Note from the Director

Spring 2014 has been marked by national and local recognitions for Gender Studies Minor (GSM) students. In March, Albra Wheeler won the “Emerging Scholar Award” at the University of Akron in Ohio, where she and Jacqueline Whitman presented their papers at the Sixth Annual Committee for Research on Women and Gender (CROW) Conference. On our campus, Michelle Mattar was given the “Outstanding Woman Scholar Award” and Karli Miller was nominated for the “Year of the Woman Award.”

On November 5, 2013, Michelle Mattar, Venyamína McIvor, Karli Miller, Katelyn Shoemaker, and Albra Wheeler presented their research at the inaugural Gender Studies Minor (GSM) Student Research Presentation Day.

The scholarly achievements of GSM students continued with the presentations of papers by Michelle Mattar, Bryan Molk, and Jacqueline Whitman at the College of Liberal Arts (COLA) Celebration of Scholarship on April 25, 2014.

I hope you will enjoy reading the news and interviews of GSM students as well as Creative Writing faculty of Bloomsburg University by Keara Hozella, who is the winner of “Margaret Bittner Parke Scholarship” for English majors.

Dr. Ferdâ Asya
Associate Professor of English
Director of GSM
Albra Wheeler: I found out about the conference through emails that were sent to us by Dr. Asya. I took the time to research the conference further after those emails.

Jacqueline Whitman: I found out about the conference when Dr. Asya sent us the email over winter break. I wasn’t going to submit my proposal at first, but I later decided to do so on a whim.

Q: How did you find out about this conference?

AW: Yes, this was my first conference ever, so I was both excited and a little apprehensive to present my work to a larger audience. I have been given tremendous encouragement and support from both students and professors and I had nothing to worry about, as the students, faculty, and attendees were very welcoming and engaged.

JW: Yes. It was my first presentation outside Bloomsburg University and Pennsylvania. However, it was only my second time presenting this paper, so my nerves were running high.
At the conference, Albra Wheeler presented “Wonderbra: Oppression versus Liberation in Capitalistic Patriarchal Society.”

Q: Where did you present your papers before?

**AW:** I presented my paper here at Bloomsburg University at the Lambda Pi Eta Research Day, where I was awarded an Academic Achievement Award for Top Student Research in Communication Studies. I also presented my work at the Gender Studies Minor Student Research Presentation Day. I will be speaking with Communication Studies professor Dr. Bertelsen’s students in his Examining Communication classes in the fall and spring semesters about how to craft research and take it to conferences such as CROW. I wrote my paper in Dr. Bertelsen’s Examining Communication class.

**JW:** I had previously presented this paper at Bloomsburg University for the Annual Art History Symposium. I had actually written this paper for that symposium, and afterward, I presented it at the Annual Art History Symposium at Juniata College on April 5th.

Q: What was your research at this conference focused on?

**AW:** My research began by looking at the ways rhetorical artifacts, like a push-up, communicate to society at large. In other words, to whom does a push-up bra speak, and what does it say to those people? My specific focus was whether it communicated and enforced patriarchal oppression or if it provided a means of liberation from that same construct. I've since expanded my work to include the ways in which media advertisements, that specifically target a female identified audience, are constructed and what they add to the conversation. At Bloomsburg University, Albra Wheeler presented “Wonderbra: Oppression versus Liberation in Capitalistic Patriarchal Society.”

**JW:** My research was focused on the 1972 feminist installation piece, *Womanhouse*, in California. I chose to focus on the three bathrooms of the seventeen-room house. My paper spoke about the social inequalities that women face in their everyday lives and how they are expected to hide these inequalities behind locked bathroom doors. My paper, “Womanhouse: Opening the Closed Door,” sheds light on what natural occurrences women were expected to hide and how they were dealing with this in their personal lives. The three bathrooms were *Nightmare Bathroom*, *Lipstick Bathroom*, and *Menstruation Bathroom*. Each bathroom used objects that were associated with women to show the world how they lived behind closed doors.

At the conference, Jacqueline Whitman presented “Womanhouse: Opening the Closed Door.”
**Interview: Albra Wheeler and Jacqueline Whitman, cont.**

*From L to R: Albra Wheeler, Vanessa Valenti, Jacqueline Whitman*

*Photo courtesy of Jacqueline Whitman*

**Q:** Can you briefly mention Vanessa Valenti, the keynote speaker of the conference? What was it like to meet her? What was her keynote speech about?

**AW:** Vanessa Valenti is an award-winning blogger, speaker, strategist, and winner of the Hillman Prize. She is the co-founder of the blog, Feministing.com, a pioneer in connecting feminism with online media and the largest online feminist community in the world. It was amazing to meet Vanessa Valenti and speak with her personally for a few minutes after her keynote address. I was thrilled because I admire her work tremendously and, in the feminist community, she's a rock star. So, I was completely star-struck. Her speech featured ways to be a good feminist and activist. She spoke a lot about intersectional feminism and how we need to include transgender sisters in our movement and not just cis-thers. She also spoke about self-care and how activists need to take care of themselves before they can take care of others. This really resonated with me because I find it hard to turn off and take a break. Since the conference, I've been practicing self-care by listening more to my body, taking more breaks to rest, and limiting my media exposure. I remind myself that I'm not alone in the fight for equality, and taking a twenty-minute break to refresh and recuperate won't hinder the women's movement.

**JW:** Vanessa Valenti spoke about her blog, called “Feministing,” that she started with her sister. It is a forum for young women to learn about feminism in the twenty-first century and a way for them to talk about their views in a safe environment. She was very sweet when we met her. It was great to meet a woman who has such a prominent role in the twenty-first century feminist movement.
Interview: Albra Wheeler and Jacqueline Whitman, cont.

Q: What is your most memorable moment of the conference? Has a particular presentation or panel left an impact on you?

AW: Heather Haden's presentation, entitled “Cyberfeminine Identity and the Telepresent Body,” still resonates with me today. It's one I think back so often, especially since my Feminist Philosophy class this semester is focused on “Nature, Woman, Technology and the Post-Human.” Both the presentation and class looked at how gender is constructed, especially in an era when gender can be manipulated through technologies such as sex reassignment surgery and hormonal replacement therapies. Heather Haden's work profiled the artists Orlan and Geneis Breyer P-Orridge, who created new gender identities for themselves through surgery. It's important to look at these issues because all gender is performative, and technology gives individuals a greater spectrum through which to express themselves. It also helps to break down the idea that gender can only be enacted as male or female. I believe that gender cannot and should not be limited to polar opposites that are dichotomous in nature.

JW: The most memorable moment for me was the question session after my presentation. I got such an amazing response to my presentation. I was able to communicate with my audience somewhat on a personal level because they and I have experienced a lot of what I was talking about. There was one presentation of the image of women in the video gaming industry that really stuck with me. The presenter argued that the gaming industry keeps putting out these scantily clad “damsels in distress” who need to be saved by the male protagonist because what the audience is seeing sells the games. Then, he countered it with statistics of the three leading games at the moment, and they all had strong heroines as their protagonist.

Q: How did the conference benefit you as a Gender Studies minor?

AW: It was beneficial to me in a number of ways. First, it let me connect and network with others who are passionate about Gender Studies as well. I made not only professional connections but personal ones as well. Just this afternoon, one of the organizers of the conference e-mailed me about another conference to which I will be applying shortly. As I stated earlier, I was inspired by what I saw and I brought fresh ideas back to the Gender Studies Minor. The conference also gave me the push I needed to know that I'm on the right path in my academic pursuits.

JW: The conference definitely reinforced my thoughts about gender in our society, which is why I became a Gender Studies minor student in the first place. It also showed me the gender issues in other departments or fields of work and life.

Albra Wheeler and Jacqueline Whitman at the CROW Conference

Photo courtesy of Jacqueline Whitman
GSM Student Research Presentations

On November 5, 2013, Gender Studies Minor (GSM) inaugurated a *GSM Student Research Presentation Day*, and five GSM students presented their research in Schweiker Room to the campus community.

From L to R: Katelyn Shoemaker, Albra Wheeler, Venyamina McIvor, Michelle Mattar, and Karli Miller

Photo courtesy of Dr. Asya

The brief abstracts of the five presentations are as follows:

**Michelle Mattar**

"Digging Deeper: Why Does Archaeology Continue to Struggle With Gender?"

The purpose of this research is to investigate the reasons for the field of archaeology to continue struggling with the topic of gender equality. When compared to the other sub-fields of anthropology, it is obvious that archaeology remains unsettled in the acceptance and acknowledgment of gender; not only as it applies to the equality of professionals, but as it applies to the archaeological record as well.

**Venyamina McIvor**

"Transmisogyny: The Assumptions We Make About Female Bodies and How They Subjugate Our Sisterhood"

This project describes the vitriolic misogyny that transgendered women experience and how essentialist notions of gender have a caustic effect on the wellbeing of all women.

**Katelyn Shoemaker**

"Women in Politics"

This research focuses on the central question: Are Americans open and willing to elect a woman president? The project then dives into the gender gap in voting, that exists in the United States, and how that affects women's ability based on gender to be elected into the executive office. The project is built upon the survey that is applied to mass lectures of students at Bloomsburg University and extensive library research on the topic.

**Albra Wheeler**

"The Wonderbra: Oppression versus Liberation in Capitalistic Patriarchal Society"

This project examines the rhetorical implications of the Wonderbra. The examination begins with a brief history of modern brasseries, followed by a critique of the artifact, and concludes with further questions that emerge through the critical process. The critique offers a polysemic reading of the bra through diverse feminist lenses. Ultimately, the project seeks to determine whether the Wonderbra functions rhetorically as a form of bondage to, or as a form of liberation from, a patriarchal society.

**Karli Miller**

"One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: The Progression of LGBTQ Rights in the World"

This project explores the progression of rights of LGBTQ people all over the world, including the most current events in regards to law, and both the positive and negative aspects of them.
Q: Why is Creative Writing important to teach in a college curriculum?

A: Jerry Wemple: Creative Writing teaches a lot of different things. One of the things it teaches is problem solving. That really transfers over. It’s like, “How do we make this character believable? How do we make a smooth transition?” Poetry is even more so like this. How do you write a sonnet? It’s the fourteen lines, the rhyme scheme, and having things flow and engaging your audience. There’s always problems to solve. You’re also trying to connect with people, and that’s the most basic thing. That’s the most universal thing. It’s something that takes a lot of practice and skill.

Claire Lawrence: It’s interesting that your answer is very “poety”...my answer is very “fiction writer-y.” I think everybody has a story. Giving people the tools and the means to tell their story is empowering. It’s a means of connection. First, there’s the realization that first here’s a narrative of my life, or of the stories going on in my head. It doesn’t necessarily have to be fiction. I love the process because so many of our students haven’t realized that they’re able to say “here I am” and claim their voices. As a professor, I could speak about this all day. One of the things I feel when I teach in my Introduction to Creative Writing class is that I’m giving the students the world or just explaining the world to them, because now I’m giving them the particulars. We learn to focus on the tiny little things of the every day. Creative Writing requires a meditative, focused concentration on the world. I think it’s such a cliché thing to say, but it’s so true. We spend our lives with our faces stuck in technology, or worrying about our classes, and we never notice the world.
**Spotlight on the Creative Writing Faculty, cont.**

**Q:** How does gender play a role in teaching Creative Writing classes, or in your own personal writing?

**CL:** I have a lot of answers to that. One of the things that’s happened to me was that I wrote a memoir that was about childbirth, and postpartum depression, and other female concerns. So, the response to that has been interesting from different magazines. Some of them think it’s too personal and graphic to write about. I belong to a group called VIDA. They’ve done a nationwide count of the number of women who are published in the largest magazines, and guess what? There’s a huge gender disparity in terms of who gets published, except for in certain magazines. They’ll do the count every year. I’ve been published on their website, and I’ve thought a lot about what silences women. So when I teach Creative Writing, I also think a lot about what silences women, or what silences students from rough backgrounds, or transgender students, or what silences working-class students. I teach through that lens of myself as a woman, and I think what happens to women is that it’s self-silencing. It’s like, “I don’t feel like I’m good enough to do this,” or “I don’t feel like my ideas are good enough to fling them out into the marketplace.” Helping my students deal with this silencing and the way I’ve thought about gender really help me teach them.

**JW:** I think my tendency as a guy is to read “guy” books. One of my favorite authors is Harry Crews, who is this really rough-cut, backwoods, Georgia guy. He has a really hardscrabble life. I tend to like books like that, but when Nick Flynn was here the other day, he was like, “You really have some class study issues here,” while he was looking at the books I teach. I purposely make an effort to do some of the same things Dr. Lawrence has talked about, like thinking about those people from harsher backgrounds who have had a hard time growing up, including both men and women. I grew up in this area, and I know all the little mill and mining towns. A lot of people don’t value education. A lot of our students come from a place where there’s not that many college-educated people in their family like I did. To make that leap is a pretty big jump sometimes, so I purposely try to pick books and balance the genders. I don’t just pick my three favorite authors. I also read lots of different things and try to discover new writers and say, “Oh, I can see where my students can learn from this woman writer, or this man. We try to balance that out when we bring people in for the reading series as well.
Spotlight on the Creative Writing Faculty, cont.

Q: Do you think that the concepts of feminism or anti-feminism influence your own writing processes or the processes of the authors whom you teach in your classes?

JW: I can see this more in my role of teaching and mentoring my students. For example, the book we just finished was written by Lacey Johnson. She’s a relatively young writer, and her book is called Trespasses. There are a lot of different trespasses in the book. One of these is that she is leaving her “class” because she has the audacity to go to college. She gets in trouble because she has to support herself and work through college. She gets fired from her job at Wal-Mart because she has to go to classes. When she is in classes, and later in grad school, there are male students who challenge her authority. I remember when I was a junior faculty member, women instructors were finding that they were being challenged in the classroom. I never, ever encountered that. I’ve never heard of a male colleague mention it, either. I realize the issues that my women colleagues and women writers face because of this issue. I try to bring in a diverse group of writers and examples in the classroom. I also try to encourage people in my classes. I remember in one of the very first classes of the year, I made a student cry because she was sensitive and thought her writing wasn’t good enough. But I think her writing is probably the best writing I’ve read so far this year. She just didn’t feel like she had the authority to write well. I’ve made extended comments on her papers to encourage her, and I noticed that she has become more confident throughout the year.

CL: I’ve been examining a lot of my own self-silencing because I work with VIDA. Even though I went to two very good Creative Writing programs, I sometimes think, and I’m not sure it’s true, that it’s harder in a way for women to get themselves out there in terms of publishing. They just don’t feel like their work is valid. Even if I spend years working on writing about being a mom, it’s still this primary female function that gets dismissed a lot. I just published on a website called Literary Mama. It circulates to 40,000 viewers, and that’s my biggest circulation and publication ever. It’s all women who are reading and writing it. People want to read and write “mom” stories on there, and it’s all women with PhDs writing about motherhood. I don’t think about it so much in terms of people whom I teach. I teach a very balanced syllabus, but in terms of my own students, I tend to spend a lot of time looking for women who are putting themselves down and prefacing and saying things like, “I know it’s probably wrong, but...” or “I know this is stupid, but...” and I notice that it’s not the guys doing it. If I notice that one of the girls in my class is doing this, I’ll go up to her after class and say, “You know, that was really good point you made today, and you really don’t have to preface it that way.” I want women to take a stronger stance.
Spotlight on the Creative Writing Faculty, cont.

**Q:** Do you think a Gender Studies Minor could be complementary to a student interested in Creative Writing?

**JW:** I think it depends on what you’re interested in. The more that you learn about a particular subject matter, the more you can write about it. It informs your writing. If the idea of gender is an issue that you want to explore in your writing, then yes, you should take a GSM. There are students who have taken two minors. There’s even more room for minors now with the new general education system. Students are finishing up their GEPs within two or three semesters at the most, so there’s a lot of room to pursue a minor.

**CL:** Because we have built the Creative Writing major in a way that students can take a minor, they should take a minor. It should be something that they’re interested in. I absolutely think a Gender Studies Minor is complementary. We tend to also steer students into a more practical minor sometimes, just to give them more. I have a lot of marketing minors and professional writing minors in my classes. Case in point, I had a women’s studies minor when I was in college years and years and years ago, so it

**Q:** Do you believe that an awareness for gender is essential for creativity in writing?

**JW:** I’m thinking of the old saying, “Art can’t exist outside of its time,” and I think you have to think about who the artist is, and that artist has to think about his or her gender. But that doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s limiting. There’s a book by John O’Hara, who came from Pottsville. He’s one of the great short-story writers of the twentieth century. But he was a gruff person. One of the things that is always praised about his writing is that he wrote believable female characters. Tawny O’Dell came here eight years ago, and her book, Backroads, had a male narrator. The central character is this nineteen-year-old guy. She wrote it when she was a forty-year-old woman. The idea is that writers take on these issues and have to be really sensitive to all people. We have to respect everybody, because that’s what we do as writers—we take on other personas.

**CL:** For me, it has always had more to do with the publication end of it. I don’t care what body you happen to be born into, there’s always a possibility for creativity. It’s more about what you create, and how it’s received in the world. There’s art for art’s sake, but once you decide you want your art to go somewhere, you want it out in the world, or you want to sell it, and that’s when the awareness of gender comes in. But of course, I say that from a fairly privileged standpoint. I’m not one of the students I’ve had recently who is transgendered. I think that this student’s answer to this question would be very different. If you’re in a body that is troubled gender-wise, then it would be closer to the creative core. I have to say that creativity comes from experience. Our experiences are gendered; there’s no way for them not to be. So, maybe when I answer, it doesn’t have that much to do with the creative genesis itself, but on the other hand, I write about being a mom because that’s my experience and life right now. Maybe it’s something that we don’t even think about consciously, and it’s just something that’s structured. It’s writing about our experiences in the world.
Q: What does it mean to you to have won the “Emerging Scholar Award?”

AW: There was only one “Emerging Scholar Award” presented at the conference. The significance (at least to me) means that I have been recognized as providing viable work to the feminist community, and that more sustainable work is expected of me in the future. It also concretes my work as having value and it gives me a voice within the academic community, which I’m very proud and quite honored. I had to provide a copy of my CV along with a paper that detailed my prior, current, and planned work at Bloomsburg University in regards to my research, activism, and participation on campus at large in an effort to increase awareness about feminism as well as women and gender issues. It meant a lot to me that I was selected as an undergraduate student, since I was vying for the award amongst graduate students as well. I’m still surprised and elated that I was presented with the award. As my accomplishments were being read aloud during the presentation, I thought to myself, “I need to meet that person!” I thought the person and I would really hit it off. It wasn’t until a few seconds later that I thought they might be talking about my work on campus. I was so excited that I grabbed Jackie's [Jacqueline Whitman] arm and told her that they could be talking about me. She was really excited too, and that made me super happy. I was shocked when the presenter announced my name. I was so overwhelmed that it was hard to keep from crying out a mixture of elation, shock, and a feeling of accomplishment. I still look at the award where it hangs on my wall and smile. I don't think I'll ever be able to look at it without a grin on my face. I'm really proud of it.
Outstanding Woman Scholar Award: Michelle Mattar

On March 27, 2014, Michelle Mattar, Anthropology major and Gender Studies minor, received the “Outstanding Woman of Bloomsburg University Award.”

Q: What was your reaction to receiving this award?

MM: Receiving the “Outstanding Woman Scholar Award” at the Women's History Month Reception was a great honor. I was not even aware of the ceremony until I received an e-mail invitation stating that I had been nominated for the Outstanding Scholar Award. Any woman student or faculty member was eligible for nomination, and I was made aware at the reception that I was nominated by Dr. Faith Warner, who has served as an enduring and remarkable mentor in all my academic and professional endeavors. Bloomsburg University students and faculty could make category-specific nominations online, and over sixty women were nominated. I was asked to give a short presentation at the reception, discussing my individual research projects which investigate gender inequality within the discipline of archaeology. I was honored to be asked to present my research; however, I never assumed that I had won the Outstanding Woman Scholar Award, as I was in competition against not only students, but faculty members as well. I was astonished and revered when my name was announced as the recipient of the award. It is reassuring to know that my continual semesters of hard work and dedication to scholarship at Bloomsburg University have not gone unrecognized, and I hope that I inspire more women to pursue independent research and become future outstanding women scholars.

Michelle Mattar, recipient of the “Outstanding Woman Scholar Award”

Photo courtesy of Michelle Mattar
Twenty students from Dr. Kelly Dauber’s Women in Sports classes participated in the annual National Girls and Women in Sports Day clinic, which was sponsored by the Women's Basketball Team and Bloomsburg University Athletic Department. The event took place on February 8, 2014 at Nelson Field House. Students from the Women in Sports classes taught the girls agility drills, while the women’s basketball team taught them basketball skills.

Photos courtesy of facebook.com/BUhuskies
Accomplishments

Karli Miller, English major and Gender Studies minor, was nominated for Bloomsburg University’s “Year of the Woman Award” for her accomplishments in leadership.

She also received the “Henry Carver Fund Scholarship” from the Honors Program.

Karli Miller is the president of the Gender and Sexuality Alliance, and she is also the youngest woman president to have served two consecutive terms.

Keara Hozella, English major and Gender Studies minor, received the “Margaret Bittner Parke Scholarship” for English majors for the 2014-2015 academic year.

College of Liberal Arts (COLA) Celebration of Scholarship

On April 25, 2014, three Gender Studies minor students, Michelle Mattar, Anthropology major, Bryan Molk, Anthropology major, and Jacqueline Whitman, Art History major, presented their papers at the COLA Celebration of Scholarship.

The titles of their papers are as follows:


Jacqueline Whitman, “Womanhouse: Opening the Closed Door”
The Gender Studies Minor Fall 2013 Graduation Reception was held on Friday, November 22, 2013. Senior Katelyn Shoemaker was congratulated on her upcoming commencement ceremony and received the green Gender Studies Minor cord.

The reception was attended by Dr. Ferdâ Asya, Dr. Archita Banik, Dr. Christina Francis, Dr. Faith Warner, Dr. Michael Martin, Dr. Thomas Klinger, and Lauren Lewis, Coordinator of the Women’s Resource Center. Student attendees included Sara Tessarvich, Daniele Baxter, Shamira Jones, Jacqueline Whitman, Albra Wheeler, Keara Hozella, Katelyn Shoemaker, and Margo Cottone.

*Gender Studies Minor Gazette* is prepared and compiled by Keara Hozella, with the assistance of Jacqueline Whitman, both GSM Work-Study Students.

Hozella (left) is a senior English major with a minor in Gender Studies. This is her third semester working for Dr. Asya and the GSM. She’d like to thank Dr. Asya for the wonderful opportunities she’s been given. She would also like to thank the GSM students for their passion for, interest in, and suggestions for the minor.

Whitman (right) is a sophomore Art History major with a minor in Gender Studies. This is her first semester working with the GSM. Jacqueline would like to thank Dr. Asya for allowing this opportunity to work in the GSM Office and Keara Hozella for graciously accepting her help with artistic designs.
The purpose of the Gender Studies Minor (GSM), which offers cross-listed courses in sixteen departments across Bloomsburg campus, is the study of social, cultural, and historical constructions of gender and its intersections with other constructions such as race, class, nation, and sexuality.

The program investigates gender relationships and inequalities in a variety of societal contexts and strives to provide co-curricular experiences to enhance the Gender Studies Minor curriculum and raise awareness about issues of gender. Eighteen credit hours are required to complete this minor program.

GSM Director:
Dr. Ferdâ Asya

Work-Study Students:
Keara Hozella and
Jacqueline Whitman

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Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania is committed to affirmative action by way of providing equal educational and employment opportunities for all persons without regard to race, religion, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status.

Fall 2014 Course List

ANTHRO 380.01 Men and Women: An Anthropological Perspective
Faith Warner

COMMSTUD 309.01.02 Gender Issues in Communication
David Heineman

If you are planning to take COMMSTUD 309 Gender Issues in Communication, which will be offered (two sections) in fall 2014, please complete a blue request form at the Department of Communication Studies. The department is willing to waive the prerequisite of Interpersonal Communications for Gender Studies minors.

ENGLISH 152.05 Literature and Society Identity, Dislocation, and Belonging in Fiction by Contemporary Women Writers
Ferdâ Asya

ENGLISH 288.01 Feminist Reading of Culture
Betina Entzminger

EXERSCI 288.01 Women in Sports
Kelly Dauber

HISTORY 329.01 The American Woman
Jeanette Keith

PSYCH 350.01.02 Psychology of Sex and Gender
George Chavez

Please refer to the GSM website, for courses and information.

bloomu.edu/gs