

Intersections

THE GENDER STUDIES NEWSLETTER

Issue 5
Fall
2021-Spring
2022



WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

Kimberlé Crenshaw famously first used the term ‘intersectionality’ regarding feminism to “contrast the multidimensionality of Black women’s experience with the single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences” (1989: 139). She argued that in judicial cases in which Black women were concerned, they had to prove that they were being discriminated against for being Black, and also prove discrimination on the basis of sex. If the court found that a company was not discriminating against Black people in general (including more privileged Black men) and found that this company was not discriminatory against women in general (including more privileged white women), they had no case. The courts did not take into account that Black women were being discriminated against as Black women: not as people of color or as women or even as the “sum of race and sex discrimination,” but as Black women (Crenshaw 1989: 149). Crenshaw’s work highlighted the need to consider the intersections of identity and the ways in which one’s multidimensionality creates not only multiple burdens but burdens only those with the combined attributes can experience.

What does this mean for us today? In contemporary Gender Studies, one of the main issues we consider is intersectionality. Our understanding has gone far beyond Crenshaw’s original use explaining the social, cultural, legal, and institutional barriers faced by Black women. We examine the marginalizing effects of all intersections, including but not limited to race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, and disability. As our understanding of intersectionality continues to expand, we also find ourselves witnessing a mounting number of reasons to contemplate it in 2019. We have so named our Gender Studies newsletter *Intersections* in the hopes that our readers will continue to examine our population’s multiplicities with us. ■

-SAMANTHA BARNHART

ABOUT THE COVER

Consider the ontology of a quilt. It provides warmth. It is a commonly used item of comfort. A patchwork quilt is particularly unique. It is handcrafted and beautifully imperfect. This reminds us of the labor that went into making the quilt: the very hands and tools that constructed it. From a Marxist perspective, this reminder of labor resists the estrangement so typical in a capitalist society. It is a unifier against the consumer-driven alienation we feel. It is also a symbol of environmentalism: the cognizant decision to reuse pieces of fabric to make something new. With climate reports cautioning against the unsustainability of our current lifestyles, such a reminder is apt.

But we chose the concept of a patchwork quilt for our newsletter for its more direct relationship to Gender Studies. As multidimensional beings, we ourselves are patchworks. Our many positions, circumstances, identities, and intersections create colorful beings worth being seen. As a community, Slippery Rock, too, is a patchwork of individuals – all equally important and equally deserving of a piece on our quilt. Our Slippery Rock fabric is constantly changing, and to represent this we will feature a different quilt on each cover. We hope this newsletter will help to sew our community together. ■

-SAMANTHA BARNHART



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2021-2022 PROGRAMMING

FALL 2021

Criminal (In)justice: Access to Effective Representation

- Held on September 28th, 2021, at 7 PM on Zoom
- Hosted by Gender Studies Program and Criminology Club/Department
- Panelists: Marshall Dayan, Liz DeLosa, Yusef Jones, and Autumn Redcross

Mapping Political Power: Access, Gerrymandering, and Justice

- Held on October 25th, 2021, at 7 PM on Zoom
- Hosted by Gender Studies Program
- Panelists: Ellen Veomett, Carol Kuniholm, and Michael Latner

Gender Studies Poster Presentations

- Held on November 2nd, 2021, at 12:30 PM in person
- Hosted by Gender Studies Program

Amplifying Voices: Moving Beyond Feminist Exclusions

- Held on November 9th, 2021, at 7 PM on Zoom
- Hosted by Gender Studies Program, Counseling Department, and College of Liberal Arts
- Panelists: Keri Gray, Lydia X. Z. Brown, and Jennifer Culver

Poetry and Prose Reading

- Held on November 29th, 2021, at 4 PM in person
- Hosted by Gender Studies Program

SPRING 2022

Black History Month Keynote Speaker: Christopher Jackson

- Held on February 20th, 2022, at 6 PM in person
- Hosted by Gender Studies Program, Black Action Society, Office for Inclusive Excellence, Frederick Douglass Institute, Rock the Weekend, and University Program Board

Abortion Access: An Equity Issue

- Held on March 1st, 2022, at 7 PM on Zoom
- Hosted by Gender Studies Program
- Panelists: Tamara Marzouk, Symone Bailey, Marandah Field-Elliot, and Farah Diaz-Telloo From Advocates for Youth and If/When/How

RaMa, Writer-in-Residence at City of Asylum

- Held on March 8th, 2022, at 7 PM on Zoom
- Hosted by Gender Studies Program, Middle East Studies Center, and President's Commission on Women

Women and Allies of Distinction Mentoring Dinner

- Held on March 29th, 2022, at 5 PM in person
- Hosted by Gender Studies Program and President's Commission on Women
- Award recipients: Amanda Reichert (student), Elise Michaux (alumna), Dr. Christine Pease-Hernandez and Jennifer Keller (faculty), and Jake Rowe (ally)
- Keynote speaker: Maria Searcy

Gender Studies Poster Presentations

- Held on April 14th, 2022, at 12:30 PM in person
- Hosted by Gender Studies Program

The Disparate and Intersectional Impacts of Covid-19: Where Do We Go from Here?

- Held on April 18th, 2022, at 7 PM on Zoom
- Hosted by the Gender Studies Program, Counseling Center,
- Co-sponsored by: Public Health Department, English Department, Strategic Communication and Media Department, Political Science Department,
- Panelists: Olivia Bennett, Bernard Grant, and Sasha Jantsch

CURRICULUM

Gender Studies Major

" Gender and diversity are political and culturally constructed individual and social identities and thus impact all of us. Whether we recognize it or not, we experience, reinforce and disrupt social and systemic expectations about diversity categories (gender, race, sexualities, able-bodiedness and disability, socioeconomic status, ethnicity and religion) every day. The concentration in Gender and Diversity Studies explores all of these intersections within a critical context and analyzes how privilege, power and oppression are produced, challenged and changed at both micro- and macrocosmic levels."

Scan the QR code below to view SRU's curriculum guide for the major:



Gender Studies Minor

" As a Gender Studies minor, you will experience real-world applications of theoretical perspectives. You will gain an understanding of and sensitivity towards sexual harassment, racism, and discrimination against people with disabilities. You will explore important gender issues, such as equal pay, parental leave laws, and the diminishment of heterosexism and transphobia.

A minor in Gender Studies complements many degree programs, including business, law, music therapy, counseling, professional studies, social work, education, communication, political science, English, history, and philosophy."

Scan the QR code below to view SRU's curriculum guide for the minor:



EXTRACURRICULARS

There are many clubs and organizations to get involved in as a Gender Studies major or minor (or any other major)! These organizations will broaden your college and life experience, offering various valuable skills and life-long friendships.

- Black Action Society
- Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA)
- Gender Studies Club
- RockOUT
- TRANSaction
- Student Organization of Latinos/Hispanics and Allies (SOL)



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

DR. CINDY LACOM, DIRECTOR & MELODY HULL, GRAD ASSISTANT

We are furious.

It's been a hard year, and we had planned to write about the return to campus post-quarantine from a feminist perspective. We don't talk enough about this – the reality for many of us is that a student-centered and inclusive approach to being back on campus has meant listening to and supporting students (and one another) in important but exhausting ways. For faculty using feminist or queer pedagogies, this has meant struggling to balance support for students' many challenges with efforts at fairness. For instance, how many absences can a student accrue due to mental health issues? How much time and energy do we commit to helping those students succeed or, in some cases, simply finish the semester? How might extending deadlines ultimately mean more work for faculty as papers and projects are turned in at the semester's end? How might flexible deadlines actually burden students who are procrastinators? When might support become enablement? For staff, this might mean listening more to students in distress, working harder to resource them, and going home at the end of the day feeling wiped out. The question we initially meant to pose is this: how are such questions gendered?

We believe that they are.

But then the leaked opinion piece by Justice Alito changed the landscape of our nation. Many of us have understood intellectually that *Roe v. Wade*, the target of right-wing conservatives almost since the Supreme Court ruled on it in 1973, might be overturned in our lifetimes. We've recognized that abortion and reproductive rights have been increasingly centered in conservative rhetoric and in legislative efforts. We fought for reproductive justice in 1992, when in our home state, the Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey case reaffirmed *Roe*. We fought again through the years, horrified when, in 2022, the Supreme Court agreed to hear *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, focused on the constitutionality of a Mississippi ban on most abortions after 15 weeks.

We've borne witness to the steady diminishment of *Roe* protections, from so-called "heart-beat abortion bans" to TRAP (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) laws which put into place requirements that women's health clinics meet hospital standards, renovations whose price-tags have effectively shut down hundreds of clinics. So-called "crisis pregnancy centers" (CPCs) appeared throughout the country, which framed their services as woman-friendly but shamed pregnant people by presenting abortion as murder. And today, as a result, CPCs outnumber abortion clinics by three to one (Thomsen, Baker and Levitt, "Pregnant? Need Help? They Have an Agenda" NYT 5/12/2022). In terms of intersectional oppression, it's also worth noting that "The share of Black women and Latinas who live closer to a C.P.C. than to an abortion facility would nearly triple if *Roe* is overturned, according to our analysis" (Thomsen, Baker and Levitt).

Living in a Post-Roe World

Since *Roe* has been overturned, the right to determine laws regarding abortion has returned to states. At present, 13 states have what are called trigger laws (literally, state laws regulating and restricting abortion that will be "triggered" by the Supreme Court repeal), and when *Roe* was rescinded, at least 26 states effectively banned abortion. Some states (for instance, North Dakota, Mississippi, and Idaho, among others) will criminalize abortion, and a Louisiana bill would treat abortion as homicide. The Missouri Senate voted last year to ban common forms of contraceptives, like levonorgestrel, commonly called the "morning after" pill, and some intrauterine devices, or IUDs, from being paid for by the state's Medicaid program. Many states reference "fetal personhood" to justify punishment of abortion – language which is incredibly vague and which often values the rights of the fetus over and above the rights of the pregnant person. And Justice Clarence Thomas has made clear his willingness to consider overturning those cases which federally protect contraception and same-sex marriage: "In future cases, we should reconsider all of this Court's substantive due process precedents, including *Griswold*, *Lawrence*, and *Obergefell*." Sadly, that's fodder for a future Director's Corner piece, but the threat is real.

And the impacts are and will be intersectional, oppressing working-class women, BIPOC people, and immigrants in more measurable and damaging ways. The criminalization of abortion will contribute to already horrifying racist disparities in our criminal justice system. In the article, "Miscarriage, Stillbirth, & Reproductive Justice: Race, Racism and the Law," author Jill Wieberg Lens provides evidence that women of color and immigrant women are tried for crimes when they miscarry at higher rates than white women, and this matters even more when we understand that "a black woman's risk of miscarriage after ten weeks of pregnancy is double that of a white woman's. A black woman's risk of stillbirth is also double that of a white woman's. Women of lower socioeconomic status also face an increased risk of miscarriage and their risk of stillbirth is again double that of women of higher socioeconomic status" (Wieberg Lens).

Mississippi's governor, Tate Reeves, refuses to rule out a possible state ban on certain kinds of contraception if Roe is overturned. Senator Marsha Blackburn recently went on record saying, "Constitutionally unsound rulings like *Griswold v. Connecticut*, *Kelo v. City of New London*, and *NFIB v. Sebelius* confuse Tennesseans and leave Congress wondering who gave the court permission to bypass our system of checks and balances." Though Alito wrote that overturning Roe would not endanger other constitutional rights, we cannot believe him or the Supreme Court Justices who support his radical position, and we need to understand that "the same rationale could be used to roll back other rights. Among them: the right of adults to use contraception, the freedom to marry outside one's own race, and the right to same-sex marriage — freedoms known collectively as 'substantive due process rights'" (Masood Farivar, "Four Supreme Court Rulings that Could be Impacted by Reversal of Abortion Decision" *Voice of America*, 5/12/2022).

Abortion Rights in a Gendered and Intersectional Context

We believe that misogyny and the punishment of women's autonomy and sexuality are at heart of this. And trust us: we understand that not all pregnant people are or identify as women. But the reality is that the majority of people who get pregnant are understood by those in our country (and perhaps particularly by conservatives) to be women, and that raises the key question: why go after Roe?

As women have gained political, economic, and personal power (yes, the gains are uneven, have occurred too slowly, and have been undercut by COVID-19), there has been an increasing backlash against them. Conservative political commentator Tucker Carlson of FOX news, who has one of the largest viewerships in the country, has targeted CRT (critical race theory), trans rights, and, more recently, what he and his guests frame as attacks on "men's rights." In a new series, titled "The End of Men," Carlson laments the loss of "masculinity" and, more specifically, white masculinity. With a tired obsession with testosterone, Carlson offers a call to viewers to tan their testicles (no, we're not making that up) and "man up." Referencing a cowboy mythos of "authentic" masculinity that relies on guns for protection and independence and that synthesizes racist, xenophobic, homophobic, and misogynistic rhetoric, he suggests that "reclaiming masculinity" is one way that the right can reclaim (white) nationhood. Creating a series of binaries – white/non-white, citizen/immigrant, man/woman – the latter is foundational and thus frames women's access to abortion as emasculating.

In his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson writes about the rise of nationalism and the many ways it depends upon an "imagined community," one held together by a political construct that allows strangers across communities to share a sense of nationhood, despite their differences. The question, of course, is, "whose values?" Who "imagines" these values and beliefs that supposedly bind us together? Who enforces and sustains them? What happens to those who resist or reject these imagined values? In the case of abortion, the simplest reality is that white men have imposed their beliefs – expressed in and as the oppression of women masquerading as a desire to protect fetal rights – on our nation. Their imagined community is increasingly one of exclusion, and if BIPOC people, trans folks, immigrants, and working-class populations have been targeted, so too have women.

And as Jia Tolentino notes in a *New Yorker* article, the slogan "We won't go back," isn't enough. We won't go back – because we can't go back. If illegal and unsafe abortions or compulsory pregnancies are now a reality for many people who can get pregnant, so too is the "widespread state surveillance and criminalization – of pregnant women, certainly, but also of doctors and pharmacists and clinic staffers and volunteers and friends and family members, of anyone who comes into contact with a pregnancy that does not end in a healthy birth" ("Toe Post-Roe Era, July 4, 2022). Data collection will now police our bodies in ways unimaginable 50 years ago, from CPCs (who can collect names, locations, family histories, medical histories, sexual histories, and non-medically necessary ultrasound imaging) to menstrual app tracking in aggregate forms to GPS data following us across state lines. Already, the Pittsburgh Planned Parenthood has an almost month-long waiting list because of people coming in from Ohio and West Virginia (abortion is illegal in the former after embryonic cardiac activity at about six weeks and, in the latter, wholly illegal). We increasingly live in a panoptic state where our bodies are not our own, and this will become more marked if justices like Clarence Thomas, who has gone on record saying that he will do away with the doctrine of "substantive due process," overturns *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which in 1965 gave married couples the legal right to access and use contraceptives.

What Can We Do?

If we are furious, we are also tired. It's exhausting to feel like we're advocating for social justice when it feels like we're taking big steps backwards. I'm writing this days after the mass shooting in Texas that killed 19 children and 2 teachers and reeling as Texas State Attorney General Ken Paxton responds with a call to arm citizens and Ted Cruz has flatly denied that policies restricting access to guns are effective. It's not just exhausting – it's demoralizing.

But we can't give up. The fight to keep abortion and contraception safe, legal and accessible is critical. We can start by writing letters, especially to our senators, asking them to vote "yes" on the Women's Health Protection Act to codify a person's right to an abortion. We can participate in marches, protests and rallies that keep our right to abortion front and center in our nation. We can support pro-choice organizations like NARAL, Emily's List, the Women's Law Forum, Advocates for Youth, and Planned Parenthood, and National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF) financially and/or by volunteering.

We can vote. And we can get involved in getting out the vote work to impact the outcome of our next elections in November. This is really important, and if we flood our senators' offices with letters and calls, we need to also remember to support pro-choice gubernatorial candidates.

We can educate ourselves. Many of us have forgotten or simply don't know that the Supreme Court granted legal access to birth control in 1965 in the *Griswold v. Connecticut* case; we don't know (or know enough) about how forced and coerced sterilization of WOC and people with disabilities shaped intersectional perspectives about abortion; we may not understand the many cases (over 200 at present) that threaten *Roe*. But without knowing, our advocacy is less effective.

We can support abortion doulas and the current Janes who are helping people faced with an unplanned pregnancy to find help.

Finally, if you're comfortable doing so, share your story. Over 35% of women in the United States have had an abortion. If we could get past the shame and stigma still – still! – imposed upon us, we can change the national conversation about abortion. A lot of research shows that people change their minds about controversial issues not because of data but because of one person's story. And it may be that you have not had an abortion, but you know someone who has. That story has power, too.

Let's remind our country that we are pro-choice, that we support reproductive rights, and that we cannot and will not be silence, suppressed, or shut down. As Kimberle Crenshaw reminds us, we have to name a problem to see it, and we have to see a problem to solve it. The problem in this case is intersectional misogyny with deep roots in patriarchal white nationalism. Let's name it for what it is and work together to fight like hell.

Links to Additional Resources

<https://www.emilyslist.org>

<https://www.prochoiceamerica.org>

<https://now.org>

<https://aidaccess.org>

<https://brigidalliance.org>

<https://www.aclu.org>

<https://www.advocatesforyouth.org>

<https://www.ifwhenhow.org>

GRADUATES



AMANDA REICHERT

Amanda Reichert is a senior double major in Psychology and Gender and Diversity Studies with a minor in Cognitive Science. Amanda is the Psychology Club president, as well as being on the executive boards of the Gender Studies Club (Vice President), Psychology Leadership Committee (Co-Chair), Counseling Center Student Advisory Board (consultant), and has previously worked on the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Planning committee (consultant). She serves as a lead researcher on two teams in her department. During her education at SRU, Amanda has been awarded the Slippery Rock Distinguished Leader Award, and the Psychology Student Service and Leadership Award, and has been elected SRU Homecoming Royalty.



AYA LIPPOLD

Aya Lippold is a graduating student with a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Minor in Gender Studies. A transfer student from Seton Hall University, Aya grew a love for gender studies and activism on campus. She is on the executive board of the Gender Studies Club along with TRANSaction, SRU's club for transgender and nonbinary students. She is involved as well in Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance and RockOUT. She also works for the Pride and Women's Center on campus, hoping to build a more inclusive campus. After graduation, she is hoping to move to Los Angeles and stay committed to the lessons and values she learned in the Gender Studies Program at Slippery Rock.



AYA NAKAYAMA

Aya Nakayama is a Gender Studies and Diversity/Modern Languages and Cultures dual major with an Asian Studies minor. She is still exploring around to find what to include next in her life book after graduating. Although, she desires to establish a stronger inclusion of diverse people in the career fields. She is also interested in educating more on international-related areas and hopes to travel across the globe someday soon. "Thank you to all of the professors and supporters who have guided me to where I am right now. With all of the knowledge I have gained at Slippery Rock University, I wish to go as far as I can to increase my experiences and further my opportunities across the world."

GRADUATES



JULIANNA SABOL

Julianna Sabol is a 4th-year dual-major graduating with a Bachelor of Social Work and a Bachelor's of Gender & Diversity Studies. She has served on the Gender Studies Club executive board for 3-years and has held the presidency position for 2 years. Julianna will be moving on to pursue a Master's of Special Education with a concentration in Applied Behavior Analysis with hopes of becoming a Board Certified Behavior Analyst in her near future.



KAI BRIGHT

Kai Bright is a double major in Early Childhood Education and Gender and Diversity Studies. Kai has been involved in the Marching Pride, Gender Studies Club, SRS GA, and is a founding member of Collaborative Faiths. While at SRU Kai has worked with many organizations and offices to support LGBT students as well as students with diverse religious needs. After graduation, Kai will be teaching either pre-school or elementary school, before moving on to graduate school. He hopes to one day write diverse materials for classrooms, including children's literature, and curricula while supporting queer students by providing developmentally appropriate resources.



LILLY REED

Lilly Reed is a Communication: Digital Media Production major as well as a Gender Studies minor. She hopes to combine my advertising skills with my knowledge on gender and diversity to create new media that is welcoming and supportive of all people. She entered the Gender Studies program as a community assistant during my sophomore year, and she never looked back. Gaining cultural competence and becoming more educated on intersectional issues has helped her to hold myself and others accountable. She encourages any and all students to take at least one Gender Studies course because the past 3 years have truly given her a new understanding of social issues as well as prepared me for a diverse future. A special thanks to Dr. Cindy LaCom for sharing their knowledge with me and helping me discover one of my passions in life.



MADDY BUCKLEY

Maddy Buckley is an Integrated Marketing Communication and Gender Studies double major. She plans to use the knowledge she's gained through her Gender Studies courses to create informed, diverse, and representative content within the Integrated Marketing Communication field. Her Gender Studies courses, and the friends she's made along the way, have empowered her to be confident in her advocacy. Getting involved with the Gender Studies program is one of the best decisions she's made at SRU, and Maddy is proud to graduate knowing she's not only a prepared young professional, but a more compassionate and understanding person.



NICHOLAS CONDON

Nicholas Condon is a graduating Political Science senior with a Gender Studies minor! They have spent three of their years at Slippery Rock University on the SRSQA, first as a Commuter Senator and then as the Parliamentarian. This last semester they have been working as an intern with the Elsinore-Bennu Thinktank on Restorative Justice to look at the problem of mass incarceration in America. Nicholas is forever grateful for the support of the community here in their queer journey, the patience with them, and the knowledge that their professors have passed on to them. They cannot wait to continue these relationships post-college as they pursue a career focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Congrats to this year's
graduates and good
luck with your future
endeavors!**

MEET THE FACULTY



MELODY HULL is the graduate assistant for the gender studies program. She is currently studying to obtain her Master of Music Therapy degree with a counseling concentration. Melody earned her bachelor's degree in Music Therapy with a Minor in Gender Studies from SRU, working closely with Dr. Cindy LaCom and nourishing her passion for social justice while doing so. She has deeply enjoyed her work thus far in supporting social justice efforts on campus and is beyond grateful for the knowledge she has gained, which she aims to utilize to be a better music therapist and human.



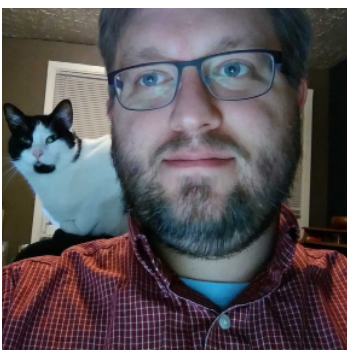
SARAH ANDERSON was the editor of this year's "Intersections." She is a junior at SRU, studying integrated marketing communication, healthcare communication, and professional writing. She has had a wonderful time working with Cindy and Melody over the last 6 months. Her time at SRU so far has included working with The Rocket, being a member of Sigma Tau Delta, as well as a member and vice president of operations of Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority. Although she is sad for her work with the newsletter to be ending, she is excited and hopeful for the work the Gender Studies Department will be doing in the future.



RHONDA CLARK is a business management instructor in the School of Business. She has been teaching in academia for over 10 years. Her educational background consists of a bachelor's, MBA, and PhD in organizational management and human resource management. Rhonda's dynamic expertise and knowledge provides real world experience in her teaching style for more in-depth knowledge sharing and classroom discussion. Rhonda's primary passion is sustainability. No matter the course being taught or organization involved in, sustainability is her key to continuous improvement and success in her career and most importantly in life. Some personal interests include traveling all over the world, photography, being outdoors, and spending time with Bubbles, her Yorkshire terrier.



KATHERINE COOKLIN is a professor in the Philosophy Department, an advisor in the Pre-Law Program, and has been a member of the Gender Studies Program since she came to SRU in 2005. She is very interested in how work in the epistemology of ignorance (how we come to know or not know something) may illuminate issues of violence. Her research focuses on how myths of sexual violence are related to issues of consent, choice, and the law. She is also interested in the ethical and political/legal questions raised by our treatment of other animals that are used for food, entertainment, and companionship. She likes to hike in the woods, read, cook and travel



STENTOR DANIELSON is a cultural and environmental geographer in the Department of Geography, Geology, and the Environment. Students in the Gender Studies Program can take their class "Gender and the Environment," which asks questions like: why do we talk about "Mother Earth" but not "Father Earth"? How does gender shape people's access to natural resources and vulnerability to natural hazards? How have gendered cultural narratives – like rugged wilderness adventure or soft-hearted sentimentality about nature – affected the history of the environmental movement? Dr. Danielson's research examines the social aspects of wildfire management and the cultural factors shaping people's relationships with places. Outside of Slippery Rock, they play and publish tabletop roleplaying games, foster kittens, draw maps, and hunt for geocaches.



MELISSA FORD is a professor in the Department of History with a special focus on African American women’s history and the history of social movements in the United-States. She is interested in the often marginalized, but incredibly important roles, black women have played in advocating for class, racial, and gender equality and justice. Her first book, under advanced contract with Southern Illinois University Press, addresses the ways in which working-class Black women in the Midwest fought for their jobs and their families in the middle of the Great Depression. When not researching, studying, and teaching about these extraordinary women, Melissa enjoys camping, hiking, and her two cats. She also is an avid improv lover and the advisor of the new improv group at SRU!.



JESSICA JOPP is a faculty member in the English Department. Her long-standing commitment to LGBTQ+ issues includes an emphasis on gender-related analysis in both her Critical Writing and Critical Reading courses, work with campus student groups, as well as community service. In her town of Indiana she co-founded an LGBT Film Festival, successful for the past 15 years. In addition to her teaching and activism, Jopp is a writer whose creative work also reflects these concerns. Recipient of the Baxter Hathaway Prize in Poetry from Epoch, she has published in journals ranging from *Poetry* to *The Progressive*. Though primarily a poet, currently at work on her third book-length poetry collection, she has also written a novel. This work of literary fiction addresses the damaging effects of internalized homophobia and celebrates breaking the confines of culturally-imposed gender roles. Jopp’s passion for intellectual engagement is complemented by her love of playing basketball, biking, and hiking.



EMILY KEENER, a feminist psychologist, is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Slippery Rock University. Committed to gender inclusive language, Dr. Keener uses they/them/their pronouns. They earned their doctorate in lifespan developmental psychology at West Virginia University and their master's in experimental psychology at Radford University. Dr. Keener has been teaching undergraduate courses on the psychology of women and gender since 2005 and regularly publishes research on gender roles and contextual influences on the expression of gender. Dr. Keener is engaged in feminist advocacy for which the SRU President’s Commission on Women awarded them the 2016 “Woman of Distinction” award.



CINDY LACOM is the Director of the Gender Studies Program. As such, her teaching and scholarly interests are connected by a focus on intersectionality and embodiment. She is particularly interested in understanding how cultural meanings are imposed on bodies and how those meanings support or challenge power paradigms. Part of her work, then, focuses on advocacy, because like so many others, she wants to make our society more just. She is passionate about teaching and feels honored to be part of so many communities (including the classroom) where she can learn from sometimes heated conversations about prejudice and resistance. She is also an avid hiker (she and her partner, Peter, have four dogs) and a dedicated reader.



CATHERINE MASSEY, PhD, is a developmental psychologist in the Department of Psychology and Faculty Affiliate in Gender Studies. She has been a member of Gender Studies since coming to SRU in 2002. Her research focus is on identity development with a particular interest in sexual and gender identities. She teaches various courses in Gender Studies including Psychology of Sexual and Gender Diversity and Multicultural Identity Development. She also serves as Co-chair of the Advocacy Committee for Gender Studies and is a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion on campus. Dr. Massey enjoys reading, outdoor activities and hanging out with her cats and dogs

MEET THE FACULTY



JENNIFER SANFTNER MCGRAW is privileged to be her 18th year of teaching psychology at SRU. She is department chair and a clinical psychologist, with specific expertise in body image and eating disorders. She has taught various classes during her time here, mainly in the areas of clinical and abnormal psychology, and tries to infuse appreciation for diversity in every class she teaches. Her research focuses on the application of Relational Cultural Theory to understanding the etiology and treatment of eating disorders as well as body image and disordered eating in college students, including women, men, and those with diverse sexualities and gender identities. Dr. McGraw has published in journals such as the *Advances in Eating Disorders: Theory, Research, and Practice*, the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, the *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, and *Women and Health*. She leads the Reflections Program on campus, which seeks to empower students in their views of themselves and their bodies.



LAUREN SHOEMAKER is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of Languages, Literatures, Culture, and Writing. Her research areas are marginalized literatures: Caribbean women in particular, and more broadly postcolonial, women's, and queer literatures. Her recent publications have appeared in the *Journal of West Indian Literature and Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*. Lauren also writes about popular culture and processes of marginalization. Her recent chapter, "Birds Aren't Real: Narrative and Aesthetic Irony in For-Profit Conspiracy" appeared in *Avian Aesthetics in Literature and Culture: Birds and Humans in the Popular Imagination*, an edited collection published in 2022. She's currently working on an analysis of novels that creatively narrate the events of Jonestown from Caribbean perspectives. Lauren also co-advises Sigma Tau Delta, the English honor society and advises the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance on campus. She co-owns Werner Books in Erie, PA and fosters cats for the Erie Humane Society.



VANESSA VOUGHT serves as the Coordinator of Health Promotion within Student Health Services. She completed her Bachelor of Science in Health in her sunny home state at the University of North Florida. She made a lateral move to Texas State University to complete her Master's in Health Education, where she concentrated in Sociology and health disparities. She is certified as a Health Education Specialist from the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing. She spends her days supervising the HOPE Peer Educators and Protection Connection office and educating campus students on sexual health, alcohol, and other drugs. She spends her nights watching movies from the criterion collection with her two cats, Monkey and Jean Luc.



THERESA ANTONELLIS is the Director of Martha Gault Art Gallery and instructor in the Art Department. Theresa earned her MFA from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst after graduating from Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts. There, she earned a dual degree in studio arts and art history and served as the Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Assistant at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. Theresa Antonellis works as a visual artist, whose large scale works on paper in the series "One Breath One Line" have been accepted to numerous exhibitions. A large-scale work produced during a dance performance at Oberlin College was acquired by Allen Memorial Art Museum. Her artworks are inspired by continued practices of yoga and breathwork.



JANA LYNN ASHER is a statistician known for her work on human rights and sexual violence. With David L. Banks and Fritz Scheuren, she co-edited the book *Statistical Methods for Human Rights* (Springer, 2008). Asher is the Director of Statistics Education and an Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Statistics at Slippery Rock University. Asher was elected as a Fellow of the American Statistical Association in 2009 "for excellence in the application of statistical methodology to human rights and humanitarian measurement problems; for leadership toward placing human rights violations research on a sound statistical basis; and for service to the profession". In 2010 she became an elected member of the International Statistical Institute. In 2022 she received the Caucus for Women in Statistics Societal Impact Award for "her work combating societal injustice through accurate and ethical quantitative measurement, and for her commitment toward teaching civic responsibility and JEDI principles through statistical practice."

DR. ANTHONY JONES

Chief Diversity Officer

I'm Dr. Anthony E. Jones, the new Chief Diversity Officer here on campus. I have experience in Residential Life and Housing, admissions, conduct, Multicultural Affairs. In the short time that I've been here, that has been extremely helpful in my conversations and has helped me relate to the individuals that I've spoken with, and hopefully will help me in the future.

Although you haven't been on campus very long, what's your take on disability accessibility and accommodations?

We have our visual disabilities and disabilities that are not visual. The structure of the campus is difficult to work with, and I know a lot of those things aren't fixes that will be easy. I can't imagine what it would be like for a student in a wheelchair or someone having to use crutches on our campus. That is a conversation that will probably be ongoing. I think staff that work with students with disabilities are doing a great job. I think we can do a better job with communicating with our faculty about what type of accommodations students need and doing the best we can legally to explain why those accommodations are needed. These are things that are on my ever growing to-do list.

What people or groups are you communicating with on campus?

I've had a lot of conversations with the President's Commissions and I feel that we've hit a lot of key I guess points with the Commission's that are in place I really feel like like we've hit the mark, as far as groups that need attention and support from me. I feel like we fill a lot of those spaces with our commissioners and have a group of individuals that are focused on the issues for those particular marginalized groups because. We have been brainstorming about what needs to be done, how I can support them, and how to get those things done. In our early conversations I asked them, 'what is your vision? What are your goals? Without limitations, what would you do?' And then trying to see how we can bring some of those things to fruition. That's what I'm here for: to make sure that these conversations don't just get tabled, that they don't get lost in what I was calling the cloud. From my conversations, some of the fixes are very doable. And I'm hoping to start checking those boxes so that students, faculty, and staff can feel like things are actually happening.

How do you see gender, in the broadest scope of your understanding, fitting into this work that you're going to do at Slippery Rock?

I think the largest issue that I've seen at pretty much all institutions is the lack of support and a lack of understanding. And in my experience, when people experience any gender that is outside of the binary, they're like, 'I don't understand.' You don't have to understand to support. And I try to really bring things into a perspective of some foundational understanding. Because you may not understand a person who identifies differently than what you are accustomed to, but you have to respect how people identify and accepting differences between people. You may not necessarily understand on a surface level, and this may shape how some people understand gender as binary. But what if that's where you live? So, that's what I try to help people understand. And if they're from that space, I try to provide support and education to develop understanding, whether that's programmatically or structurally. This can be done by creating spaces and helping organizations because I've been in a lot of institutions that didn't have any type of support groups, any type of affinity group. So creating these goals, getting those up and running and having students have spaces where they can just be who they are, is really important.



(cont'd from page 12)

You may not necessarily understand on a surface level, and this may shape how some people understand gender as binary. But what if that's where you live? So, that's what I try to help people understand. And if they're from that space, I try to provide support and education to develop understanding, whether that's programmatically or structurally. This can be done by creating spaces and helping organizations because I've been in a lot of institutions that didn't have any type of support groups, any type of affinity group. So creating these goals, getting those up and running and having students have spaces where they can just be who they are, is really important.

How much experience with gender issues have you had on our campus so far? What kinds of specific exposure on our campus?

We are having conversation about programming, but that is about the extent and maybe you can help me out with this because I'm not for sure if there is which I would assume there is a student organization. But I want to connect with the presidents of these organizations, get to know the members, and see how I can help. I'm really here to listen to issues, stories, and what's going on. I'm trying to find out how we can improve these situations. I really want to sit down with as many student organizations as I can to connect, because I know you all are the reason I'm here.

I know you're working on the DEI strategic plan. Can you explain your goals in the next three years?

I went back and forth for a long time in my career about three year or five year plans. I think in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion strategic plans, three years is the way to go. Because of the terminology, it's just an ever changing space. So of course, you want to give some leeway to create plans that can adapt to what's happening in the world. You don't want to get locked into something that prevents growth. So the idea is to have the DEI strategic plan and the Institutional Strategic Plan intersect in a lot of ways. I can't get into too much detail about the entire institutional plan because that's still in the works. I'm not sure if you're aware of the campus climate survey that came out. Those results are coming back, so as I look at the plan, I do have to be mindful that we have this information that will be coming from this survey, and I don't want to put out a plan before we get to analyze the information, as it may tell us that what we're doing is off track. I'd like to think there will be some parallels because students had input in the duration of the draft as it stands. I want to make sure that we don't miss that opportunity to tie those pieces in. So that's the plan over the next three years. I can say we're being driven by data, not just what we're thinking are good ideas. And I think a important piece of that data will come from the campus climate survey.

Interview conducted by Sarah Anderson

DR. EMILY KEENER

Psychology Department

I'm Emily Keener, a faculty member in the department of Psychology, and I've been at Slippery Rock since 2010. In that time, I've been an active member of the Gender Studies Committee, GIESO, the President's Commission on Gender Identity, Expression and Sexual Orientation, and also the APSCUF Social Justice Committee.

We know that you have a commitment to gender and diversity, but can you talk a bit more about how you've enacted that commitment?

I think there are three places where I do that work. One is in my teaching, some of which centers on gender and diversity. I teach a Psychology of Women course and have taught GNDR 120: Intro Study of Masculinity, many times.

However, all of my courses have some diversity component, even for something like research methods or statistics. For example, in the research methods in courses I teach, students do projects on gender, and even my Introduction to Psychology classes, they do an observational study using gender. I try to expose them to the idea that gender is part of psychology and that often, mental health is impacted by gender.

I also integrate diversity, equity and inclusion by using inclusive, critical pedagogy, which questions assumptions about power and the power dynamics of a classroom. Some classes lend themselves to that better, so even though I can't do as much critical pedagogy as somebody who's teaching a smaller class, I try to empower the students as much as I can.

Can you offer an example?

I try to be transparent about my expectations. Something I've learned is called "transparent pedagogy," where we explain our choices to students. For instance, I tell students, "The reason we have deadlines is because there are 70 of you, and in order for me to efficiently assess your work, I need to get these at the same time." Sometimes, we do have to set boundaries and standards that don't come from the students, but I explain why, and it's not just, "Because I said so." My goal is to try to empower the students.

Part of this is analyzing structural privilege. We talk about disability, including mental illness, from a diversity perspective rather than relying on a medical model. We also talk about white privilege and socioeconomic status.

A second way that diversity issues matter to me is in my research. In my research, every project I do has something to do with gender, and whether it's focused on teaching or scholarship, I aim to have an intersectional lens. In my empirical research, we collected data from pride festivals and sought to have a racially diverse representative sample to look at as many intersections as possible. I also include students in my research. This is so that they can gain research experience, and that can be especially important for first generation students who may never have been exposed to research or don't understand why it's important to get involved with research. And because a number of students simply can't afford it, I try to create options to include students who might otherwise be left out because of their socioeconomic status.

A third way that gender and diversity impact my work is through advocacy. For instance, the Social Justice Committee is advocating for paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers. They need time to be a parent, yet Slippery Rock University and the PASSHE state system do not provide paid parental leave, so this would be an example of something that we're advocating for. I also advocate in the community as part of the Slippery Rock Huddle, which grew out of the original Women's March in D.C. People wanted a space to continue that activism, and I've been involved in that. We organized some Black Lives Matter vigils two summers and have done other protests and marches. We also do voter registration.



(Cont'd from page 14)

It's not all related to gender, but it's all from an intersectional social justice perspective. It's important to not just pay attention to white middle class feminist issues, a failing of second wave feminism, so we want to make sure my generation doesn't make that same mistake and is more inclusive and stands up for the rights of all groups.

What challenges have these initiatives run into in the Slippery Rock environment? And to follow up on that, what do you see as some of the victories at SRU?

Well, it's been good to see the political activity of the Slippery Rock University community. I appreciate that students are so open to learning. When I first started teaching the Psychology of Women, I had to convince students that gender equality was still a problem, for instance with a gender pay gap. Many were like, "It's not that bad" or "Women aren't really treated that differently" or "Sexual violence isn't that wide-spread." But that's changed considerably since Trump was elected in 2016.

So it's interesting to me that when I first started teaching, students didn't call themselves feminists and now, many do. It was like a light switch went on. That activation and passion for social justice has been a victory, but then of course the flip side is that the other side was also activated, and that's been exhausting and challenging. One example is the effort to make our whole campus open carry [for guns]. What this means is that while there have been victories, there are still a lot of challenges, too. But there is one other victory I want to talk about. There's been a lot of momentum on campus for developing a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan and with hiring a chief diversity officer, and I count that as progress.

But in those conversations, I think it's essential that we continue to make gender part of our conversations. Sexual violence is a gender issue and thus a diversity issue, and so, when people hear the word diversity in some ways, it makes sense that they first think about racial diversity and I'm certainly committed to racial justice, but we need to retain an intersectional lens. We don't want to pit one cause against the other, especially when we remember that LGBTQ+ people, BIPOC folx, and men are also victims of sexual violence. That said, I feel like sexual violence and gender disparities are still too often left out of considerations of diversity, so we need to work to center this.

I think it was Audre Lorde who said that we don't live single-issue lives, so we shouldn't practice single-issue activism either.

*Interview conducted by Calista
Lucore*

ELISE MICHAUX

Slippery Rock University Alum

I am the daughter of an educator and a pastor. And I knew that no matter what I would do professionally, I would be helping people. Having the opportunity to do that at Slippery Rock only heightened my passion for people. And so I'm very grateful for my time at The Rock. I didn't think I was going to go to college and to be accepted and then given all the tools and resources to be successful is why I am sitting where I am today, helping to start a brand new community college. It's the experiences over the years, from 2007 to 2013 in both my undergrad and graduate school experience and then in my professional career, that have allowed this opportunity to present itself. For those reasons I'm very grateful for the professors, the speakers, the club involvement that I had; it polished me to be someone who understands the college experience and because I had such a positive college experience, it's why I got into higher ed. I always thought I would be a teacher, and so I consider myself a teacher. Now I have a whole college campus as my classroom and not just one single classroom.

During my experience at Slippery Rock I was very much involved with student government association and the programming board. We got to bring Mac Miller and Wiz Khalifa to campus, and having experiences like that really make you appreciate where you are and that you can be a part of bringing that experience to other people. Another instrumental piece, and why I'm in higher ed is that I was a first year mentor. One of my mentors encouraged me to do this, and I thought, "Me? All right." I jumped in and fell in love with it and didn't realize that I was doing what would then become my profession. My mentor, Brad Kovaleski, said, "You know you can do what I do for a living, right?" He was our SGA advisor overseeing what was called the involvement suite at the time. He told me I could get a degree for what we're doing and that was it. I took it and ran with it.

I spent two more years at The Rock and just loved it and that catapulted my career. So yeah, I'm indebted to Slippery Rock for taking a chance on me because I was not the best student in high school even though I did basketball and Student Council.

Can you talk a little bit about some of the social justice issues that you are involved in and why you became committed to them?

Trayvon Martin was slain and I remember being home in the summer. I was so frustrated at the system, not finding George Zimmerman guilty of killing this young boy in a hoodie, frankly for no reason at all. Actually, the reason was he was Black and that made him suspicious. And so that was really a pivotal moment for me. I really began to pay more attention to what was happening on a larger scale in our country. Soon after that, and I'm forgetting all of the details, but there were a few Muslim young women who were killed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and that ignited me again.

I had been teaching young men from Saudi Arabia at Robert Morris and was cognizant of how they were perceived on our campus; I had a heightened awareness of folks who had the jobs and those who were seen as other or different in our country. Then George Floyd happened when the world was literally on pause, and that made everyone realize what was going on. One of my first thoughts was that this probably would have been another situation where people didn't know that it happened if the world wasn't quiet at that point in time, which is very sad.

You have to understand how difficult this is for people of color, for Black people to see this all the time. We have to get up and go to work and, you know, it's very difficult. I don't know George's family. I don't know Trayvon Martin's family, but both of them look like they could be my family. I have a brother who looks like them. So you get afraid for what this means for all of us, as Black people and Black women



Photo from <https://www.emichaux.com/>

(Cont'd from page 16)

Sandra Bland was killed in a jail cell just for being a Black woman. It's triggering. And so when George Floyd happened, I knew I wanted to do something bigger. I did two things. I did a video series talking about how we really just need to get involved. You know, we just voted November 9, and so many people didn't go out and vote. And these local elections matter more, almost more than what happens in the White House. I wish people understood the gravity in which all of these systems work against people of color, because they were never built for us to succeed. And so although there were precursors to George Floyd, that really did spur me into action. I did a video series with my good friend, Marcus. And then I started a podcast with two other homies of mine. Again, I'm an educator at heart. What we were doing was taking current events and bringing them to people based on legitimate sources, like CNN and Medium.com, and people were joining us and being a part of the conversation and it was really, really cool.

That's why these social justice issues matter to me as a Black woman from a small white area, and now newly a part of my identity as a gay woman and a Christian. So all of these intersections really challenged me to see everybody as whole. And I'm very grateful for that.

I wanted to ask you how you inhabit your role as a member of the Council of Trustees. What are the challenges that you have working in this role?

I'm proud to be there. I'm humbled to be there. But it's not about me. It's about who's not at the table and ensuring that their voice is heard. I am in a position to ask questions when different things happen on our campus and be a voice for student concerns so that Slippery Rock can continue to be a place you give to, come back to, and are proud of. I see it as a tool to be helpful and resourceful and continue to bring marginalized voices to the forefront. These are things I want to be a part of because they matter. It matters. I want to see people that look like me and who don't look like me who aren't in the majority in more of our media, our magazines, our newspapers. People need to see themselves in everything that we do, including hires of our faculty, our staff, and our administration. We also need to see it in student peer to peer relationships.

I'm very appreciative of the role but it does have its challenges because I am the youngest, Blackest, and gayest (to my knowledge). Those are things I don't take for granted. But I recognize and try to position myself with the understanding that all of that is playing in the background. To have a seat at the table is to recognize how to use your voice properly. Part of the savviness is to be smart and ensure that what they see and what they know isn't clouding what they fear.

Do you have any closing thoughts you want to say?

I would encourage students to take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way as a Slippery Rock student. You only get out of it what you put into it, and you only get to do it once. Now, it may take you four or five, six years, but you only get to do it once, so make the most of it.

You have to grow up so quick. And this is a time where you can really be yourself and figure out who you are. You won't have it all figured out by the end. But if you take advantage of all the experiences that come your way and the great people and the resources that you have at your discretion, you're going to be that Slippery Rock standout grad.

Interview conducted by Calista Lucore

ABBEY ZINK

Previous SRU Provost

NOTE: Abbey Zink was the Provost at the time of the interview, and because she was a champion of DEI efforts and initiatives we feel her voice should be heard, we are publishing the interview we did with her in the Fall 2022 semester.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

AZ: I'm Abbey Zink, and I serve as the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer at Slippery Rock University. I joined the university in June 2020 and have come to think of myself as a "pandemic provost," which means that most of my first year was virtual. Despite that, I've had a great experience so far, and people have been enormously helpful in my transition. People across campus have given me a positive reception and have helped me navigate the campus, and this year, I've really appreciated having an on-campus semester.

In addition to my administrative position, I'm also an English professor and I teach and study Women's Studies and women's literature. I've attended several of the Gender Studies events and just went to the Gender Studies poetry and prose event the other night. It was really fun, and I had the chance to participate as well.

Originally, I'm from West Virginia and am a double Marshall University graduate. I earned my PhD in English at Northern Illinois University in the Chicago area and have lived in Connecticut and Texas, so it's nice to be back in the region.

What experiences and knowledge do you bring into the university? And as a part of that, can you talk about how diversity equity and inclusion fit into your goals and your work more generally?

Well, one of the things that really attracted me to this position, and that remained consistent when I interviewed here, was that diversity, equity, and inclusion came up pretty consistently in the questions and in all of the forums. That was a positive for me, because I've done a lot of diversity, equity and inclusion work -- that's a passion for me. I worked at my last position to meet the requirements to become a Hispanic serving institution. When I was there, we were about 24% Hispanic and 17% African American, so they've crossed that 25% barrier with the Hispanic serving institution. Prior to that, I was at Texas A&M University Kingsdale, which is a Hispanic serving institution, with a 67% Hispanic student population. So long story short, I've done a lot of diversity, equity and inclusion work.

My college actually won one of the first inclusive excellence awards at Sam Houston State for the work that we did. Collectively, we started a diversity reading program and had a DEI speaker series. That's what gets me up in the morning and so I look forward to making strides here at Slippery Rock and helping to move us forward. We've already approved the DEI requirement for Rock Studies [a one-course DEI requirement for all incoming undergraduates starting in Fall 2022], and that's been something folks have worked towards for a long time, and we were able to get it through the process, so I'm very excited about that.

Can you touch a little bit more on the outcomes you'd like to see in the next three to five years [with the DEI Strategic Plan]?

In terms of the outcomes, I want to ensure that our retention graduation rates for students are consistent, inclusive, and equitable. I'm really troubled that we're losing ground in terms of retention in terms and success rates and whether people feel welcome here at Slippery Rock. Those are things that I really want us to make progress on, and the same thing goes with diversifying the faculty.



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/abbey-zink-4a429679/>

(Cont'd from page 20)

That's great. Moving from the local to the national level, I wanted to ask you about the gender wage gap. As Provost, do you have any ideas about how to close that?

It's one of those issues that we have to continuously bring up because a lot of people still think that all those problems have been solved, but as you rightly point out, though women are graduating from college at higher rates than men and there are more women in college than men in college, the pay hasn't caught up. That's something that we have to work on as a society – it can't be fixed on a one-by-one basis. It's not enough to identify the issue, but we actually have to make progress on it. I'm hopeful quite honestly that part of the COVID rethinking in terms of the Great Resignation but also the reality that women have left or been compelled to leave their jobs during the pandemic at much higher rates than men will help then to address some of those wage gaps. But it is definitely distressing, there's no question.

Is there anything else you'd like readers to know about you?

I think that for me it's not about the title. It's about the work, and I am extremely passionate about what I do. The ability to make a difference in students' and faculty's lives is what gets me up in the morning. I believe that education can absolutely transform lives. It transformed mine, and I just want to pay that forward for every first-generation student, and every student on this campus so that they can have the same kind of transformational experience that I had.

Interview conducted by Calista Lucore

For more information about what happened to Abbey Zink and her situation at SRU, scan the QR code below for an in-depth story from "The Rocket."



Gerrymandering, Math and Social and Representative Justice

*Written by: Dr. Ellen Veomett, Chair, Department of Mathematics and Computer Science
Professor of Mathematics, Saint Mary's College of California*

What do you think about when you think about gerrymandering? Maybe you think about how lawmakers who gerrymander maps to benefit their own party are choosing their voters, rather than allowing voters to choose their lawmakers. Or maybe you think about the commonly understood methods of gerrymandering: “packing and cracking.” Specifically, a partisan mapmaker will gerrymander by packing her opposing party’s voters into a small number of districts that they win with an overwhelming majority. She then cracks the remaining opposing party’s voters at below-majority levels among the many remaining districts, making them winning districts for her party. Well, if I have any say in your thoughts when you think about gerrymandering, I hope you think about math. I know, you’re probably thinking, “But I hate gerrymandering and I love math! Why should I associate gerrymandering with math?” The answer is: as with nearly everything else, the “I know it when I see it” method for detecting gerrymandering is not only useless, it does not hold up in court. We want to have a healthy democracy and to achieve

this, we need to be able to show when a map has been unfairly drawn to benefit one political party. This, of course, is where the math comes in. And interestingly, the mathematics involved is much more complex than comparing two numbers. Frequently, the media tries to claim gerrymandering has occurred simply by reporting the vote share compared to the seat share: “Party X won 40% of the votes and 0% of the seats!” But this comparison does not actually tell us whether or not this outcome was truly unfair. Here’s why: suppose every household had 3 Democrats and 2 Republicans living there. No matter how district lines were drawn, every single district would be won by Democrats with a 60%/40% split. There would be no way to draw lines to get a different outcome! The fairness of a map absolutely must take into consideration where the voters in a state live, and whether a different outcome was possible. Fortunately, mathematicians have come up with many different ways to determine whether a proposed map is unusually biased. My group, STEM in Redistricting, has created the Geography

and Election Outcome (GEO) metric that uses voters’ partisan preferences AND their location in a state to determine precisely that. The GEO metric detects whether, with small changes in a districting map, a political party has the ability to improve their outcome. If Party X has a lot of freedom to improve their outcome, and Party Y’s outcome can’t get any better, the map was drawn to benefit Party Y. If you’re curious, take a look at our analyses of over 200 proposed maps that were drawn since the 2020 census: www.the-geometric.com And the next time you think about how much you hate gerrymandering, you can think about your love for math, and that mathematicians who love our democracy are working to preserve it.



Interestingly, this “extreme case” really does happen! See this article, if you want to read about how, although “there are more ways of building a valid districting plan than there are particles in the galaxy, every single one of them would produce a 9–0 Democratic delegation [in Massachusetts].”

PARTNER PIECES

Advocates for Youth: Centering Young People in the Fight for Abortion Access

*Written by: Tamara Marzouk, Director, Youth Abortion Access, Advocates for Youth
Marandah Field-Elliot, Senior State Campaign Manager for Abortion Access*

Advocates for Youth is a national organization that partners with young people and their adult allies to champion youth rights to bodily autonomy and build power to transform policies, programs, and systems to secure sexual health and equity for all youth. Advocates for Youth envisions a society in which all young people are valued, respected, and treated with dignity; sexuality is accepted as a healthy part of being human; and youth sexual development is normalized and embraced.

Advocates for Youth's abortion access team works with young people increasing access to abortion through policy advocacy, practical support, and culture shift through abortion storytelling. Abortion access is under attack in the United States. When abortion is restricted, young people often face the brunt of the restrictions, especially low-income and marginalized youth. Whatever this stacked anti-abortion Supreme Court decides in the next few months, we must listen to and support young people.

Young people are tired of waiting on policymakers to act. In many parts of the country, abortion policy has failed us time and time again. In 2020, Advocates for Youth launched a new initiative, the Youth Abortion Support Collective (YouthASC) to recruit young people from across the country to provide informational, emotional, and practical support (rides, housing, funding) for other youth in need of abortion care. YouthASC currently has 542 members who are working in their communities to support young people accessing abortion, and just launched the first Abortion Doula/

Support training created by and for young people. If you or anyone you know between the ages of 14 and 24 is interested in supporting young people accessing abortion, learn more and join the collective here.

Advocates for Youth is also working to expand young people's access to abortion by working to implement abortion on campus. Based on the successful campaign to pass legislation requiring public universities to provide access to medication abortion on college campuses in California, Advocates is running similar campaign in Massachusetts. Advocates is educating, training and supporting young leaders on 13 college campuses in Massachusetts to mount campaigns to mobilize their peers, educate policymakers, and convince their health centers to support campus-based access to medication abortion. This work is in support of H2399, a bill introduced before the Massachusetts legislature by State Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa (1st Hampshire District) that would create funding for medication abortion to be provided by public universities' existing health services, improving access to medication abortion for 13 campuses and their approximately 154,000 current undergraduates.

However, states do not need to pass a bill for individual campuses to implement abortion on campus. We are also working with youth activists across the country who are working to push their campuses to provide medication abortion on campus. If you are interested in building a similar campaign, please reach out to Marandah at marandah@advocatesforyouth.org!



Photo of Tamara Marzouk



Photo of Marandah Field-Elliot

Inside Out

Written by: Sarah Kuehn

According to the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program's website, this program facilitates dialogue and education across profound social differences—through courses held inside prison, involving students from a higher education setting (outside students) and incarcerated (inside) students. For 15 weeks, both groups come together at a correctional facility to take a university level class spanning the humanities and social science disciplines.

The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program began in 1997 with a Temple University course that brought criminal justice students to a Philadelphia jail to take a course alongside incarcerated students. Lori Pompa is a criminology professor at Temple University and has since then built the worldwide program. There are over 1,100 instructors and community leaders trained. Courses have been taught in at least 30 U.S. states and in several countries, including Canada, Germany, Mexico, Norway, Australia, Mexico, Denmark, and the U.K. More than 350 universities have offered this class, with Slippery Rock currently being the only one of PA's State Universities.

I first learned about Inside Out classes at a Criminology conference. The conference offered a workshop, which took interested professors into a maximum-security prison for a day to experience what inside out classes would look like. Throughout the day, incarcerated men and professors had an in-depth dis-

cussion and worked collaboratively on group projects involving social justice issues. I was hooked! Over the next months, I started talking to professors who had taught these classes. While I was still debating if I wanted to pursue a class like this, I received a letter from one of the incarcerated men at SCI Mercer asking me kindly to teach a class like this at the prison. Apparently, he had heard through the grapevine that I could be easily convinced to teach a class like this.

This letter gave me the last push to attend a week-long training for Inside-Out facilitators in West Virginia, 3 days spent at a maximum-security prison. I also initiated the process to get this course implemented at SRU. It took lots of paperwork and many meetings with university and prison administrators to convince them that taking SRU students to SCI Mercer to study alongside incarcerated men would be a great idea.

I have been fortunate enough to have since taught several of these courses at both SCI Mercer and Butler County Prison. The course focuses on the various processing stages, practices, and personnel of the criminal justice system. It examines the problem of crime in American society and the administrative responses to this issue. Both historical and contemporary components of the system including the police, the courts, and the corrections field, are explored. My course is designed to provide students with a social psycholog-

ical understanding of both the effects of crime on community structures and the challenges the criminal justice system faces in responding to crime. Topics include restorative justice, victimization, theories of crime, criminal justice policy, re-entry, mass incarceration, and cross-national perspectives. Most classes involve in-depth group discussion, projects, and presentations. The initial class meetings of this experiential learning experience are generally very uncomfortable and unsettling encounters, which challenge students to leave their comfort zone. Tension and anxiety run high when the two groups of students first meet. However, through emphasizing community building, establishing trust and ground rules, and promoting dialogue, participants eventually become more comfortable around one another. In this shift, outside students come to recognize people serving prison sentences as something more than the sum of their crimes, while college students become more than children of privilege incapable of understanding why people succumb to the culture of street crime. Once these stigmas are challenged, critical thinking and a deep analysis of the criminal justice system can happen, and students, both inside and outside, change how they see themselves, each other, their futures, and their potential impact on society and social justice issues.

PARTNER PIECES

(Cont'd from page 24)

SRU (Outside) Students

"This was an unexpected part of my individual journey because I didn't know that a one semester course would change my view on what I wanted to do with my life. I had many personal views about specific issues in the criminal justice system that eventually changed due to this course. [...] However, learning about many of these tragedies has helped to motivate me to want to be a part of the change for a better future for those who find themselves incarcerated."

"How did reading three books and meeting in a cramped classroom with barely enough room for 25 yellow chairs make such a lasting impact on over a dozen individuals? The answer is simple: we came in open-minded and none of us held back. Because of that, we all ended up with a life-changing experience."

"Inside-Out has meant much more than college credits. I would have taken this class even without receiving credits. This has been the best learning experience in my years of college. The contributions & different types of knowledge that we all brought to the class complimented each other's ideas. I think Inside-Out could

accomplish big things. Maybe even a prison reform. This class has given me determination to continue our discussion outside of the classroom & make a difference."

SCI Mercer (Inside) Students

"Prison naturally denies a person the full experience of community. I am thankful for the opportunity to share ideas with others not associated with the prison system. Our outside students' sincerity and commitment made me feel needed and appreciated...in other words, I am still a valued asset to our community"

"I have told several people about this program. They ask questions. My only solid answer is that this program makes you feel like you're a part of something larger than life and you get to work with awesome people. This program has given me a chance to do something positive in an area that has affected me for most of my life."

"Participating in this class has been an experience that I will never forget. I will use this life changing experience to hopefully educate others and have a positive influence on their lives, like you [professor] and your students had on mine. I feel as though I'm forever in debt to each and everyone of you."

The gentleman who wrote the letter had already served 41 years of a life sentence without parole for an offense that's called a felony murder (i.e., his accomplice had pulled the trigger during a robbery). He ended up taking my first class and was released shortly after when the governor commuted his sentence in 2019. We are now both part of the Elsinore Bennu Think Tank of Restorative Justice which, on a weekly basis, brings together a diverse group of returning citizens (i.e., formerly incarcerated people, professors, students, lawyers, and community activists) to build community, give voices to the ones unheard, and foster social justice.

I would gladly talk to anyone who is interesting in learning more about this class. Please don't hesitate to contact me at sarah.kuehn@sru.edu.



PA Innocence Project

Written by: Liz DeLosa

“The mission of the Pennsylvania Innocence Project is to exonerate those convicted of crimes they did not commit, to prevent innocent people from being prosecuted and convicted, and to help those wrongfully convicted transition to freedom.”

The Pennsylvania Innocence Project opened its doors in April of 2009. In our eleven years of work throughout the state of Pennsylvania, we have secured or helped to secure the exoneration of over twenty Pennsylvanian men and women convicted of and incarcerated for a crime that they did not commit.

In addition to identifying and litigating cases for the convicted innocent, the Pennsylvania Innocence Project works to improve

the criminal justice system to prevent innocent people from being convicted. The Project works to educate all stakeholders in the criminal justice system on the reasons for wrongful convictions, and to promote policies that will prevent such tragedies from occurring. The Project also works to promote legislation to loosen Pennsylvania’s draconian post-conviction laws to allow convicted individuals a fair chance of having evidence of their innocence presented in court – including updating our post-conviction DNA access laws.

The Pennsylvania Innocent Project boasts two offices throughout the Commonwealth. Our main office, located in

Philadelphia on Temple University’s Center City campus and our Western Pennsylvania office, located in Pittsburgh on Duquesne University’s campus hosts a variety of internship opportunities for undergraduate, graduate, and law students alike. For more information, please visit www.painnocence.org





SRUgndrstudies



genderstudiesSRU



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