

SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

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A FEW WORDS FROM OUR CHAIR

Welcome to the spring 2015 edition of the Gender and Women's Studies newsletter! Our first year as a department is almost over, and it has been an excellent one. Congratulations to our fourteen graduating minors for their hard work and their contributions to the department. A special thank-you goes to Nia Parillo, one of the directors of Michiana Monologues 2015, and Payton Moore, who has been an effective contributor to panel discussions about *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *The Hunting Ground*.

The department put its travel fundraiser to good use last month, when Professor Sonalini Sapra, Payton Moore, and Bri O'Brien attended New Articulations/New Translations: Feminist Research Activism, a conference sponsored by the University of Michigan's Institute for Research on Women & Gender. We intend to have another fundraiser next year, which again will not be a bake sale and will not include me completing a marathon.

Good luck with the end of the semester, and have a wonderful

summer holiday!

All the best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stacy".

Stacy Davis, associate professor, religious studies, and GWS chair

Inside this issue:

Student-written articles on Global Women's Leadership and taking GWS courses abroad
Recaps of recent GWS panels, "Godly But Gay" and "50 Shades of Nope"

50 Shades of Nope panel

Tera Cuskaden, an editor of romance novels at Samhain Publishing in South Bend, Connie Adams, Director of BAVO, and Payton Moore, a senior and Gender and Women's Studies minor, presented critiques of 50 Shades of Grey and the recent movie release as abusive storylines. The three provided audience goers - of which there were between 50-60 students, faculty, and staff - with close readings of passages from the book, and a comparison and contrast between the relationship of characters in the book and other romance novels that explain BDSM.

The panelists discussed themes of stalking, controlling behavior, and the protagonist Christian Grey's continual violations of Anastasia's trust and personal safety. Cuskaden discussed the ways in which real world BDSM relationships involve more discussion about role-playing and Connie Adams discussed patterns of abuse noted in a range of scenes and interactions. Moore also addressed consent in the book and the ways in which consent still leads to violence in scenes that are eroticized.



Cuskaden, Adams, and Moore on “50 Shades of Nope” panel, Feb 19th, sponsored by GWS and Feminists United.

A STUDENT'S JOURNEY IN FEMINIST ACTIVISM

Last summer, I was honored to be a student participant in Saint Mary's Study of the U.S. Institute (SUSI). This program centers on Global Women Leadership and aims to help women around the world develop leadership and intercultural communication skills. Through this program, Saint Mary's hosted 20 women from the Middle East and North Africa; these countries included: Egypt, Iraq, Kurdistan, Libya, Jordan, and Tunisia. In addition, four Saint Mary's students were able to participate alongside these women in the course for academic credit.

At the end of the 5-week course, the students from each country developed an action plan promoting women leadership that they would implement. The Jordanian delegation developed the idea for SheCab through the creation of their action plan. SheCab would be a female-driven taxi company that provides safe, public transportation for women in Amman who are being sexually-harassed in male-driven taxis.

Because the team successfully secured a start-up grant through the State-Department, Emily Beaudoin,



who was a fellow Saint Mary's SUSI student, and I were granted the opportunity to join two Saint Mary's faculty members to Amman, Jordan. This was an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that allowed us to experience Jordanian culture and lend support to our SUSI sisters.

I firmly believe in their SheCab mission. Women leaders not only identified an issue in their community, they are finding a solution. They are finding and sparking confidence in others. At our reception dinner at the end of the trip, I met three of the future SheCab drivers. One of the many inspirational moments for me on this trip was hearing about their past and how it influenced their decision to join SheCab. Most of

these women have experienced first-hand the need for safer public transportation for women. They are the bread-winners for their family. These women are not only investing their time in SheCab, they are also investing the faith that this company will help other women just like them.

At Saint Mary's and at Notre Dame, Emily and I hope to show this faith and support of our SheCab friends. We started laying down the groundwork for our "SheCab Funding Initiative." It is our goal to raise funds for our women leaders in Jordan to help further their mission. Since Saint Mary's is an all-women's college, it is our duty to help support female entrepreneurship and promote women's safety. I plan to

work through Saint Mary's Circle K to raise awareness for SheCab and get support through various fundraising initiatives. It is an honor to be able to help the SheCab team on their journey.

The SUSI program has been one of the most important aspects of my education. This program has made it possible for me to experience new cultures and be profoundly inspired by women leaders around the world. I feel fortunate to have been able to watch, from the very beginning, the Jordanian delegation begin to develop and implement their dreams.
– Eleanor Jones

Studying sexuality and gender in Ireland

While in Ireland, I decided to take Sociology of Sexuality and Gender and Sex in the Celtic World. Sociology of Sexuality is a fascinating class that discusses the stigmas around sexuality in Irish society. We have talked a lot about the ways in which Ireland differs from the rest of the world in how they treat sexuality and we have also tried to figure out what has happened socially, that causes this taboo around sex and sexuality. In my Gender and Sex course, we step away from present day society, and go back thousands of years to look at the lives of early Celtic women. Since there are very few named women in ancient Celtic texts, we base most of our theories and assumptions about gender relations in Celtic society on both law and religious texts. Through the laws, we are able to see that while Celtic women had more rights in marriage than other women at the time period, they were still victims of harsh laws that repressed them in both marriage, and family life.

While I'm learning a lot in my classes, I am finding that I learn much more about gender relations in Ireland by observing the culture I find in classrooms and social events that I attend. Ireland has been a good opportunity for me to learn about gender issues in another country. I'm very thankful for this because I have now seen first hand how women in a different country can have different struggles and means of oppression, while still being so similar to me and the struggles that I face as an American woman.

Kylie Garabed



Godly but Gay

In January, local writer and activist Joel Barrett gave a talk at Saint Mary's titled, "Godly but Gay," sharing his life experiences overcoming ex-gay therapy. Joel grew up in a religious Baptist family in the Midwest, became a Baptist pastor, married a woman and had three children, and then spent three years with a therapist who promoted ex-gay therapy.

After realizing there were no "success stories" in ex-gay therapy, Joel left therapy and his job and finally, his wife, coming out to all of his colleagues, friends and family.

Joel said that he began to develop authentic relationships with people after this change, and coming out is a decision that he never regretted. "I don't believe in ex-gay therapy," he said. "While it didn't hurt me, a lot of people have recanted it or come out with books that it did a lot of damage."

Joel married his partner David in 2013 after having been together for 7 years.

On his website, www.joelspeaksout.com, he discusses marriage equality along with other local and national social issues.

