Greetings from the Chair

August 2019

Dear Alumni and Friends,

I am pleased to be writing my first Chair’s Message! As I begin my 30th year as a professor at UK, I look forward to working with students, faculty in the department and from around the university, alumni, staff, and administration to expand the role of Gender and Women’s Studies as an integral part of UK’s educational and research missions. GWS course offerings continue to expand, and enrollments are growing, providing more students with quality educational opportunities to engage with critical topics including gender, sexuality, race, class, disability, transnational issues, and intersectionality. Students on campus and through online courses from anywhere in the world can interact with our award-winning faculty and graduate student teachers. GWS classrooms, on campus and on the web, are dynamic environments of learning.

One of my most important jobs as chair is to support GWS faculty and graduate students as they create new knowledge to move forward our understanding of
essential topics of justice, equality, and lived experiences. This work is essential to our department and the university being recognized as leaders in the Commonwealth and our changing world. For example, the Comparative Perspectives on #MeToo Conference this past spring brought scholars to the UK campus from around the world to share their research and dialogue with students and faculty. The upcoming Kentucky Gender & Women's Studies Conference, organized by GWS Ph.D. students, will bring presenters from several other states to talk about their research and host critical discussions. These programs contribute to the active and contemporary scholarly environment at UK.

In this issue we look back with appreciation for those who have contributed to where we are as a department today, especially Professor Joan Callahan, who passed away on June 6: see former Chair Patty Cooper’s tribute, below. We also look forward to the contributions of our new faculty member, Professor Frances Henderson, and our first Postdoctoral Fellow, Abby Folberg. GWS will continue to work with the College of Arts & Sciences family to grow and help students flourish. A couple of great examples of this flourishing are the Tomasky Leaders Program and the new Sarah Caton Scholarship.

As I begin my tenure as Chair, I look forward to reconnecting with alumni and sharing the many accomplishments of GWS with you. Thank you for your enthusiasm for our vital work.

Sincerely,
Ellen D.B. Riggle, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Department of Gender and Women’s Studies

In Remembrance of Dr. Joan Callahan
By Patty Cooper, Ph.D.
Emerita Professor Joan Callahan (1946–2019) joined the UK Philosophy Department in 1986 and served as Director of the Women’s Studies Program (later renamed the Gender and Women’s Studies Program) from 1998 to 2002 and after a one-year sabbatical returned as Director from 2003 through 2007. She led the move to make GWS a department with a major and celebrated when both were established in 2009. She went on medical leave in early 2008 and retired in 2011.

Joan’s professional achievements were many. Here are only a few: The Society for Women in Philosophy named her Distinguished Woman Philosopher in 2007. She served on the Board of Officers of the American Philosophical Association and held several positions in FEAST (the Association for Feminist Ethics and Social Theory). She sat on the editorial boards of several journals, including Hypatia and The Journal of Social Philosophy. In 2010 she was inducted into the UK College of Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame, an honor that especially thrilled her. Never one for conventional attire, she wore a tuxedo and bowtie to the posh event held at Keeneland.

Joan was a bold and serious scholar specializing in feminist philosophy, social philosophy, and ethics, including biomedical ethics. She wrote scores of articles and four significant books: Ethical Issues in Professional Life; Reproduction, Ethics, and the Law; Menopause: A Midlife Passage; and Preventing Birth:
Contemporary Methods and Related Moral Controversies. Her research often sparked discussion far beyond the discipline of philosophy. She relished every debate about her ideas. Joan loved to think: her curiosity was off the charts.

UK students loved Joan because she was so honest, direct, kind, brilliant, and funny! From the outset, she was “out” to her students and used her own life and experiences to spark their thinking. Joan, an unabashed feminist, always stood strong for what she felt was right. She was very instrumental in getting UK to create a partner benefits program. One former A & S dean confided to others that Joan Callahan was his “conscience.” She showed up at plenty of demonstrations, testified before the Kentucky state legislature, wrote letters and articles related to feminism and justice, and refused to back down whenever patriarchal/racist behavior or speech reared its head on campus. So many colleagues and friends sought her counsel and support during rough times and her companionship in moments of triumph.

She and Nancy Tuana launched a Feminist Philosophers Oral Project in 2001, which later became the Feminist Philosophers: In the Own Words, a collection of in-depth video interviews now housed at Pennsylvania State University. They interviewed many of the Founding Mothers in feminist philosophy including Linda Alcoff, Susan Bordo, Sandra Harding, Alison Jaggar, and Sara Ruddick.

Joan had a wicked sense of humor. Her funny quips and observations could throw anyone into a fit of laughter in seconds. Many folks will still chuckle when remembering her rendition of Father Guido Sarducci or the crazy get-ups she’d wear to GWS parties complete with a mustache. She passionately loved animals including residents on her farm, i.e. horses, fish, dogs, cats, birds, and chickens. We had a GWS summer seminar one year, and she kept a rescued baby starling in her waist pack every day for two weeks, nurturing it back to health.

No description of Joan’s professional life is complete without Joan’s partner and wife, Jennifer Crossen. They each had their own accomplishments, but also collaborated to make good things happen. Together they hosted the Pride picnic for many years, and their home was the site of more potlucks and parties (many for UK folks) than one could possibly count. They parented their dear son, David Crossen, and dearly loved being grandparents to his two children. These two women made a remarkable and energetic pair.

Who was Joan Callahan? She was a ground breaking feminist scholar, strong and wise leader, playful companion, devoted wife and mother, and steadfast loving friend. I can only imagine how many friends, colleagues, former students, and family members are now grieving the loss of this extraordinary woman.

2018–2019 Tomasky Leaders
The Department of Gender & Women’s Studies is excited to introduce our first cohort of Tomasky Leaders! The Tomasky Leaders Scholarship Fund, which serves undergraduate students at the University of Kentucky, was established by Susan Tomasky (’74) to encourage students to engage in politics and public debate, to pursue higher office, and to lead activist lives.

The Tomasky Leaders scholarship recipients receive funding for registration and travel fees for leadership and activism trainings, seminars, conferences, and programs. The 2018-2019 Tomasky Leaders are:

**Rory Barron** (B.A., 2019) is a student activist at UK who has participated in many local organizations and attended the Civil Liberties and Public Policy (CLPP) conference with his Tomasky funds. He graduated with a major in Gender and Women’s Studies. His interests are in reproductive justice, queer history, and racial justice in the rural U.S. South.

**Erin Hoskins** is a senior at UK, studying English and Gender and Women’s Studies. Erin plans to attend law school in hopes of one day working on reproductive rights and other cases focused on helping our nation’s least represented, least privileged residents. With support from the Tomasky Fund, Erin was able to attend the Civil Liberties and Public Policy (CLPP) conference.

**Sebastiana Smith**, currently in her sophomore year, is an English major with a minor in political science on a pre-law track. Of her plans for the Tomasky award, Sebastiana said, “I want to offer the world new ideas to unsolved preexisting problems. I believe that the National Young Women’s Leadership Conference will provide me with networking opportunities to help bring my ideas to life, and show me what it means to be a successful woman in a leadership role.”

**Jasemine Jones** is a sophomore, double majoring in Neuroscience and Economics with a Sexuality Studies certificate. In her free time she plays the harp and has an applied study harp at UK. Like Sebastiana Smith, she used her scholarship funds to participate in the National Young Women’s Leadership Conference. “I am very passionate about reproductive justice and women’s health. I am so blessed and grateful to be a Tomasky leader and to be able to
A Young Alumna’s 10-Year Pledge to Establish the Space, Place & Southern Grace Scholarship
By Julie Wrinn

After nearly a decade of writing for the Internet, it’s safe to say that blogging is a way of life for Sarah Caton (GWS and Spanish ’16). What started in high school as a means of communicating in a new language—Spanish—eventually became a heavily trafficked lifestyle blog in English entitled “Space, Place & Southern Grace.” The new name was inspired by Caton’s Gender and Women’s Studies (GWS) coursework. “The name is a consideration of the voices of place and how geography impacts who you are and the identities you have,” she explained. “The southern aspect shows my ties and appreciation for Kentucky. I am from here and intend to live here my whole life.”

As a freshman Caton found herself in Professor Karen Tice’s course GWS: 250 about social movements, which became pivotal in her decision to major in GWS. “I realized very quickly that we were talking about real issues, right now. We
could have something on the syllabus, and some major world event would happen, and the syllabus didn't matter anymore. For me, as someone who was already blogging, I realized these are the conversations we need to be having.”

The Space, Place & Southern Grace blog really took off among Caton’s peers in 2013 when the craft-oriented social media site Pinterest picked up her post on fraternity cooler painting. Not aware of this tradition? Neither was Caton, who didn’t belong to a sorority herself at the time. But in preparing to attend her boyfriend’s spring formal at his fraternity, she learned about the practice from friends and ended up creating a step-by-step tutorial complete with photos of her own efforts. Fun and practical, the post exemplified Caton’s appeal, and from that point her blog steadily grew a larger readership. “While the post about coolers and similar ones about Greek life did launch my blog success,” Caton said, “some of what I covered and wrote at that time was somewhat contradictory to my work as a budding feminist.” Between her studies, interpersonal relationships, and overall professional growth, Caton began to understand barriers in society that reinforced marginalized identities, and her efforts to combat them took shape in her blog work.

By her senior year Caton was already feeling a desire to serve as a mentor and decided to write a book guiding women through the college experience from a feminist perspective. Entitled Lessons We Paid For, the book embraces feminism as a guiding philosophy for college success. As Caton writes, “By embracing feminism and choosing to consider a feminist perspective on various issues, I made decisions in college that best supported my well-being, respected those around me, and allowed me to develop a unique voice and platform from which I can share my experiences. Feminism doesn’t consume your life. Rather, feminist is an identity that shapes me to be a better version of myself, allows me to tackle injustices, and to make decisions on a micro level that can ultimately impact the macro.”

After graduation, Caton was able to leverage her longtime facility with computers into a full-time position as a Computer Support Specialist in the UK College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment. In addition to providing desktop computer system support, Caton utilizes her expertise in strategic communications is areas of web development, graphic design, and social media/strategic digital marketing for the Department of Community and Leadership Development and The Food Connection.

At the same time, Caton began offering local workshops geared towards women small business owners. “The classes centered around topics of core business functioning and logistics,” she explained, “but also blended into questions of how do you have confidence to do certain things. How do I elevate myself despite these identities that might be traditionally marginalized? The conversations in the workshops got pretty personal very quickly and stopped being about how do I start my business checking account and went into how do I reach the people that I’m like.” The demand for these courses was so great
that Caton decided she needed to write another book, This Little Thing I Do Sometimes, forthcoming in fall 2019.

Now Caton’s blog advertises a wide range of services, from business and lifestyle photography, to comprehensive brand review, digital strategy implementation, personalized business coaching, community and corporate workshops, and influencer marketing and product review. She credits her GWS coursework with helping her to find her voice. “I’m storytelling from an auto-ethnographic perspective. I want to be analytical but also interject my voice and my story in everything I share, anything from a product review to an experience I’m detailing or a vacation I’m sharing.”

Some of the expertise she shares in these workshops come from her own hands-on experience, but much also comes from her GWS courses. “My degree programs were all about communicating effectively with people. My academic studies were valuable to me because they helped me appreciate people for who they are, where they are, and to understand different identities that are unlike my own.” For her GWS thesis, Caton studied blogger relationships on the Internet and how they’re perceived, concluding that a feminist identity can significantly impact audience and readership.

With two thriving careers, Caton, has already turned her thoughts to giving back. “My intent with entrepreneurship is to live a comfortable, financially stable life, but what good is excess money if you can’t help other people and see the benefits of what you’ve worked for put into practice?” Caton decided to support students pursuing a GWS major, because her coursework in that department raised her own awareness of how meaningful feminism still is today. “We live in a somewhat conflicted society, about how we identify, how we talk about one another to one another. And I think a GWS education is essential to people speaking and forging meaningful relationships person to person.”

The Space, Grace & Southern Grace Scholarship will provide $1,000 to a rising junior majoring in GWS beginning in the 2019-20 academic year, and it will be awarded to a different recipient every year for the next decade. That long-term commitment was important to Caton: “There is a lot of good in one-time gifts, but that sustainability of setting up a program and seeing it through, and offering the mentorship component in addition to the financial means, is really a holistic approach to scholarship awards.”

Caton feels especially strongly about the importance of mentors in young people’s lives. “We have mentors tucked into every corner of our life, whether we realize it or not, whether the mentors know they’re our mentors or not. I think it’s important for every person to have informal and formal mentorship relationships established. Through this scholarship I hope to offer students that
Herself a beneficiary of financial support and extra advising through the highly competitive merit scholarship program at UK known as the Singletary Scholars, Caton wants to extend those same opportunities to GWS majors. “I had that built-in level of support that a lot of students don't come in with. GWS houses students who don't feel like they fit in in a lot of other majors, and I found myself there. Because of that, I feel like GWS majors deserve a little bit more attention.”

GWS Awards Day

Thanks to the generosity of alumni and friends, the department is able to reward demonstrated excellence among its students by supporting their future scholarship in a variety of ways. Donating to a departmental award is one of the easiest ways for alumni and friends to make a significant impact on our students’ success. Congratulations to the following recipients:

**2019 Bonnie Jean Cox Graduate Research Awards:** Ruwen Chang, Mikaela Feroli, Alina Hechler, Mel Lesch, and Payton Moore

*The Bonnie Jean Cox Graduate Research Award was established in 2001 by Bonnie Jean Cox to help support travel and research directly related to graduate students’ doctoral research in Gender and Women’s Studies.*

**2019 Jan Oaks Feminist Creativity Award:** Allison Tracy

*The Jan Oaks Feminist Creativity Award was established in 2016 in memory of Dr. Jan Oaks and awards excellence and creativity in feminist studies in the humanities.*

**2019 Joan Callahan Award for Scholastic Achievement:** Meg Coppala

*Given in honor of Joan Callahan, this award recognizes an undergraduate major or minor in Gender & Women's Studies for outstanding achievement in scholarship.*
2019 Kate Black Award for Activism: Michelle Kuiper

Given in honor of Kate Black, this award recognizes outstanding achievement as a scholar and an activist in an undergraduate major or minor in Gender & Women's Studies.

GWS Honors: Paige Adkins, Meg Coppala, Molly Rush, Leslie Smith, and Allison Tracy

GWS graduate certificate awardees: Ana Alvarez Guillen, Kathryn McClain, Jennifer L. Murray, Sandra Nava Nieto, and Elisa Sperandio

College of Arts & Sciences Dean's Competitive Graduate Fellowship: Ashley Ruderman

Spotlight on new faculty: Frances Henderson & Abby Folberg

The Gender & Women's Studies Department is delighted to welcome Associate Professor Frances Henderson in the fall. Dr. Henderson will be joining us from Maryville College (TN). She specializes in comparative politics, social movements, women’s movements, critical feminist theory, and intersectionality. Her work has been featured in Transforming Anthropology: The Journal of the Association of Black Anthropologists and Black Subjects in Africa and Its Diasporas: Race and Gender in Research and Writing, with titles such as “Black Rural Lives Matter: An Ethnography of an Anti-Racist Christian Organization in the U.S. South” and “(African–) American Woman Outsider: Nationality, Race and Gender in Field Research in Mozambique”.

Please welcome GWS’s first postdoctoral fellow! Abigail Folberg will be joining the department in August after being awarded a University Research Postdoctoral Fellowship. Abby will be working with faculty member Jenn Hunt in GWS, as well as with faculty member Chris Marshburn in the Psychology department. Abby earned her Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Nebraska, Omaha. Her dissertation examined people’s willingness to tolerate sexism in others, and how tolerance of sexism related to different motivations, such as justifying gender inequality and avoiding masculinity threat. Abby also studies
how gender affects experiences in the work force across cultural and national contexts. In addition, Abby has strong interests in measurement and statistics. Abby is excited to join the community of feminist scholars at UK.

**Faculty Achievements**

UK Faculty Members
Cristina Alcalde and Jennifer Hunt
Appointed to US Commission on Civil Rights State Committee

Congratulations to Cristina Alcalde and Jennifer Hunt, who were both appointed to serve as members of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Kentucky Advisory Committee.

**GWS Recognized at Inclusive Excellence Awards**

The Gender and Women’s Studies Department was awarded a UK Office of Institutional Diversity Inclusive Excellence Award in April 2019 for programming and service.

**Staff Achievements**
Michelle Del Toro was presented an Outstanding Staff Award by the College of Arts and Sciences. The award is a well-deserved recognition of Michelle's effectiveness, efficiency, and kind and generous spirit. Congratulations Michelle!

**Save the Date: 3rd Annual Kentucky Gender & Women's Studies Conference**

The 3rd Annual Kentucky Gender & Women’s Studies Conference will be Saturday, September 28, 2019, in the Bill Gatton Student Center at the University of Kentucky.

The conference provides an intellectually stimulating space where participants can express and exchange thoughts about classic academic arguments and contemporary political disputes. This year’s conference theme is “TransBorders—Foggy Boundaries, Fuzzy Binaries,” with the aim to dismantle various material and conceptual borders, exploring and broadening the space of in-betweenness—existences beyond and across borders. The term “border”
can be understood quite broadly, including but not limited to gender and sex binaries, racial differences, class boundaries, national borders, and all forms of difference-making, and how these differences are created and upheld—discursively, politically, socially, legally.

Please join us for a day featuring thematic panels of papers, workshops, and poster presentations created by undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, activists, and community members from UK and other colleges and universities (including international visitors). For more information, please visit http://kygws.as.uky.edu

**Opportunities to Support GWS**

You can invest in the future of the Gender & Women’s Studies Department and support the next generation of scholars with a contribution to our program. You can also make your gift in honor of or memory of a friend, relative, or faculty member. Please designate your donation to an area of your choice, or you can direct your gift to the Department’s greatest needs.

The Gender & Women’s Studies Development Fund provides critical resources to respond to student needs, attract and support world-class faculty, and provide innovative opportunities to enable our students to compete in the global marketplace.

A gift to the Gender & Women’s Studies Development Gift Fund can be made online at http://www.as.uky.edu/givetoas and click on the Gender & Women’s Studies Development Gift Fund button.

Gifts can be mailed to:
University of Kentucky Gift Receiving
210 Malabu Drive, Suite 200
Lexington, KY 40502

For questions, please contact Debra Gold (Debra.Gold@uky.edu) or (859) 257-8124.

**KEEP IN TOUCH**
Please let us know if your email address changes or if you have any news or ideas for the next newsletter.
Email Gender & Women’s Studies Department Manager Michelle Del Toro at michelle.deltoro@uky.edu.