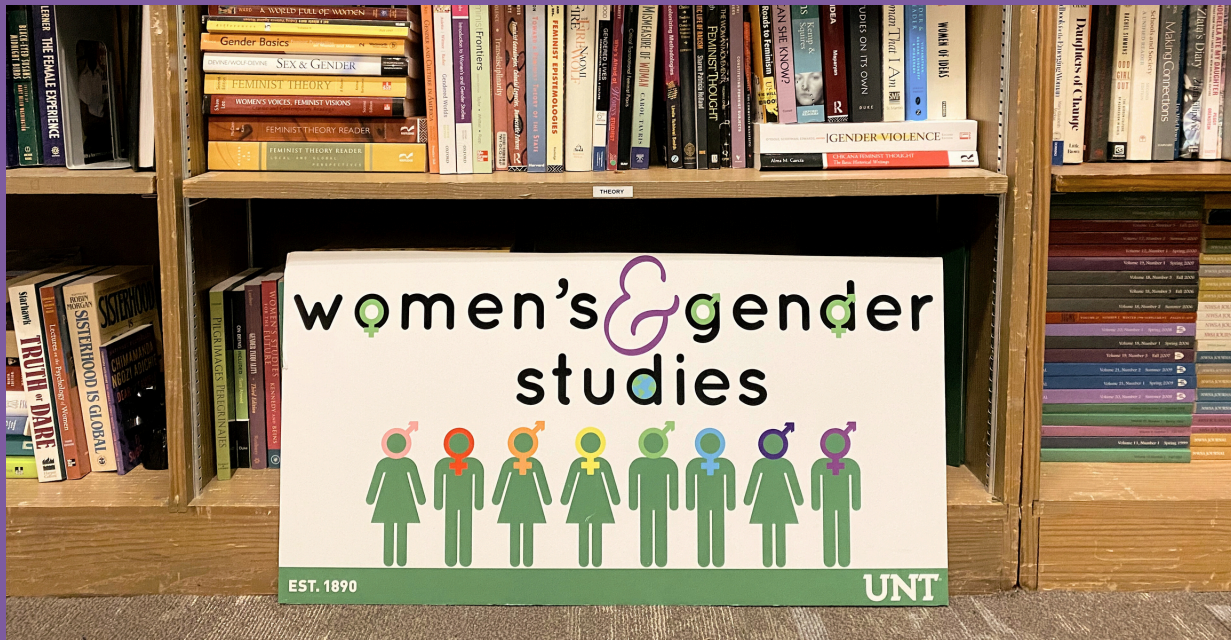


# WOMEN'S & GENDER STUDIES

## SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER



## A LETTER FROM THE PROGRAM

### May 2025

As I've shared in the past, I always find the final weeks of a semester to be some of the best as we are provided the opportunity to recognize one another's efforts and see how far we've come in the preceding months. Working alongside you in the collective projects of education and community building sustain me, offering hope in challenging times.

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# A LETTER FROM THE PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

It has been another busy semester for the WGST program as we've worked behind the scenes to strengthen our minors and graduate degree. This semester we learned that the Women's and Gender Studies Program will be folded into a new school that will officially open in the fall. While details of this new venture are still being finalized (such as an official name), I am happy to share that I will be leading this new unit and am excited to see what sorts of new opportunities this presents for us.

Certainly, structural changes like this, especially in a social and political climate that are so unpredictable and challenging can create concerns and anxiety. I certainly feel this. It is no secret that we are in a moment that is especially unwelcoming to gender and sexuality studies, with a host of legislation designed to curtail our research and teaching or eliminate our programs. To respond to these challenges we must be creative and collaborative; strengths I know our faculty members, affiliates, and students are exceptionally capable of. My confidence and excitement about what comes next are grounded in the quality and strength of the interdisciplinary relationships we've been forging for years. Two particular places where we have fostered these ties have been in our recent Confluence: Interdisciplinary Explorations series, and in our annual Women's and Gender Studies symposium. Both of these events provide opportunities to foster and promote interdisciplinary scholarship, engage critical conversations, and showcase the innovative teaching and research of our affiliated faculty and students. Your enthusiasm and support for this programming always excites me and I look forward to carrying these efforts forward and to sharing more about the changes on the horizon as things become concretized. In the meantime, I am happy to share some other program updates and news.

As the spring semester concludes, we are excited to see three of our graduate students complete their M.A. degrees in Women's and Gender Studies; Courtney Bellamy, Ghazaleh Ebneenasir, and Maria Mazvimavi. Each of these three students have been vibrant members of our WGST community, serving as Teaching Assistants, mentors for our undergraduate students, and exceptional role models. They have tutored students in our WGST library, presented their work at conferences, and developed exceptional culminating research projects that have positioned them competitively for the future as they embark on PhD journeys, other educational paths, and/or the workforce. It is always sad to say goodbye to our students, especially because we form such meaningful relationships with them during their time here, but it is made a bit easier knowing that the opportunities for professional mentorship and friendship will only continue to grow. For the fall, we have already admitted five new graduate students and we will be excited to include them in our fall semester "Welcome Back Happy Hour" at Harvest House, as well as in ongoing coffee hours so they can meet some of our exceptional affiliated faculty across campus.

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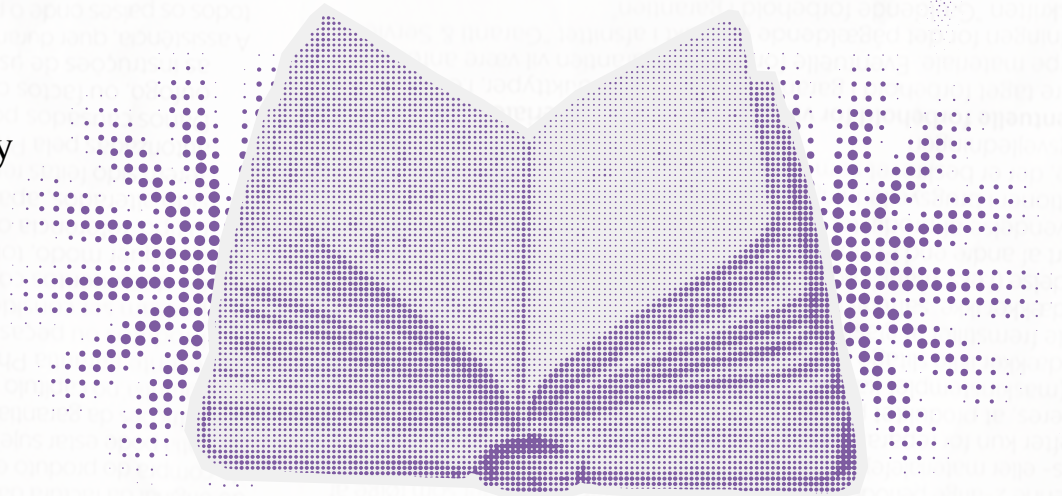
# A LETTER FROM THE PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

This summer we will continue to offer our Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies class over multiple summer sections. Our core faculty will be doing this alongside some other work. Specifically, Dr. Özlem Altıok, will be travelling to present some of her work to an international audience at the 5th International Sociology Association Forum of Sociology in Rabat, Morocco. Dr. Katherine Ritter is preparing to update our graduate level Feminist Methods and Methodologies class for an online format.

As we look toward to fall and anticipate some of the changes mentioned above, we will continue to host Coffee Hours (stay tuned for an email in early fall identifying dates and times for these events). As always, we will ask for folks who are interested in attending to please sign-up for a day/time. Also, after a very enthusiastic reception, we will continue to run our Confluence: Interdisciplinary Explorations Series. As before, we will announce the topics for Fall 2025 in August, and plan to host three lunch-time discussions with interested faculty and graduate students in the months of September, October, and November. As the New School begins to take shape, there will certainly be other initiatives to share with you, but for now, I will just wish you all a restful and restorative summer break. See you in August!



Dr. Megan Morrissey  
WGST & LGBTQ  
Studies Programs  
Director

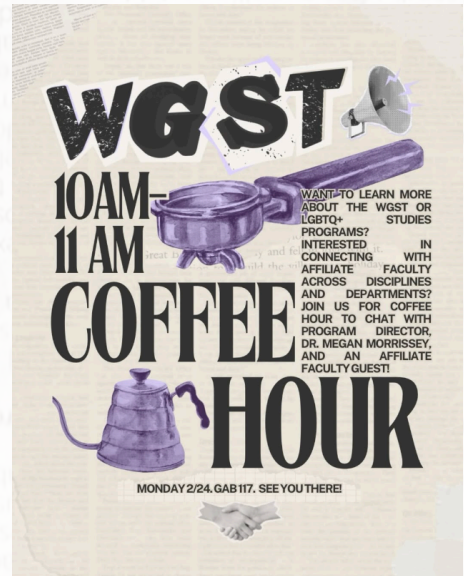




# EVENT SNAPSHOTS



*Spring Potluck: Ghazaleh Ebnenasir, Courtney Bellamy, Maria Mazvimavi, Rebecca Bearden, Megan Morrissey, Özlem Altıok, and Katherine (Tili) Ritter*



*Spring coffee hour flyer*



*Flyer for film screening and Q&A with Dr. Megan Morrissey*



*Dr. Özlem Altıok*

## CONFERENCE: FROM DR. ÖZLEM ALTİOK:

"I attended the 69th meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) in New York in March 2025. CSW69 corresponded to the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China (1995), which was a historic event. I believe that attending the CSW on the occasion of Beijing Conference's 30th anniversary, in the midst of an escalating backlash against women's rights and gender equality, was also of historic significance... As a member of the International Committee and delegate of Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS), I presented at a panel that brought together sociologists from different parts of the world to interrogate different kinds of social and gender inequalities. The focus of my talk was Women and Armed Conflict 30 years after Beijing, specifically the (lack of) progress made in the area of women's participation in decision making in foreign policymaking and peacebuilding -- and demilitarization, more broadly. My work was published as part of the shadow report written for the US Women's Caucus at the United Nations. Wearing my hat as a delegate and scholar, among others, I attended many engaging CSW69 events hosted by a variety of different groups from conservative think tanks, UN agencies, and the European Union, among others.

While in New York, I made a point of watching Six on Broadway and the play Liberation because we also need art and fun things in our lives!"



# WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM & RECOGNITION CEREMONY

In April of 2025, we held our third research conference led by Dr. Katherine Ritter and Dr. Özlem Altıok. Students presented the exciting research projects they have developed across WGST courses. We hosted another poster session as well as panel presentations. The showcase of some of this critical work offered an opportunity for students to talk with affiliate faculty and with each other about the importance of interdisciplinary scholarship and ideas. We appreciate all in attendance who listened, learned, and engaged in dynamic conversations with our students about their work!

## **PANEL 1, DR. KATHERINE RITTER- FLESHINESS, SUBALTERNITY, AND CONSUMING THE DIGITAL OTHER:**

Undergraduate students Berkeley Robinson, Leonardo Vargas, Ryann Ragsdale, and Mar Lamberson, as well as graduate student Abid Iskander, presented their thought-provoking and wide-spanning work in this compelling panel session. Topics in this evocative session included queering digital precarity, recasting representations of pyro-eroticism in media and culture, trans corporeality in literary representations of the more-than-human, feminist recastings of cannibalism and consumption, and a revisiting of "Can the Subaltern Speak" by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

## **PANEL 2, DR. ÖZLEM ALTIÖK-THE POLITICS OF GENDER AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE AGE OF AUTHORITARIAN NEOLIBERALISM:**

Students taking Gender & Sustainable Development seminar with Dr. Altıok this semester presented their research as part of the panel titled "The Politics of Gender and Sustainability in the Age of Authoritarian Neoliberalism," and participated in the poster session. Students' work ranged from Rose Bhaskar's "Sex Work and the City" focusing on gentrification in Mumbai, Kinza Aliza's "Health-seeking behavior of displaced Afghan women in Pakistan," Isabella White's "Trad-wives" and the representations of gender, class and sustainability in the neo-homesteading movement in the U.S., and Valerie Gonzalez's "Blockchains or the chains of slavery in the fashion industry" that explored a new technology. Paige Trevino's research on the role of Rockefeller women in the creation of the National Parks Service was highlighted in the poster session."

*(Photos continue on page 8)*



# WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM & RECOGNITION CEREMONY



*Panel 1: Abid Iskander, Mar Lamberson, Ryann Ragsdale, Leonardo Vargas, Berkeley Robinson, and Dr. Katherine Ritter*



*Panel 2: Valerie Gonzalez, Kinza Aliza, Isabella White, and Rose Bhaskar*



*Megan Morrissey & Courtney Bellamy*



*All award recipients from the 2025 Research Symposium & Recognition Ceremony*



*Graduate Panel: Rebecca Bearden, Özlem Altıok, Megan Morrissey, Katherine Ritter, Courtney Bellamy, Ghazaleh Ebneenasir, and Maria Mazvimavi*



# 2025 DR. MARILYN MORRIS AWARD



*Dr. Megan Morrissey, Dr. Katherine Ritter, and Dr. Jara Carrington*

The Dr. Marilyn Morris Award is awarded annually to a faculty member who has made outstanding contributions to the LGBTQ Studies Program at UNT. Award recipients represent the vanguard in creating innovative pedagogical and research strategies, fostering gender and sexuality as an analytical lens, and creating safe spaces for our students in the classroom. The award is named after its first recipient, Dr. Marilyn Morris, founder of the LGBT Studies Program in 2009, and a pioneer in scholarship on sexuality as interdisciplinary inquiry at UNT. It is an honor to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of these exceptional faculty members.

It is our honor to acknowledge Dr. Katherine Ritter as the 2025 Dr. Marilyn Morris Award for Outstanding Academic Contributions in LGBTQ Studies.



# CONFLUENCE:

## INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPLORATIONS

This Spring, the Women's and Gender Studies Program launched a new series for faculty and graduate students.

### LIST OF SESSIONS:

- **BELONGINGS, CITIZENSHIP, AND MIGRATION**
- **WORLDMAKING**
- **CARE WORK**

The purpose of these sessions was to facilitate thinking about different ways of doing interdisciplinary collaboration through discussion of research, teaching, and community outreach.



*Photo of Care Work session, by Dr. Özlem Altıok*



# FACULTY & AFFILIATE NEWS

*Dr. Özlem Altiok's "Feminism en garde: The Women's Platform for Equality (EŞİK) and its struggle for the Istanbul Convention, women's human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Turkey" was published in We are Equal: Academic Papers of the 12th International Crime and Punishment Film Festival.*



*Julie Leuzinger recently published Chapter, "Trans Accessible Libraries Initiative," in Censorship is a Drag: LGBTQ Materials and Programming Under Siege in Academic Libraries*



# CONGRATULATIONS SPRING 2025 GRADUATES!



*Courtney Bellamy*

Courtney graduated from undergraduate school at Texas A&M University with a Bachelor's of Science in Psychology. They are interested in continuing their education in social work and utilizing what they learned from the WGST program to pursue a career as a therapist.



*Ghazaleh Ebneenasir*

"I'm proud to be graduating from the Women's and Gender Studies program at UNT, a place that has shaped me both academically and personally. I'm incredibly grateful for the community, mentorship, and opportunities for growth I've found here. I'm especially thankful to my professors for their guidance and encouragement throughout this journey."



*Maria Mazvimavi*

"Hardwork pays off. My journey in Graduate school in the Women and Gender Studies program will forever remain etched in my heart."



# WHO WE ARE

940-565-2098 P.O. BOX 305097, DENTON, TX 76203 WMST@UNT.EDU



*Dr. Megan Morrissey,  
Program Director*



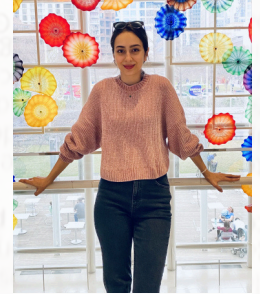
*Özlem Altıok,  
Principal Lecturer*



*Dr. Katherine Ritter,  
Lecturer*



*Rebecca Bearden,  
MA, Program Coordinator*



*Ghazaleh Ebhenasir,  
Graduate Teaching  
Assistant*



*Maria Mazvimavi,  
Graduate Teaching  
Assistant*



*Abid Iskandar,  
Graduate Student  
Assistant*



*Marija Ivanic,  
Undergraduate  
Program Ambassador*



*Mar Vargas,  
Undergraduate  
Program Ambassador*



*Shelby Wells, Office &  
Communications  
Assistant*

**Advisory Board Members:** Dr. Katherine Ritter (WGST), Dr. Suzanne Enck (Communication Studies), Dr. Joanna Davis-McElligatt (English), Dr. Özlem Altıok (International Studies & WGST), Dr. Jara Carrington (Anthropology), Dr. Megan Morrissey (Communication Studies)

## ABOUT US

UNT's Women's & Gender Studies Program centers intersectional feminist education and research through a multi-disciplinary, theoretically diverse curriculum. Housing a master's degree program in WGST and undergraduate minors in WGST and LGBTQ studies, the Women's and Gender Studies program educates students to think critically and take a global approach to their environments and themselves. Our program serves students through interdisciplinary research and course offerings, engaging them in discussions that critically address the lived experiences of individuals and communities. The WGST program collectively seeks imaginative and progressive ways of seeing the world, investigating the opportunities and challenges of living in a global diaspora, and collaboratively building welcoming spaces that respect and celebrate differences.