SPRING 2018 - NEWSLETTER
THE PROGRAM FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN AND GENDER

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DIDN’T GET ENOUGH IN CLASS?
SWG PROFESSOR’S SUMMER RECOMMENDATIONS

Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism.
Students can read all the back issues through JSTOR. We also have hard copies of every issue in our Meridians offices at Hensshaw B2 that we would be happy to lend out to interested students. They should be in touch with Leslie Aguilar, our phenomenal Editorial Assistant, at meridians@smith.edu if they’d like to come browse our library. I particularly recommend the special issues on Harriet Tubman (v. 12, n. 2) and the one on #BlackGirlActivism (v. 15, n. 1).

Nancy MacLean, Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right’s Stealth Plan for America
In her national bestseller Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires of the Radical Right, New Yorker journalist Jane Mayer showed us how a network of wealthy people led by multibillionaires Charles and David Koch have taken over the Republican Party, Congress and many state legislatures. Their goals? To lower their taxes, shrink government, and transfer public functions to the private market. They want to deregulate business, including the elimination of civil rights protections, public health and environmental regulations, privatize government institutions like public schools and prisons, and eliminate welfare programs like Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and food assistance. But these programs are deeply popular with the American public, so how do these billionaires plan to achieve their goals? By undermining democracy, argues Duke historian Nancy MacLean in her recent book Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right’s Stealth Plan for America, MacLean unearths the roots of the Koch network’s anti-democratic strategies in the 1950s school desegregation fights and dissects strategies they developed over six decades to alter every branch of government to undermine the ability of the majority to use its numbers to level the playing field between the rich and powerful and the rest of us.

Kadji Amin, Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History (Duke, 2017)
This book focuses on the contemporary queer idealization of the French radical gay writer Jean Genet, and exposes how this idealization is actually not very faithful to Genet's intellectual and activist legacy. Genet (in)famously glorified the juvenile detention camps where he first experienced the inter-generational sexuality and homosexual bullying he would later write about in his first novels. In the second part of his life, he dedicated himself to solidarities with Black Panthers and Palestinian fighters, solidarities which he also eroticized. Amin argues convincingly that idealization is not the optic with which to best understand, and learn from figures like Genet in contemporary times.
Daina Ramey Berry, The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grace in the Building of a Nation (Beacon, 2017)

Daina Ramey Berry measures the value of life and death at one hub of the transatlantic slave economy, the American colonies. Berry details how the labor of enslaved and dispossessed people created American wealth, technology, industry and infrastructure. From birth to burial, Berry asks questions that unravel the myth that capitalism as an economic system ever promoted self-made wealth.


As theories of rhizomatic organizing proliferate, what better object for study than the matsutake mushroom? This third book in Tsing's trilogy about globalized ecologies of the present is written in a meditative, even wandering form. Tsing draws together people and places around the world through the trade and consumption of this particular fungi. Perhaps my favorite parts of this book lie in her discussions of the future-seeking worlds of mushrooms: of symbiosis, reproduction, and collaboration as survival. As the summer begins, redolent organic matter seems a perfect place to imagine the heterogeneity necessary for renewal in the face of environmental despair.

Rafia Zakaria, The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan, (Beacon, 2015)

Two lives and two deaths entangle the story of modern Pakistan told by journalist Rafia Zakaria. Using the survival of her uncle on the day of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's murder, Zakaria begins her book about how Pakistan emerged from independence in 1947. From a Konkan family that emigrated to the new nation in 1947, Zakaria also tells about the her aunt, the upstairs wife of the book's title. The social death of her aunt, who first sought divorce then returned to her husband's home with another wife, meets the rise of Benazir Bhutto who became the first woman prime minister of Pakistan. Zakaria revels in the minutiae of daily life as impacted by political violence. The effect is a book that is hard to put down, and the details of the modern Pakistani state take new form.

Karl Marx, Grundrisse, (1858;1939)

Since the book wasn't published until the mid-twentieth century, its political relevance is sometimes surprising. Imagined as a book about Marxism that could include anti-capitalism of all stripes, Grundrisse fostered powerful debates about what could come after capitalism.


At the end of a long day, Weeks is fun to read. She says things like 'postwork' and doesn't just mean the four hours between clocking out and sleeping. Rather than postwork, what Weeks argues for is antiwork. As she argues, since finance capitalism doesn't draw its wealth from the stolen work by people (industrial capitalism) and instead creates wealth through the pyrotechnics of financial, technical and intellectual property, then let's not work. Antiwork.


Currently I am reading Sara Richardson's highly engaging essay "Sexing the X: How the X Became the "Female Chromosome." She traverses the constrictive and sometimes hilarious sexism of scientific narratives about chromosomes. Angela Willey, one of the editors of this volume, will be teaching a course in feminist science studies for SWG next fall.
DIDN'T GET ENOUGH IN CLASS?  
SWG PROFESSOR’S SUMMER RECOMMENDATIONS

Originally published in 1981, this mixed-genre anthology of poetry, prose, memoir, theory, etc. is one of most influential feminist collaborative publications to emerge in the twentieth century. Women of color published anthologies like this through their own publishing collectives in the 1970s and 1980s, to create new spaces for knowledge production, provide tools for consciousness raising and community building, and build solidarity and understanding across lines of difference. If you haven't yet read this in any of your courses, be sure to read it over the summer. It's a must-read for everyone interested in women's and gender studies.

This book includes a reprinting of the original statement from 1977 (which remains one of the most influential feminist documents) alongside interviews with the founding members of the collective as well as current activists. Together they reflect on the history of the collective and make visible the expansive radical political cultures that helped to shape and emerged from this group of radical black lesbian activist-writers.

I rec. Leanna Betasamosake Simpson's "The Accident of being Lost" (2017) a collection of short pieces that are smart, thoughtful and often funny. She also has amazing videos that connect her poetry to music and visuals (and directed by Native and First Nation individuals). I like it paired with her recent "As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance" (2017) because it considers what Indigenous resurgence looks like.

I want to talk about the dystopian movie "The Girl with All the Gifts" (2016) forever. I like the book (2014) as well. While the book explores Pandora's box more fully, the young black protagonist Melanie in the film is so spectacularly good. Although a zombie movie, it makes me think about the symbiotic relationship between humans and plants and new possible futures.

Meray's a+e 4ever is a beautifully drawn graphic novel about Asher and Eulalie as they negotiate their trans/genderqueer/queer teenage years. As a graphic novel it has more of a punk versus comic book aesthetic, transcends the normal grid pattern, and uses grammertext (lettering) and shading to convey the angst of being young and trying to figure out where you fit in the world. The characters deal with difficult issues such as: bullying, first time sexual encounters, being in love with your best friend, fear of being touched and the confusion of not knowing what to call oneself. It is a friend love story but everything is complicated.


Also Octavia Butler always!
FEATURED WORK FROM OUR GRADUATING SENIORS

EMILY CARLSON

Emily is a graduating SWG major and an Archives concentrator, whose work is primarily focused on exploring documentations of queerness in the media and historic record. In her spare time, she makes a lot of zines.

“This is a series of letters written to people and places that have been influential in developing my understanding of queerness. The letters are both to figures who I know personally and to others who I have never met but have been important to me, be it because of their art, writing, or activism.”

To Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, Stormé de Laverie, and all the others involved with the beginning of queer liberation movements,

I am a great believer in the necessity of knowing the beginnings of things; without that, I don't think there is any way of understanding where we are now, or where we will go. And you have been the beginning of something. But more importantly, you continue to be something. Your actions have shaped lives, changed histories, and your work is still present and necessary.

We owe so much to you, and it frustrates me to no end that that seems to be so frequently forgotten. I go to Pride every summer and feel cheated watching people cheer on banks, police officers, and corporations. I need the event to be something better, something true to honor your rebellion. Pride should be about fighting back, fighting for those of us who are the most vulnerable. Pride should be about knowing where we came from. Pride should be about protection, respect, rage, and love, so much fucking love.

Thank you for emphasizing the importance of taking care of each other and for continuously putting your money where your mouth is. Your work and your words make me want to do better by my people. Because what’s the point, if my friends, my family aren't safe? I want to protect them and make the world a better place. Thank you for being a reminder that not only is that a possibility, but a necessity.

Your work and your lives have allowed me to exist as the person I am today, and I will always be thankful for that.

With all the love and gratitude in my heart,
Emily
Dear Smith College Archives,

The need to find myself and others like me is an ever-present thing in the archives. I am continuously so grateful to have access to such a large, interesting amalgamation of lives and stories. To think that I can read about people who I never otherwise would have been aware of! The meticulousness of record-keeping enthralls me and keeps me coming back for more.

You've been an inspiration and a consideration in my own attempts to create and maintain my story. When I journal, I find myself writing to future historians. There's a certain self-consciousness in it, a performativity which I am still making my peace with. But I think of all the people of antiquity who are presumed to have been straight, and hesitations turn to dust. I write about my queer pilgrimage to New York, I write about queer readings for class, I write queer confessional about sex and romance and love. Every other page or so I toss in a “GOD I FEEL SO GAY” to make sure no one can ever forget this about me.

Someday these diaries may end up in the archives – a fitting end and a very meta set of records – and I hope that they end up helping some future Smith student years after my death. It's very weird to think about what will be left of me after I am gone, but I think that if even just one person reads my sad gay diary and thinks, “god, me too,” that will be enough. I want to speak through time to someone who needs it, want to reassure them that Smith is survivable. That mental illness is terrible but can be lived with; that break-ups and disappointments won't hurt forever; that love and other good things in life are ever-present if you are able to stop and look for them. I want to be somebody's Mary Mather, want to bring comfort, connection, and clarity from a different time and place.

I am grateful for the role that you have played in my time at this institution, and I look forward to leaving and finding myself in places and papers for the rest of my life.

Best,
Emily
SPRING SEMESTER PICTURES!

Sammi Stolar & Sarah Evan present their SWG Honors Theses:
Sammi on Disability in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale and J.M. Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians. And Sarah's on Physician Attitudes in Treating Commercial Sex Workers.

Inaugural SWG Senior Dinner!

From the panel event "Only 3% Are Women? Diversifying Construction at Smith."
SPRING SEMESTER PICTURES!

DEAN SPADE AND MISS MAJOR TALKING AT SMITH. MODERATED BY SWG PROFESSOR JENNIFER DECLUE - MARCH 30/31

SWG PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

JENNIFER GUGLIELMO AND MICHELLE JOFFROY won a $1 million grant to pursue research on the history of domestic worker organization. They are working with the National Domestic Worker’s Alliance and Mata Hari in Boston.


LIZ PRYOR appeared on the local Springfield television station WGBY’s program Connecting Point with Carrie Saldo about teaching racist language,

CARRIE BAKER published “Challenging Narratives of the Anti-Rape Movement’s Decline” in the journal Violence Against Women with a related podcast and won the SGA teaching award this year.
FEATURED WORK FROM OUR GRADUATING SENIORS

REBECCA YORK

Pieces made by Rebecca York ('18) as part of the final project for SWG seminar, Documenting Queer Lives based on a self-generated prompt “write and draw for 30 minutes every day leading up to graduation.”

April 14

I don’t know what to do for this project. I thought that just adding another comic to my rep for the semester would be a lot easier or maybe straightforward (!) than it has been.

But for some reason the thought of creating content is directly linked to my personal experience... awful.

I’ve been listening to Tegan and Sara again. It’s amazing how much this show has grown on me in the last year (academic year). I don’t think I ever be able to listen to “Wasting” without remembering sitting on a bench in the snow at Hampshire, waiting for the 10:10 pm bus, like, maybe 2016?

But back to the comics, I think I’m afraid of misrepresenting my friends; or maybe presuming too much, recognizing my life actually reflects, influences, etc., on theories I’m supposed to be working with & thinking on, which is ridiculous because theory has such a profound & all encompassing influence on my life.

Waiting something/knowing some/3

seeing something/something moving something moving from without a name - what do you call a man like that? Bridget
FEATURED WORK FROM OUR GRADUATING SENIORS

REBECCA YORK

APRIL 22

THINGS I DID TODAY:

1. Work up @ 6:00 am, showered & dressed.
2. Ran H.C.
3. Finished cleaning room.
4. Talked to dad for almost an hr.
5. Wrote assignment for Fugikawa.
6. Now I'm going to bed.

(6. Read on in little fires everywhere & I love Celeste's smile!)
FALL 2018 SWG CLASSES

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF WOMEN AND GENDER
SWG 150
T Th 1:00 PM-2:20 PM
TTh 10:30-11:50

THE QUEER '90S
Jennifer M. DeClue
SWG 200
T Th 1:00 PM-2:50 PM

GENDER, LAW AND POLICY
Carrie N. Baker
SWG 222
M W F 11:00 AM-12:10 PM

Feminist and Queer Disability Studies
Jina Boyong Kim
SWG 227
M W 1:10 PM-2:30 PM

Methodologies of Gender Studies
Elisabeth Armstrong
SWG 250
W F 9:00 AM-10:20 AM

Feminist Science Studies: Postcolonial, Posthuman, Queer
SWG 234
M 1:10 PM-4:00 PM

Women Against Empire
Elisabeth Armstrong
SWG 318
Th 3:00 PM-4:50 PM

Sexual Harassment and Social Change
Carrie N. Baker
SWG 333
T 1:00 PM-4:00 PM

AND CHECK OUT OUR MANY CROSS-LISTED COURSES!
HTTPS://WWW.SMITH.EDU/SWG/COURSES_CROSS.PHP

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WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SMITHSWG/