WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE

Director's Note page 2
Programming News page 4
New Fall Cohort page 9
Second Year Cohort page 12
Minor Student Highlight page 14
Scholarship & Awards page 15
Graduating Students page 16
Affiliate Faculty Highlight page 17
Newsletter Article page 19
Notables & Quotables page 20

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WGS@UNI.EDU
UNIWGS
UNI WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES
WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM AT UNI
Dear UNI Friends,
Greetings from the Women’s and Gender Studies Program (WGS)! For the past decade, I have had the privilege of serving WGS as an Advisory Board member, teaching cross-listed WGS courses, and advising thesis projects. This past August, I happily accepted the position of Interim Director of WGS. It has been an honor to learn about and serve the program in this new capacity. As a way of introducing myself and sharing with you a bit of what has been happening in WGS, I offer the following three things:

1. I am dedicated to holistically preparing WGS students for the many challenges they will face in their careers and lives. One way WGS offers a holistic education is through the interdisciplinary curriculum that structures the program. It is an amazing advantage to our students, as it allows them to learn and gain skills across multiple areas of studies. It is exciting to see our students recognize and make new connections across their classes, craft new ways of thinking, and problem-solve by weaving together skills from various disciplines. Multidisciplinary, modular education is the future and WGS has a long history of providing boundary-breaking education.

2. How we do things makes us who we are. And how we do things is influenced by gender, sex, sexuality, class, race and more. As such, I try to not only be thoughtful about what I teach but how I teach—how I create curriculum, how I advise students, and how I lead as Interim Director. We have some very exciting projects on the horizon, like a 4+1 degree, exploring ways to make the program more accessible to people who work full-time, along with meaningful programming to enhance student learning outside of the classroom. What we are doing is invigorating and promising. But, how we do things is as important as what we do. Which leads me to my final comment…
I am committed to creating and maintaining an educational program that is also a space of belonging—a place where people can show up as themselves and learn together and collaboratively. If we want to create spaces of belonging—spaces where we acknowledge each other as people—then we need to understand how gender, sex, and sexuality shape our worlds. We need diverse approaches to leadership, diverse processes of working, teaching, and learning.

As you scroll through the following pages and meet the many amazing people who make up our program, I encourage you to consider your place of belonging in the WGS community and invite you to reach out to me with your ideas, talents, and dreams. You belong here and your contributions are wanted and welcome!

Be well WGS friends,
Danielle Dick
McGeough

Thank you!
This Fall we co-sponsored the event You and I Dissent with the students from Social Work. It was held on campus in Maucker Union Ballroom A and included community partners from the ACLU of Iowa, Cedar Valley Reproductive Justice, Planned Parenthood, the League of Women Voters, and Riverview Center. It focused on the overturning of Roe v. Wade and the status of reproductive rights in Iowa.

It was multi-faceted with the attending partners hosting a table where attendees could stop by and learn more about their organizations. The Student Social Work Association had a presentation about the overturning of Roe v. Wade, and then each of the partnering organizations put on a presentation about their organization. Each discussed their knowledge about the status of abortion in Iowa and how the overturning of Roe v. Wade has and will impact our area. Speakers stressed the importance of activism, volunteering, and voting to make a change. The event concluded with Q&As from the audience.

For our Fall newsletter article, we wanted to highlight the voices of our students. So, we asked them their opinion on the reversal of Roe v. Wade, and how it affects their experience living here. This article is neither intended for political purposes nor is an inclusive sample. It’s merely an informative discussion between UNI students and to satisfy curiosity. To find out what they said, look for the sticker in the newsletter.
The Women’s and Gender Studies Program at UNI continued the annual tradition of The Clothesline Project for the 11th year in a row. It is organized in conjunction with Relationship Violence Awareness month in October, in an attempt to bring awareness to the continual violence against women, children, men, the LGBTQ+ community, and other marginalized communities through the decorating of shirts.

Our GAs had shirt decorating events throughout the week, encouraging students to share their messages to survivors and victims of violence. On Friday of the same week they hung the shirts around the university for Bearing Witness, with different sounds playing in the background indicating the various types of violence. An example would be a whistle blowing which indicates a rape has occurred.

Participants were encouraged to wear the purple ribbon to show their support to victims and survivors of domestic violence.
This semester we hosted a panel for five Afghan speakers that shared their stories about growing up in Afghanistan. The speakers, Roquiya Sayeq, Zuhal Salim, Zamira Saidi, WGS alumni Hasina Jalal, and current student Hakima Afzaly, all come from different backgrounds and parts of Afghanistan. They shared their experiences growing up as girls and women in Afghanistan, and during the 10 years of U.S. aid.

Two of the main issues that faced them and face women today with the takeover of the Taliban are access to education and mobility. Young girls in Afghanistan are not allowed to go to school, while young boys are taken to Madrasa, where they’re taught extremist religion to serve the Taliban.

People in Afghanistan have found a way around this, secretly, they create small classrooms in tents in various neighborhoods.

The speakers' main focus was on the legal status of women during the first era of the Taliban rule and the subsequent period when the United States played an instrumental role in the transition toward a democratic Afghanistan. They discussed their individual experiences and freedoms regarding the cultural factors that affected them as women.
Four WGS students participated in the 2022's NWSA Annual conference, held in Minneapolis, MN. This year's theme was "Killing Rage: Resistance on the Other Side of Freedom". Two students presented their original research. Hakima Afzaly presented her thesis, "Media Framing of Marriage Practices in Afghanistan" and Saja Abd el-Hai presented her preliminary research on murals of female martyrs in Palestine.

NWSA provides an opportunity for our students to learn about new research in the field of women's and gender studies from different scholars. It also gives them an opportunity to network and consider their options for their future academic and professional endeavors.

Lastly, traveling together and spending their time exploring Minneapolis allowed the students to bond over their shared experience.
There were clashes in the Palestinian territories with the Israeli army, that made it dangerous for people to visit. In addition, there was an operation on Gaza during the last week of summer, that also limited my mobility. Sadly, these events are not uncommon, and usually take the lives of many Palestinians.

The biggest contribution of the award was to allow me to take part in spreading awareness on the role of Palestinian women in resistance, that is distinct of Palestinian men. An issue that does not receive enough attention both in the media and in scholarly research.

Unfortunately, however, during my visit that lasted two months, I faced restrictions in mobility and did not get the opportunity to visit all refugee camps as I had planned. There were constant raids on the Jenin refugee camp, where Abu Akleh was murdered.

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I am very thankful to receive the Yang Travel Award that gave me the opportunity to visit Palestine and collect data for my research. Last summer, I visited several Palestinian refugee camps and cities to collect data on politically motivated graffiti, with a focus on women and resistance in art. During those visits, I witnessed the iconization of renowned Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh who was assassinated by Israeli forces in May 2022. The focus on Ms. Abu Akleh as a symbol of resistance and female steadfastness encouraged me to write my masters thesis on graffiti depicting Abu Akleh in Palestinian refugee camps in the Occupied Palestinian West Bank, and other women martyrs.

Saja Abd Elhai was the recipient of the WGS Yang Travel Award that sponsored her trip to Palestine/Israel this past summer for her research.
Meghan Cutcher has undergraduate degrees in Women's and Gender Studies and English - Creative Writing from The University of Toledo. She plans to focus her studies in the applied track for gender and wellness, with a focus on abortion access and reproductive justice. She joined our program as a Programming Assistant in the WGS Office.

"I chose the WGS program at UNI because of the great scholarship opportunities in addition to the applied track specifically geared toward those interested in focusing on gender and wellness. I felt that the program would be a place where I would really be able to dive into my studies and learn the most about reproductive justice spaces. I really enjoy the flexibility of the program and the ability to choose the classes that will interest you but also aid you on your journey to your future career."

Abortion in my community is take place illegally and unsafely, leading to many other problems. Having this background and mindset from a conservative society, I wish not to see the same fate following me in United States.

I would prefer to live where abortion care is available. That would be a state that recognizes my personal autonomy.

Fun Fact: I have five cats! :)

Meghan Cutcher (she/her)  Toledo, Ohio
The multicultural-diverse ambiance of the university first drew my attention to UNI. To crown it all, the wide range of scholarship opportunities, track availability (Thesis or Applied), practical classes, learning flexibility and inclusion of individual learning capabilities at the WGS program sprouted my interest in studying at UNI.

Christiana has a Bachelor in English from Bowen University Iwo, Osun state. She plans to focus her studies in the applied track with her research on Gender Identity as a result of Child Sexuality and Biological Constraints.

She is working as a Research Assistant for Dr. Jolene Zigarevich, researching non-binary/intersex bodies and medical treaties in the eighteenth century.

I would not like to live and study in a state where abortion is not allowed because I will not have the freedom to enjoy sexual intimacy with anyone. Instead, I will be worried of not getting pregnant. I do not like to be on birth control, so it is important for me to live in a state where abortion is legal.

As a woman I want to live in the state where I can do abortion legally and safely.
As an international student, the reversal of Roe v. Wade plays a major factor in my deliberations to potentially work in the US and in which state, as I consider it as indicative of potential future demotions of women’s rights.

Pregnant people will be impacted because there will be states where abortion care is not available, and this means that there will be a higher demand to travel out of state for care. This has a big financial and logistical impact on the patient.

Sarah Awachi (she/ her)

Sarah has a Bachelor in History and International Relations from University of Reading, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Diplomacy. She plans to focus her studies in the applied track and is interested in gender violence prevention, family and divorce laws in the Middle East, & religion and gender. She is a Graduate Assistant at the Patricia A. Tomson Center for Violence Prevention.

I was contemplating applying to a number of universities, but I was drawn to the applied track in violence prevention offered at UNI, which addresses my exact area of interest. The passion with which my professors take on each class and their deep intersectional knowledge has elevated my program experience.

I hope to be as knowledgeable and effortlessly cool as Dr. Cate Palczewski and Dr. Danielle McGeough someday.

Fun Fact: I can only solve the first two layers of a Rubik’s cube.

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During the summer, I explored Cedar Falls and went to NYC. That was totally a new experience so far. Being a Grad Student I am focusing on education sector of Pakistan, mainly on Sex Ed and Women's Reproductive Health problems and looking forward to creating possible solutions. I would like to thank WGS faculty and staff for always being supportive towards their students.

Fun Fact: I love to collect memories in the form of photographs!

Saja Abd Elhai (she/ they)

This summer I got the chance to visit my homeland, Palestine/Israel, for data collection for my research. In my thesis, I'm researching murals of Palestinian women that were killed by Israeli forces, and their impact on public grief and public memory. I'm focusing on the most recent one, Shireen Abu Akleh; a Palestinian journalist that was killed during a raid on Jenin refugee camp last May. Her murals can be found everywhere, from Palestinian cities, to refugee camps, Gaza, Arab cities in Israel, and I even found one online in Syria! In addition to data collection, I also had fun being with family, going to the beach, and eating really good food. I also finally went to the movie theatre, something I miss from pre-COVID world.

Fun fact: "My hobby lately is re-watching 90s rom-coms!"

Noshaba Shafiq (she/ her)
Rachel Dillavou (they/she) Evansdale, Iowa

Rachel is on our thesis track and is researching LGBT Censorship in Museums.

I taught high school science classes over the summer for the UNI Upward Bound Program. This semester I will be attending three different conferences where I believe I will learn a lot which will influence my thesis and future work. I am enjoying this program as I am getting to learn more in depth about a range of different topics and belief systems from an academic perspective.

Current generations may take greater health and even life threatening risks to obtain abortions. As for future generations, their sexual freedom and education may be impacted, as their health, safety and bodily autonomy are demoted to the status of privileges, rather than rights. In addition, both current and future generations’ education level and standard of living may be impacted, as having a baby could affect their decision to pursue or continue higher education and can influence their income level.

The reversal of Roe v. Wade has made the life of women from current and future generations in the United States harder than it already was. The US is really going backward with the reversal of Roe v. Wade. It is not right to call that US is a free country now.
I am double majoring in Philosophy and English, and triple minoring in Sexuality, Women and Gender; Creative Writing; and Ethics. I absolutely adore this university and am pretty involved with a variety of different organizations. As of right now, my plan is to pursue my PhD in philosophy in hopes of later on becoming a professor. Learning, teaching, and writing are three of my top passions, so as long as I am doing something that involves them, I’ll be set.

I have always held a rather fiery spirit when it comes to equality and the injustices people face daily. However, when I took an Honors seminar with Dr. Sutton my freshman year on sex, violence, and power, I realized how vital it was for me to be educated in as many different aspects regarding sex, gender, violence, etc. that I could. At that point, I had already declared one major with two minors, but it quickly became clear to me that the topics studied in WGS were ones that I could not afford to ignore. I love all of my majors and minors dearly, but I know that my WGS minor gives a layer of meaning to each that is absolutely necessary if I wish to make any sort of impact in our society. I hold a strong belief that our studies in college are not just so we feel validated with a piece of paper, but instead are meant to act as a guiding agent for us to make the changes that the world so desperately requires. WGS has helped in giving me the guidance to work on making changes in areas that impact us all whether we realize it or not.

fun fact: I have an extra bone in my foot.
**Scholarships & Awards**

**Agathon Fellowship**  
Deadline: March 1, 2023  
This $1000 fellowship supports students, (graduate and undergraduate) who have demonstrated a strong commitment to, and have had active roles in, supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Applicants must have a 3.0 GPA and will be full time at UNI in the 2023-2024 academic school year.

**Francis L. Webster Scholarship**  
Deadline: March 1, 2023  
The Francis L. Webster $500 Scholarship seeks to support any declared WGS graduate student or Sexuality, Women and Gender (SWAG) minor who has completed or is completing at least six hours of Women’s and Gender Studies required courses, and who will not graduate before December 2023. Applicants must have six completed hours of WGS or cross listed courses by the end of Spring 2023 semester.

**Outstanding Graduate Paper Award**  
Deadline: February 15, 2023  
This annual competition is designed to encourage and reward graduate scholars (within or outside of the WGS program) on their research in the area of gender issues. The prize includes a $100 cash award and being spotlighted as our final SWAG Forum presenter for the academic year. Applicants must submit a paper, identified as but not limited to the following: a chapter from a graduate thesis; a paper submitted for a course at UNI as a graduate student; a conference paper; or a creative project focusing on any of gender identity intersections. *Author of the winning paper must be willing and available to present at the SWAG Forum on Monday April 3rd, 2023.*

**Yang Travel Award**  
Deadline: April 15, 2023  
This fund is to be used to provide travel support for undergraduate and graduate students of the Women's and Gender Studies Program. The award is to be used for study and research outside of the United States and is to be awarded annually. The recipient(s) must have a GPA of 2.5 or above, and will be used during the summer of 2023 or during the 2023-2024 academic school year. The amount of the award is to be determined upon request, travel related expenses and financial need shall be a consideration.

For additional details and information on how to apply, please go to our webpage:  
https://csbs.uni.edu/womenstudies/student-resources/scholarships
WE ARE THRILLED TO ANNOUNCE THAT TWO OF OUR STUDENTS ARE GRADUATING!

Hakima Afzaly (she/her)
her thesis
Media Framing of Marriage Practices in Afghanistan

Fatima Saadat (she/her)
her thesis
The Girl with Almond Eyes: Reclaiming Our Voices, Power of Personal Narratives
Alysa Mozak (she/her)

Alysa Mozak is the new Director of the Patricia A. Tomson Center for Violence Prevention (PATCVP). In that role she oversees curriculum infusion of bystander education and strategies within pre-service teacher education and social sciences programming at UNI, as well as the implementation of Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Strategies training and outreach in and among Iowa’s higher education and Pre-K-12 educational systems. She has been using the MVP model for 10 years in secondary and post-secondary environments and is a master trainer.

Alysa is currently working on edits to a new version of the MVP model, called “MVP 2.0 Lessons in Social-Emotional Learning,” which will be primarily for secondary school educators.

Alysa is a certified sexual health educator and is excited to incorporate that lens into her work at the center. She also considers herself a social justice advocate with expertise in victim advocacy, sexual and mental health, and gender and racial equity. Alysa has worked in the non-profit, health and human services, and secondary and higher education fields.

“In my free time I enjoy indie rock music and attending concerts, biking and yoga and frequenting new restaurants!”
Amandajeann (Aj) Freking Nolte earned a BA in Communication/Theatre Arts Education (2005) and a MA (2007) in Communication Studies from the University of Northern Iowa. After almost ten years as a Communication Studies instructor and a social justice peer theatre troupe director, she juggled work, family, and school to earn her MA in Library and Information Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2018). She’s currently the humanities librarian and an assistant professor at Rod Library. In that role, she supports teaching, learning, and research for the Women’s and Gender Studies program. She is particularly interested in transforming library systems and services with an intersectional feminist lens. She loves librarianship because it allows her to walk alongside creators of information and empower them to be critically information literate scholars and citizens.

She currently serves as the 2022 Iowa Library Association/Association of College and Research Libraries subdivision president and is really excited to work with the Prime Time Reading program with Humanities Iowa and the Waterloo Public Library.

In her non-academic life, she spends a lot of time with her family, chauffeuring her kids to their many sports and music activities. She is eternally grateful to her partner, Nevin, who has washed all of their laundry since 2010. She loves walking their golden retriever, Bea Arthur, and always has a detective novel and a bullet journal in her too-heavy bag. She is still sort of unsure how she became a dance, swim, and dog mom but is adjusting to the reality.

Her email is amandajeann.nolte@uni.edu, and her office is located in Library 370. You are welcome to stop by or make an appointment https://uni.libcal.com/appointments/ajnolte.
This is insane for me. Back home abortion is not allowed but at least where I come from is not a developed country. I choose the US for the freedom it has, but with the reversal of Roe v. Wade I don’t see my country and the US any different. Now both countries seem backward and unsafe for me.

The protection of Roe v. Wade will contribute to women empowerment movement that we have been working for so long. It will grant the freedom of rights, for women owning their bodies. Future generations will be given freedom and a chance to better raising our wanted children not putting pressure on families to raise a child that they cannot support or can have deathly consequences for the mother.

As I come from the Middle East, discussions about reproductive rights are not common. That being said, abortions are performed when the health of the mother is affected and/or if the fetus shows any abnormalities. Thus, the moral dilemma does not exists. Instead, abortions are a matter of health and practicality. However, parents rarely have the choice to end a pregnancy without a medical reason, which in any case is rare. In addition, extra marital pregnancies are so rare that there is no discussion surrounding them.
If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough.

I do not believe in taking the right decision, I take a decision and make it right.

If you love something, love it completely, cherish it, say it, but most importantly show it. Life is finite and fragile, and just because something is there one day, it might not be the next. Never take that for granted.

~ R. Queen