

- Elizabeth Wood (History)
- Diana Henderson (Literature)
- Andrea Walsh (WGS and Comparative Media Studies/Writing [CMS/W])
- Abha Sur (Science, Technology and Society [STS])

### **Louis Kampf Prize Committee**

- Andrea Walsh (WGS and CMS/W), chair
- Jennifer Greenleaf (MIT Libraries), WGS liaison
- Kym Ragusa (WGS and CMS/W)

### **Research Activities**

WGS faculty affiliates conduct research on 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 de-industrialization 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.

### **Teaching and Curriculum**

WGS offers a range of undergraduate subjects, including many that are cross-listed in other units: Anthropology, CMS/W, Global Studies and Languages (GSL), History, Linguistics and Philosophy, Literature, and the Program in Science, Technology and Society (STS). 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 25 subjects during AY2019, including both fall and spring semester classes for its introductory subject, WGS.101 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, and enrolled a total of 441 students.

## Subjects for Academic Year 2019

- WGS.101 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies
- WGS.109 Women and Global Activism in Media and Politics
- WGS.110J Sexual and Gender Identities
- WGS.111J/CMS.619J Gender and Media Studies
- WGS.125J/CMS.616J Games and Culture
- WGS.140J/21L.504 Race and Identity in American Literature
- WGS.145J/21L.020J Globalization: The Good, the Bad and the In-Between
- WGS.151 Gender, Medicine, and Public Health
- WGS.181 Queer Cinema and Visual Culture
- WGS.190J/21H.106/21L.008/21W.741 Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies
- WGS.222J/21H.381J Women and War
- WGS.224 Race, Gender and Social Inequality: Reproductive Health Care in the United States
- WGS.225J/21A.103/STS.046 The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender
- WGS.228 Psychology of Sex and Gender
- WGS.229 Race, Culture, and Gender in the US and Beyond: A Psychological Perspective
- WGS.231J/21W.742J Writing about Race
- WGS.233J/21G.325J New Culture of Gender: Queer France
- WGS.236J/21G.030 Introduction to East Asian Culture: From Zen to K-Pop
- WGS.245J/21L.480 Identities and Intersections: Queer Literatures
- WGS.250 HIV/AIDS in American Culture
- WGS.274J/21A.141/21G.048 Images of Asian Women: Dragon Ladies and Lotus Blossoms
- WGS.275J Gender, Race, and Environmental Justice
- WGS.301J/17.007/24.237 Feminist Thought
- WGS.310/21H.983 Gender: Historical Perspectives

WGS's ongoing curriculum development prioritizes subjects tailored to meet the needs of MIT students, including subjects relating to gender and STEM, 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 has continued to offer two sections of WGS.101 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, a required subject for all WGS concentrators, minors, and majors, allowing approximately 50 students per year to explore the field at the introductory level. Lecturer Joaquín Terrones's newly developed subject on HIV/AIDS in American culture was reviewed very well in student evaluations. It will be offered again in AY2020, along with his subject on queer literatures, which reached a record enrollment of 23 this spring. WGS.181 Queer Cinema and Visual Culture, developed by Lecturer Karl Surkan, also enrolled well for its third year. Liz Janiak offered her timely subject on reproductive politics in the United States for a second time with solid enrollment and very positive reviews, so it will be offered for a third year in AY2020. Three subjects—Terrones's on HIV/AIDS, Janiak's on reproductive politics, and Charlton's on gender, medicine and public health—are public health subjects that students can list on their medical school applications. Charlton has agreed to offer the subject again in AY2020. WGS.228 Psychology of Sex and Gender and WGS.229 Race, Culture, and Gender in the US and Beyond: A Psychological Perspective, also support the preparation of pre-health students for new MCAT requirements on gender and race analysis that were instituted in AY2015.

### **Program Highlights and Accomplishments**

WGS programming addresses a wide spectrum of academic disciplines and issues related to the field of women's and gender studies, and reflects program commitment to collaborative work with groups across the MIT campus and the Cambridge and Boston communities. In AY2019, WGS collaborated on programming with many academic and non-academic units. WGS also worked with and supported the programming efforts of many student groups.

Programming highlights from AY2019 include My Sister's Keeper (MSK). Established in fall 2015, My Sister's Keeper 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, former counseling dean Ayida Mthembu, and former assistant dean for Graduate Education Eboney Hearn. It is currently governed by a board consisting of the founding members, Emily Neill and Sophia Hasenfus; GSL faculty member Amah Edoh; Suraiya Baluch (MIT Medical); JJ Jackson (Office of the Provost); Literature staff members Daria Johnson and Chloe Jones; and student members Jennifer Nwenyi and Nonye Chinonyelum. New members include Acia Adams-Heath (Vice President for Finance), Dextina Booker (graduate student representative), and Dyan Madrey (Human Resources).

MSK was established to foster community among MIT's Black women and to support 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. Each year, MSK holds four core events to which all of its members are invited. In AY2019, MSK continued with the new program, Spontaneous Sisters to supplement its core events in order to provide ways for its members to gather casually and spontaneously to talk, get to know one another, and support each other at MIT. Through this program, members gather for trips to museums, sexual health seminars, musical performances, and other cultural events.



In fall 2019, MSK hosted a welcome back barbecue and piloted a weekly yoga class for MSK members, who were invited to join Joy DeGruy for a private luncheon prior to her talk. In the spring, MSK hosted its largest event to date, a wildly successful comedy show with Amanda Seales, "Smart, Funny, and Black," with the support of the de Florez Fund. Many MSK members indicated it was the best event they had attended at MIT. The MSK career panel, "Beyond the Dome . . . What I Wish I Would Have Known," featured six MIT Black women graduates. MSK wrapped up the year with an end-of-term joint celebration with Hermanas Unidas with food, music, dancing and a Paint Nite at Commonwealth Restaurant.

The biannual McMillan-Stewart Lectures on Women in the Developing World continued to attract attention and attendance across and beyond the Institute. The fall lecture was given by Amahl Bishara, associate professor of anthropology at Tufts University, titled "Against Fragmentation: Palestinian Women's Engagement across the Green Line." Her talk was followed by a faculty dinner with colleagues from MIT and neighboring universities. In the spring, the McMillan-Stewart lecture, "Women, Gender and Feminisms in Iraq: Between State Collapse, Social Movements and Fragmentation," was presented by Zahra Ali, assistant professor of sociology at Rutgers University. Both visitors lectured in Professor Lerna Ekmekçiöğlü's class during their respective visits.

WGS again partnered with the GCWS to produce Boston's 10th annual Women Take the Reel film festival, held during Women's History Month. Films were screened throughout the month of March at the 10 participating academic institutions, with screenings followed by discussions with film directors and producers, film protagonists, and faculty members. This year, WGS was able to screen a diversity of films at the LIST Visual Arts Center's Bartos Theater. The opening film was *MATANGI / MAYA / M.I.A.*, an intimate portrait of the Sri Lankan artist M.I.A.'s journey from refugee immigrant to pop star. The film was followed by a discussion with Aysha Upchurch, a dancer, choreographer, and professor at Harvard University. The second film in the series, the documentary *Roll Red Roll*, was a true-crime thriller about a notorious high school sexual assault in Steubenville, OH. Director Nancy Schwartzman led an impassioned question-and-answer session after the screening, with nuanced attention to toxic masculinity, social media, and "boys will be boys" culture. The final film at MIT was *Rafiki*, a love story between two young women in a country that criminalizes homosexuality. Director Wanuri Kahiu joined from Kenya to discuss the film and how it was banned for its positive portrayal of queer romance.

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.

In addition to Women Take the Reel, WGS sponsored a new luncheon film series in AY2019. Films included *RBG*, *Mankiller*, *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai*, *Sighted Eyes/Feeling Heart*, *The Hate U Give*, and *Asmarina*—a documentary of voices and images

of a post-colonial heritage about the Eritrean and Ethiopian communities in Milan, Italy, with director Medhin Paolos.

WGS began the fall semester with writer and storyteller Josefina Baez doing a performative reading of "As Is É" with the Institute Community and Equity Office and Hermanas Unidas. Lorgia García Peña moderated the discussion after the reading.

WGS brought acclaimed speaker Joy DeGruy to campus in September 2018. Author of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, DeGruy spoke at length to a packed audience composed of members of the MIT and Boston- area communities.

In the fall, WGS co-sponsored a unique interactive diversity program with the School for Architecture and Planning, *The Defamation Experience*. The play by Todd Logan explores highly charged issues of race, class, religion, and gender, and in the end the audience becomes the jury, enabling them to explore their own personal biases.

WGS showed the film *Dolores* about Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the first farm workers union. It was followed by a Q&A with Roxana Rivera, the head of SEIU Local 615. SA+P co-sponsored the film.

WGS revived the reading series re:Vision, collaborating with the MIT Libraries to bring author (and MIT alum) S. L. Huang for a popular reading of her novel *Zero Sum Game*.

WGS supported the MIT Arts Scholars and CAMIT bringing L. Nichols for a reading of *Flocks*, his autobiographical graphic novel about his experiences as a transgender man, engineer, and father of two.

In the spring, WGS joined forces with many collaborators across the Institute for the important "Conversation about Race" with Beverly Tatum, author of the timeless *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* SHASS dean Melissa Nobles served as the moderator.

WGS worked with Comparative Media Studies/Writing in their MIT Communications Forum to bring Cameron Esposito to campus for a set of standup comedy and a question-and-answer session, with the support de Florez Fund for Humor and MindHandHeart.

WGS supported GSL "Mindfulness as Medicine," the lecture and walking meditation with Sister Dang Nghiem.

WGS supported the ICEO and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society in screening *Dawnland*, a documentary film about the untold narrative of forcible removal of Indigenous children from their homes, followed by a panel with film co-director and learning director, and MIT linguistics graduate student Roger Paul.

In concert with Literature, Yomaira Figueroa presented "Intimacies," regarding how dictatorship and military occupation impact intimate kinship and community relations, followed by a Q&A with Lorgia García Peña.

WGS presented its annual Kampf Writing Prize to Nailah Smith—a first-year student from Lithia Springs, GA, who is majoring in electrical engineering and computer science—for her story “Watermelons.”

## **Administrative Initiatives**

### **Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Initiatives**

Issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity are inextricable and foundational aspects of the WGS 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 subjects from AY2019 include: WGS.109 Women and Global Activism in Media and Politics; WGS.140J Race and Identity in American Literature; WGS.190J Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies; WGS.224 Race, Gender and Social Inequality: Reproductive Health Care in the United States; WGS.225J The Science of Race, Sex, and Gender; WGS.229 Race, Culture, and Gender in the US and Beyond: A Psychological Perspective; WGS.231J Writing about Race; and WGS.250 HIV/AIDS in American Culture.

### **Reenvisioning and Reorganization**

Since AY2016 WGS has been working to become more inclusive and to strengthen and broaden its community. It has reached out to members of underrepresented minority communities and both expanded and diversified its programming. It has created a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive atmosphere to attract faculty, students, and staff. In AY2019 a workshop on class awareness hosted by the ICEO spurred Emily Neill and Sophia Hasenfus to form a small committee with other MIT constituents to address food insecurity on campus. This path also led them to investigate housing disparities on campus and other issues that uniquely affect low-income and first-generation students for whom there is not a lot of formal, institutional support at MIT. They have now joined forces with the student organization Class Awareness, Support, and Equality and another ad hoc committee, Accessing Resources at MIT, and will continue to expand their efforts in this area with the ultimate goal of helping to establish a First-Gen Office similar to peer institutions. WGS also hopes to develop a subject that addresses labor and class politics as part of this new direction over the course of AY2020.

### **Finances, Funding, and Space**

In addition to its base budget, WGS receives support from the SHASS Dean's Office for classes, conferences, annual programming, and operational expenses. In AY2018, WGS received a five-year commitment of additional funding from the provost to develop new subject offerings to meet the changing needs and interests of the student body. WGS also benefits from programming co-sponsorship with various units across MIT. An additional source of funding has come from the Genevieve McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation to support the McMillan-Stewart Professorship in the Study of Women in the Developing World and the McMillan-Stewart Lecture Series on Women in the Developing World. These were established in 1996 and endowed by Geneviève McMillan, a passionate believer in equal justice and opportunity. The McMillan-Stewart Chair is held by WGS affiliate professor Lerna Ekmekçiöğlü, who teaches two WGS subjects, WGS.222J Women and War and WGS.221 Women in the Developing World, as well as a new graduate-level subject, WGS.310 Gender: Historical Perspectives with Elizabeth Wood. As chair, Professor Ekmekçiöğlü organizes the McMillan-Stewart Lecture Series.

WGS received an important five-year commitment from the provost, starting in AY2018, for an additional two subjects per year in order to develop new subject offerings based on student interest and current social imperatives. For AY2019 WGS developed WGS.250 HIV/AIDS in American Culture. For AY2020, WGS has developed two subjects WGS.160 Science Activism: Gender, Race, and Power and WGS.118 Gender and the Visual Arts.

As Hayden Library's renovation gets under way, WGS has actively argued that it should be allowed to turn the current small study space on the second floor of the library into a space for postdocs and lecturers that would be contiguous with program headquarters. This could come in addition to or in exchange for the space on the second floor that is currently used by the six lecturers and visiting scholars. Another desirable initiative would be to have the Cheney Room reconfigured to provide event and classroom space over which WGS would have priority, in order to support more inclusive WGS programming.

**Elizabeth Wood**  
**Interim Director,**  
**Professor of History**