Students, faculty, and staff from the Women’s Studies Program represented ETSU once again at the annual conference of the Southeastern Women’s Studies Association. Conference goers from colleges and universities in the nine-state region travelled to Hendrix Student Center at Clemson University to hear and present research on a wide range of theories and practices related to this year’s theme, “Transformations: Leading Change.”

ETSU Women’s Studies gained greater regional visibility through scholarly research on a range of interdisciplinary subjects/topics and through leadership roles occupied by our program administration. Undergraduate Women’s Studies major Pepper Heifner presented on bringing gender nonconformity back into the LGBTQ+ activism narrative, and graduate student Kara Russell from the Department of Literature and Language presented part of her thesis research on southern lesbian novelist, Bertha Harris. Rebecca Tolley, Women’s Studies Steering Committee member and faculty in Sherrod Library, moderated a collaborative roundtable presentation on practicing feminist pedagogy in program administration by Women’s Studies director Phyllis Thompson, assistant director Jennifer Grubbs, and executive aide Heidi Marsh. Phyllis Thompson transitioned from President-Elect to acting President of SEWSA while at this year’s conference and will lead the organization into next year by planning the upcoming conference and other association initiatives. Former Women’s Studies assistant director, Hilary Malatino, continued this year as the chair of SEWSA’s LGBTQ caucus, proposing the caucus theme and organizing movement-building activities for the group.

Attending SEWSA provided vital opportunities for professional development, particularly for our students. Kara Russell not only received a competitive travel grant from the organization which helped fund her research and travel, but while at the conference she was able to meet one of the few Bertha Harris scholars in the country. Kara said, “Dr. Jaime Harker from University of Mississippi attended my session and eagerly shared her own work on Harris as well as information about the resources her university could offer to support my scholarship. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity, and am already working on the abstract for next year.”

Next year’s SEWSA conference will be March 7-9 at the University of Mississippi’s Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies in Oxford. The theme “Envisioning a Feminist and Queer South” prompts scholars to consider the distinctive role of gender studies programs in the South in fostering interdisciplinary scholarship, social change, and the creation of inclusive spaces. We are looking forward to these crucial and revitalizing conversations!

Interested in presenting at SEWSA? Check out the Call for Papers at http://www.sewsa.net/clemson-general-cfp
Counselor Loren Biggs explained the principles of harm reduction (the prioritizing of less risky behavior) and emphasized that healthy drinking looks different for each individual. She discussed the differences in how the body processes alcohol based on factors like gender, weight, and drug use, then helped audience members calculate their personal drink count for staying under .08 BAC, which is the legal limit for consensual sexual activity or operating a vehicle. Biggs reminded us that BAC levels continue to rise after someone stops drinking, and being mindful of how quickly a person reaches .08 BAC could save a life.

Loren Biggs (ETSU Counseling Center)
Alcohol 101
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Epidemiologist Dr. Mildred Maisonet kicked off the semester with a discussion of her career in environmental health and contamination. Maisonet highlighted work done by women before her, as well as her own research, showing that contaminants have led to a decrease in fertility rates worldwide. She warns us that to avoid contaminants we should buy organic when possible, wash all produce with soap and water, and use glassware as opposed to plastic food containers.

Dr. Mildred Maisonet (Biostatistics and Epidemiology)
Environmental Contamination and Human Health: Does it Matter?
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Dr. Alison Deadman from the Department of Music reviewed some of the often overlooked contributions of women in music and encouraged the inclusion of female composers in both music history courses and textbooks. Obstacles like strict gender roles and lack of women's formal education contributed to unconventional compositions and melodies, leading to women's further marginalization in music survey courses. Deadman says that even though there are some women included, the examination of how these women overcame their disadvantages to learn music and become great composers is much needed.

Dr. Alison Deadman (Music)
Reclaiming Lost Voices: Women Musicians in Early Music
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Ceramics Professor Lindsay Rogers gave a brief history of food production and consumption to explain how modern convenient food has eroded cultural awareness of what we eat. In response, her recent bodies of work have been inspired by her research on the slow food movement, which advocates elevation of local sustainable food and small businesses. To this end Rogers has collaborated with farmers, chefs, and artists to create events that showcase the labors of growing, cooking, and creating, and has even led classes on digging and processing clay directly from the earth to encourage people to go local.

Lindsay Rogers (Art and Design)
Pottery, Food, and the Labor of Making Objects
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Dr. Diana Morelen (Psychology)
Mom Power: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences
Dr. Morelen discussed “Mom Power!” a program recently implemented in the Tri-Cities that helps prevent ACEs (adverse childhood experiences), which can lead to drug use, mental illness, and other obstacles in adulthood. Mom Power is a 10-week intervention program that provides trauma informed care for children while their mothers learn about resources and techniques for better parenting skills. Morelen encourages mothers to find a balance between being warm and nurturing, and being in control by setting boundaries.

Cara Harker from the Department of Theatre and Dance rounded out this year’s lecture series with a talk describing her process for creating dances, which includes drawing on everyday life for inspiration. Harker says one of the most rewarding aspects of choreographing dances is finding movements and arrangements that work for all performers in the dance who often have differing levels of ability and experience. She especially enjoys creating dances for ETSU student productions, and this semester she directed and choreographed Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play.

Cara Harker (Theater and Dance)
What Making Dances Means to Me
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Casey Wagner is an adjunct faculty member in the Women’s Studies Program. She recently completed the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies with a concentration in Gender and Diversity before teaching Introduction to Women’s Studies. Casey sat down to chat with Elizabeth Chapman, English MA student and research assistant.

Elizabeth Chapman: What made you decide to choose ETSU to study at the graduate level and what was that experience like?

Casey Wagner: I discovered feminism after having my daughter then decided I wanted to study feminism for a master’s degree. I didn’t really know where that would ever end up, but I wanted to enter some sort of career related to feminism. The closest thing I could find was Gender and Diversity studies in the Liberal Arts Program at ETSU. During that time, I got to take a Feminist Pedagogy class with Phyllis Thompson and at the same time co-teach an Intro to Women Studies class with Jill Leroy-Frazier. We learned about the philosophical aspect related to feminist pedagogy in class and then did the practical part in a classroom team teaching, and that is when I realized that’s what I want to do.

EC: What informs your pedagogy?

CW: The writings of bell hooks and Paulo Friere as well as my own lived experience. I feel that through my personal experiences I’ve really gained perspective of how I want to be in the classroom and the kind of presence I want to embrace.

EC: What are your main research interests?

CW: Ecofeminism is my primary area of interest, specifically environmental movements that are women-led. I studied the Greenbelt movement, which is located in Kenya and addresses issues related to being a postcolonial nation and environmental degradation caused by the colonial presence in the shift from subsistence to modern culture and agriculture.

EC: What interests do you have outside of ETSU?

CW: I have three children, so I do a lot of momming action, which I love. I also have a part-time landscaping business. For me, it’s the best of both worlds: I get to exercise my body and work hard outside creating beautiful things from the ground, and then I also get to come into the classroom and be stimulated by younger people, learning from them while engaging in my own mind which is really beautiful.

This interview was edited for length and clarity.
Faculty Scholarship

Presentations


Rebekah Byrd

Article

Book Chapters


Jill Leroy-Frazier

Presentation

Phyllis Thompson

Book Chapter:

Article

Women’s Studies Scholarship and Award Winners

Jaden Finch
Barbara Murphy Brooks Scholarship

Keyana Miller
Undergraduate Feminist Activist Award

Ruth Taylor Read
Graduate Feminist Activist Award

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Your donation allows the Women’s Studies Program to preserve the rich educational environment we have for our students. We appreciate and thank you for your generosity! To make a donation, please see the webpage above.

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