

women's & gender studies

womensstudies.unt.edu

Fall 2019/Spring 2020
Newsletter



A note from Dr. Alicia Re Cruz Program Director

Dear WGST community,

This is the time when we usually ritualize the end of the academic year in a celebratory way with our Lavender Graduation and recognition to the academic success of our students. The unexpected and abrupt arrival of COVID-19 during our Spring Break, has forced us to improvise an academic digital life that places office, classroom and home under the same roof and with Zoom as the pulse. Certainly COVID-19 has impacted us all in different ways, but with a very loud message: evident gross gender inequalities and race disparities in society. Women carry a different kind of burden from COVID-19. Lockdowns uncover the inequities, which disproportionately affect their wellbeing and economic resilience. Childcare, elderly care, and housework typically fall on women. Concerns over increased domestic violence are growing. Women's sexual and reproductive health services, as well as prenatal and postnatal care, are disrupted. The LGBTQ community is highly at risk as well. The U.S. Supreme Court is debating and set to rule any day on whether Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protects LGBTQ people from employment discrimination. This decision can have devastating consequences in the COVID-19 pandemic. These are just a few highlights of the social panorama that claims for attention, intervention and transformation. This is why our WGST community of faculty and allies at UNT plays a critical role in nurturing our students with the methodological and ethical tools to embark on the social justice lifetime path.

(Continued pg. 2)



TABLE OF CONTENTS

A NOTE FROM DR. RE CRUZ
1-2

WGST MILESTONES 2019-2020
3-5

NEW AFFILIATED FACULTY
6

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT
SPOTLIGHT
7

EVENTS
8-12

A Note from Dr. Re Cruz, Program Director (Continued)



(Continued from pg. 1) I am sure that the interconnected gender, class and race impacts of COVID-19 will be food for thought and inspiration for WGST next year's organized events. Although COVID-19 has held hostage half of the semester, we can say that the 2019-2020 has been a very productive and successful academic year that started with the search for our first full time lecturer in WGST. The invaluable work and tenacity of the search team (Cathy Ragland, Nancy Stockdale, Yolanda Flores Niemann, Dr. Özlem Altıok, and Leah Brooks-Hall) led by Suz Enck, identified Dr. Armaghan Ziaee as our new WGST faculty to join our community in the Fall 2020. Dr. Ziaee brings to our program and to UNT a unique interdisciplinary framework combining architecture, urban studies, and gender studies applied to a broad range of cultural and geographical contexts with particular emphasis in the Middle East. Welcome to our WGST community, Dr. Ziaee. I hope we have the opportunity, very soon, to celebrate your new professional chapter at UNT in the WGST Community Room.

In an effort to strengthen our 50+ interdisciplinary community of affiliated faculty, we created the Brown Bag Lunch Series: Disciplining Gender and Sexuality. The purpose is learning from faculty across UNT campus about their disciplinary perspectives on gender and sexuality as it informs their scholarship. The outstanding and impactful inaugural presentation by Suz Enck and Megan Morrissey (Communication Studies) predicted the success of the WGST Brown Bag Lunch Series, which was to be followed in March by the Philosophy Department (Irene Klaver, Samantha Langsdale, Terra Rowe and Kim De Wolff) and the Anthropology Department in April (Jamie Johnson, Jara Carrington and Alicia Re Cruz). As soon as COVID-19 allows, we will resume our Disciplining Gender and Sexuality within our new dynamic and diversified organized programs... and it is our hope that Fall 2020 can bring it to us.

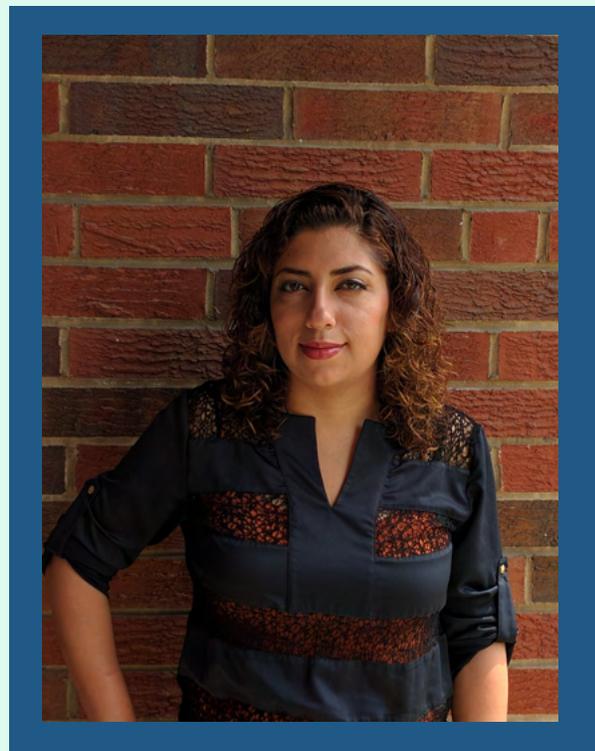
- **Alicia Re Cruz**

UNT Women's and Gender Studies Milestones 2019-2020

Welcoming...

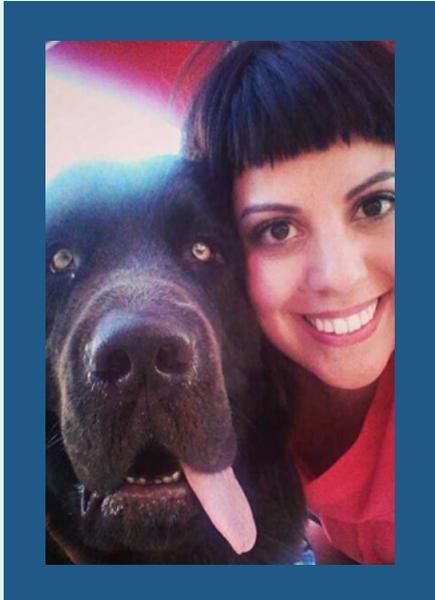
Dr. Armaghan Ziaee, Faculty Member

Dr. Armaghan Ziaee is a new full-time lecturer in Women's and Gender Studies at the University of North Texas. Her interdisciplinary scholarly work centers on the transnational and decolonial studies, intersectional methods and pedagogy, history of gender and architecture, and Middle Eastern studies. Dr. Ziaee has been the recipient of a multitude of awards, grants, and fellowships including from the National Women's Studies Association. Prior to joining UNT, Dr. Ziaee was a visiting assistant professor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Cincinnati. She received her Ph.D. in Architectural History, Theory and Criticism, and an MA in WGSS from the University of Cincinnati. She also received a Master of Architecture with a diploma of honor from I. A. University in Dubai, UAE, and a bachelor's degree from Shiraz, Iran.



Professor Ziaee has taught introductory, upper-division, and graduate-level courses including introduction to WGSS, the senior capstone seminar, transnational and intersectional feminist theory, and women and global issues. She supports and enhances diverse student population and she was awarded a medal of honor by the Office of Ethnic Programs and Services at UC for her positive contribution on student's success. She also received the Outstanding Faculty Award from the Dept. of WGSS at UC. Dr. Ziaee's recent publications include "On Contradictions: The Architecture of Women's Resistance and Emancipation in early 20th Century Iran" as part of *On Margins: Feminist Architectural Historians of Migration*, and "To Manifest" a collective piece by Feminist Art and Architecture Collaborative published in Harvard Design Magazine. Dr. Ziaee serves on the Editorial Board of *Journal of International Women's Studies*, and she is the reviews editor for the journal of *Design and Culture*.

UNT Women's and Gender Studies Milestones 2019-2020



Congratulations on Graduation...

Brenda Barajas-Koch, Graduate Student

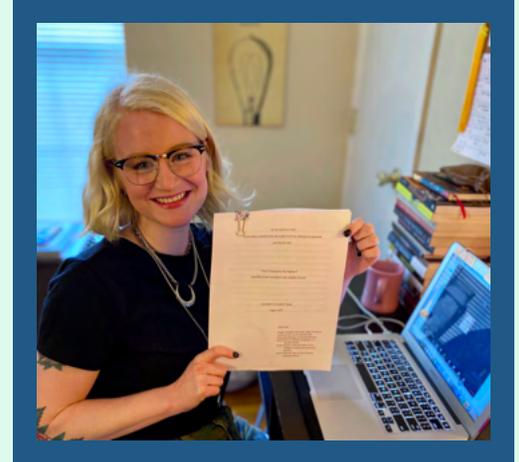
While completing my Comprehensive Exams and final coursework this semester, I have also had the unique opportunity to pursue my Special Project with the amazing staff and administration of Child Care Associates, a Fort Worth-based educational non-profit that contracts with the federal Head Start Program. My work with them has involved leveraging my academic background in Women's and Gender Studies to develop and implement equity and inclusion initiatives via workshops, discussion-based training, and online resources that are available to CCA's staff and community members.

Leah Brooks-Hall, Graduate Student

This spring brought another milestone for one of our Women's and Gender Studies graduate students and for our program. Leah Brooks-Hall (she/her, they/them) defended an eloquent thesis titled, "In the Near Future: Decolonial Perspectives on Subjectivity in *Her* and *Ex Machina*." Her project, the first thesis to be successfully composed and defended in our program, brought together women of color feminism, decoloniality, and new materialism to weave a beautiful and critical analysis of the relationship between humans and robots in the films *Her* and *Ex Machina*. In an extraordinary moment where technology feels more integrated into our lives than ever, Leah's project provides some compelling ways to imagine how we might move forward.

Congratulations to Leah on her outstanding work!

Leah would like to thank her thesis advisor, Dr. Megan Morrissey, and committee members, Dr. Suzanne Enck and Dr. Analouise Keating for their support.



UNT Women's and Gender Studies Milestones 2019-2020

Welcoming...

Mackenzie Roper, **Program Ambassador**

she/her/hers

Major? Psychology

Classification? Junior

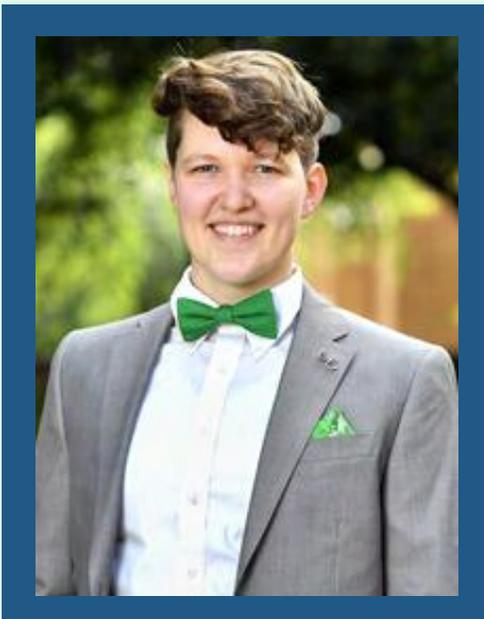
What drew you to WGST/LGBTQ Studies?

"I wanted to be a part of something greater than myself, and I've always been drawn to Women Studies."



Kit Shattuck, **Program Coordinator**

Kit Shattuck (she/her & they/them), our new Program Coordinator, is an alumnus of UNT from 2016 who took WGST courses during her undergraduate career. She has worked at UNT for several years in Orientation, Housing, and most recently as an Admissions Counselor for undergraduate admissions. She lives near downtown Denton with her spouse Hannah and two dogs Beatrice and Fitzwilliam Darcy.



New Affiliated Faculty Spotlight

Welcoming...

Martinque Jones
Psychology



Yolanda Flores Niemann
Psychology



Devin Garafalo
English



**Carol Anne
Costabile-Heming**
World Languages,
Literatures, & Cultures



Cathy Ragland
Ethnomusicology



Jo Davis-McEligatt
English



Anna Hinton
English



Undergraduate Student Spotlight

Introducing...

Leslie Lopez (she/her), WGST Program Ambassador

Program Ambassador Profile:

Major? Psychology

Classification? Senior

What drew you to WGST/LGBTQ Studies?

"One of the reasons I decided to come to UNT was because of the WGST minor. I wanted to learn more about how to incorporate feminism into my career track and learn more about feminist movements, especially pertaining to Black and brown women. Through the WGST department, I was also able to make connections with others and in doing so discovered one of my passions— being involved in the reproductive justice movement in Texas."

The picture to the right features Leslie at UNT's Spring 2020 Preview Day.

On the event, Leslie says: "It went really well and I spoke to many students. Quite a few seemed interested in the LGBT minor but most were not sure about what Women's and Gender Studies was until I explained it to them."



Event Spotlight: Opening Doors for Social Justice

Partnering with the UNT Career Connect and Multicultural Center, on November 13, 2019, the graduate and undergraduate students in Dr. Özlem Altıok's Gender and Globalization course showcased their semester-long activist-scholarship projects at an educational event called "Opening Doors for Social Justice." The event provided the opportunity for UNT and outside community members to engage with the students in Gender and Globalization and learn about their partnership with two community organizations: Opening Doors International Services (ODIS) in Denton and Refugee Support Network (RSN).

At the event, students shared the Country Conditions Reports they compiled to aid asylum seekers and educated attendees about their personal and professional experience throughout the process. According to an online article co-authored by Dr. Altıok and Jordan Rogers with the Career Center:

"Through their research, students learned about the dire conditions that lead people to leave their home countries. Students' reports on Guatemala and El Salvador have already been used by two asylum seekers who filed their cases in immigration courts in Texas. These valuable resources that Gender and Globalization students compiled will be used by community partners into the future as well as providing an example of how students' skills and learning can be empowering not only for themselves but also for others."

Article source: <https://vpaa.unt.edu/career-connect/opening-doors-social-justice>



Opening Doors for Social Justice: Graduate Student Perspective

Reflection from...

Meg Langlitz, WGST Graduate Student



Altrok and Langlitz at the event

Opening Doors International Services is not an entity that had been on my radar prior to this class despite living in and around Denton for the past ten years. The nonprofit, known as ODIS, offers “humanitarian and legal immigration services to families and individuals in North Texas since 2003,” according to their website. My role as a volunteer was to place phone calls to Mexican nationals compiled from a list of DACA recipients who might benefit from additional legal immigration services. If the person was willing, they were scheduled for an in-person interview probing for extenuating circumstances that might qualify them for residency or citizenship beyond their DACA status. It is an especially important initiative as recent announcements have expressed the uncertainty of the program’s future. United States law allows certain safeguards to be granted to victims of crimes. Recipients of T-visas and U-visas, along with victims of domestic violence are offered protections from deportation in exchange for information pertaining to the criminal activity affecting them. The interview started by collecting personal and family information, specifically looking for relatives who are US citizens or who have obtained residency/citizenship. Next, the circumstances surrounding the person’s legal status and method of entering the country were covered. Finally, a probe for human trafficking, witness to or victimization of certain crimes, and domestic violence was made to discern eligibility for additional protections..

I co-interviewed a mother and daughter. The mother had crossed the US-Mexico border many years prior with her baby in her arms. This baby, now a grown woman with her own nursing baby sat in front of me answering questions about employment, criminal history, etc. She then translated for her mother who told the story of her arrival in the US, and her quiet, safe life, caring for her many grandchildren. We laughed together about babies and kids - three mothers who knew the joyful depths and unnerving challenges of childcare, but not in the same way. The weight of the uncertainty with which their family survives is chilling. My privilege became apparent, glaringly so. I am free to move through my community, enjoy my life, voice my opinions, defend my kids’ transgressions, irresponsibly mess up, and know my family’s future is reasonably safe, or at least its fate is pretty squarely in my hands. Only in witnessing the absence of this safety, certainty, and control, did I even think to register its presence in my life. This woman risks so much with every venture from her home. She could be ripped from her family at any time. She could live a good, moral life of loving and caring for her family and it wouldn’t matter. Her daughter, the DACA recipient, moves and works with more confidence than her mother, but her existence is still so confined. Any transgression could strip her of her status. The carelessness and freedom with which I exist were illuminated. The concept of immigration as an element of globalization went from being an intellectual exercise to possessing a face with a daughter and a granddaughter that she adores. I was struck by the real consequences of the Obama administration prioritized deporting people who were convicted of serious crimes during fiscal year 2016 while the Trump administration is taking a ‘catch all’ approach to deportation (Pierce, Bolter, & Selee, 2018). ***Cont. on next page.***

Opening Doors for Social Justice: Graduate Student Perspective (Continued)

Continued from previous page. Before the interviews, I came across these terms: U- and T-visas and had to ask Daniella what they mean. She explained with a sheepish smile, that being a victim of a crime could be an easy way in. It had never occurred to me there could be a 'bright side' to a rape or abuse. I hate that from the legal perspective, that was a 'great' finding. It occurred to me then, that one has to be in a pretty precarious spot to benefit from such victimization.

The United States Immigration policy under the Trump administration is taking measures to reduce incoming immigrants while increasing deportations. The tactics I was exposed to by the news and being outraged at the grand and illegal moves, were compounded by the additional knowledge of the more subtle policy changes. No one protests a reduction in refugee admission ceiling when kids are in cages. No one notices increased "green card" scrutiny when an entire religion is banned. No one notices the CAM program dismantlement when 700,000 Dreamers are facing deportation. (Pierce, Bolter, Selee, 2018).

EL SALVADOR: PEACETIME VIOLENCE

PUSH FACTORS

Gang Violence
Gang violence is ruthless and all-encompassing for Salvadorians. "Gangs kill, disappear, rape, or displace those who resist them, including government officials, security forces, and journalists" (HRW 2019).

Police Corruption
Extra judicial killings and impunity of legal and government corruption taint the reputation of the state. "Due to ineffective governmental institutions, corruption, and social acceptance, impunity reigns in nearly all cases of violence against women" (LAWG, 2016).

Medical System
Women are forced to carry all pregnancies to term, even in the cases of imminent death of the mother and non-viability of the fetus.

Economic Factors
Neoliberal trade policies usher in Maquiladoras or export-oriented manufacturing sites that employ women at low wages.

PULL FACTORS

Family
2.3 million El Salvadorans live in the USA

FEMICIDE
is a sex-based hate crime term, broadly defined as the intentional killing of females because they are females. El Salvador has the highest rate in the world.

Statistics

- ♦ Suicide accounts for 57 percent of the deaths of pregnant girls/women between the ages of 10 and 19 (LAWG 2016).
- ♦ There were more than 2000 documented cases of rape in a 10-month period of 2017.
- ♦ Between 8% and 10% of the population is involved in Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) or Barrio 18 (18th Street gang). The number of gang members exceeds the number of police officers by 8,000 people (CGI 8).
- ♦ The prison population is two to three times capacity and has been placed in a state of emergency by the El Salvadoran government (CGI 7).

EL Salvador has the world's highest murder rate.

In 2015 El Salvador had 103 homicides per 100,000 residents.

Honduras and Guatemala figure near the top of the global ranking, at about 57 and 52 deaths per 100,000 residents.

Average High and Very High Female Homicide Rates

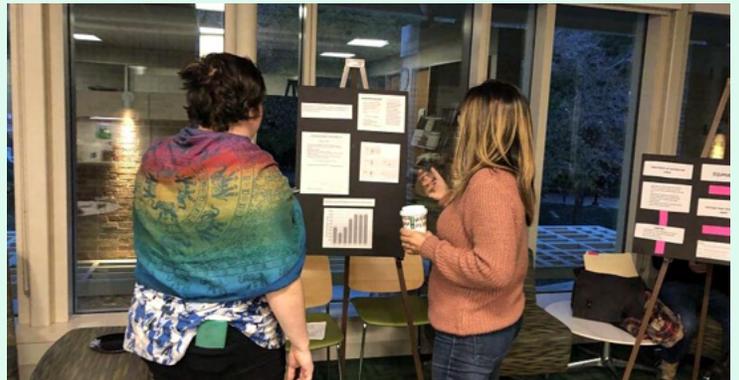
Country	Rate (per 100,000 women)
El Salvador	103
Honduras	57
Guatemala	52
Colombia	45
Kenya	40
India	35
South Africa	30
Other countries	10-30

THE NUMBER OF DEATHS

26,000
29,700

Langlitz country conditions project on El Salvador and peacetime violence

WGST Event Snapshots



Who We Are

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Maia Cudhea,
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Kristin Alder,
Adjunct Instructor



Kit Shattuck,
Program Coordinator



Leah Brooks-Hall,
Teaching Fellow & Graduate
Research Assistant

Mission:

The Women's and Gender Studies program at UNT promotes teaching, research, and outreach with a critical analytical focus aimed at interrogating gender-related stereotypes, especially as our identities intersect with sexuality, race, and ethnicity in a global context. Our program's interdisciplinary scholarship supports and sustains campus-wide discussions in areas including, but not limited to: global contexts, feminist approaches, women's social movements, feminist activism, and explorations of the connections among gender, class, ethnicity and race in social and cultural constructs.