LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR,
DR. ELAINE PARSONS

It has been an exciting year at the Women’s and Gender Studies Center. We had a full and excellent calendar of speakers on our theme, “Saints: Holy and Secular.” From Lisa Tetrault’s talk on the apotheosis of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, which launched the series in the Fall, to our final speaker, Robert Ellsberg, who spoke to us in March about the subversive power of female saints, our talks have been universally excellent and well-attended.

Socially, we held a monthly Red Ring get-together, where faculty and graduate students gathered informally. On two of these occasions, we had the opportunity to bring “book cakes” to celebrate new books published by faculty members Elisabeth Vasko and Laura Engel. We also had a new event for Undergraduate students, a “Pop-up Museum” of saints organized by Alima Bucciantini.

Next year, our theme will be “The Body.” Anyone who would like to volunteer to be part of next year’s series, or to volunteer a colleague, should be in touch with me! We are also planning a series of events around next Fall’s synod of women and the family. Thanks to Jim Bailey and John Lane for their work on that. Again, please step forward if you would like to be a part of that.

I wanted to take this moment to thank Dr. Ann Vinski for her dedicated and excellent work for the last three years as our graduate assistant. To say that the center would not have been able to do what we did without her is very much an understatement. I can’t believe she’s leaving! I hope you will join me in wishing her well as she launches into the world.

Our new graduate assistant, Rachel McCarren, an incoming MA student in the English department, will begin in the Fall.
In a fascinating lecture on January 23, Dr. Sarah Miller presented her research on the connection between medieval views of female sanctity and body fluids. There were 21 people in attendance, both faculty and students, from a variety of disciplines. Miller focused her talk on menstruation and lactation, and she explained that classical and medieval accounts of women’s physiology differed significantly from our contemporary understanding. That female body fluids were dangerous was generally accepted, although there were various interpretations of how and when it posed a threat.

At the same time, in the Middle Ages, holy women often experienced miraculous “seepage,” which included such phenomena as bleeding from stigmata and miraculous lactation. In this way, female saints exhibited physiological events that were considered holy, even though this contradicted the medical ideology of their day. Miller concluded her talk with a discussion of the implications these ideas had for medieval Christology and Mariology. We are grateful to Dr. Miller for sharing her intriguing work with us!

On Friday, January 29, students and faculty gathered in the NiteSpot to display and view objects that spoke of sainthood to them. Dr. Alima Bucciantini was the organizer and facilitator of the event that featured holy and secular saints. The objects were varied and included prayer cards, rosaries, and statues, as well as original artwork, photographs, and the bust of a revered former U.S. president. Those people who spent time viewing the displays were challenged to expand their idea of sanctity in the sacred and secular realms. Thanks to all who participated, and in particular to Dr. Bucciantini for guiding this exciting and mind-broadening event!
**Divine Textualization:**
**The Writing of Maria**

Why were some physical wounds interpreted as stigmata in fifteenth-century Spain? Using the metaphor of writing, Dr. Boncho Dragiyski explored this question in his lecture on February 20. He explained that male ecclesiastical authorities, or “readers” needed to recognize Christ as the author of a person’s wounds before those wounds would be considered stigmata. In order to make this assessment, the authorities also must accept that the message of divine favor can be bestowed through physical ailments, and that a particular person can bear this message. Maria de Toledo (d. 1489) was the specific person whose story Dragiyski explored in this edifying presentation encompassing history, theology, and hermeneutics. Our thanks to Dr. Dragiyski for sharing his research with us!

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**Who Are Our Saints? Building a National Pantheon in the Modern Museum**

Not all national museums share the same mission, but all of them reflect which people and objects a nation holds up at any given time as being worthy of “reverence,” that is, who the nation views as (secular) saints. On March 13, Dr. Alima Bucciantini delivered a lecture to more than 25 people in which she made the case that the way museum objects are displayed serves both to indicate the level of importance they hold for those on the museum staff and to communicate this importance to visitors. Because museums were historically operated by people with power, the objects displayed reflect the values of the ruling group that enshrined them. Therefore, one of the questions in Museum Studies today is how to include the aspects of a nation’s history that are often missing from museums, in particular the experience of women and minorities. Many thanks to Dr. Bucciantini for her informative presentation!
The Women’s and Gender Studies’ 2014-2015 speaker series, “Saints: Holy and Secular,” culminated on March 26 with a presentation by Robert Ellsberg, publisher and editor at Orbis Books. Before a group of 100 people, Ellsberg provided an historical overview of feminine sanctity in the Catholic Church. His presentation illustrated the ways in which female saints—from biblical times through those who strive for holiness today—claim their own identity over against the patriarchal definitions of who and what they should be. Many women saints have excelled at showing that embracing the depths of everyday experiences can be a powerful means toward holiness.

If you would like to learn more about women saints, check out Ellsberg’s book Blessed Among All Women: Women Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for our Time (Crossroads Publishing Company, 2005). We thank Mr. Ellsberg for sharing his work and insights with us!

This event was sponsored by the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies, the McAnulty College NEH Endowment, and the Department of History.

On March 11, faculty and students gathered in the Power Center Ballroom to engage with Dr. Godriver Odhiambo, History Department, LeMoyne College, as she presented a talk on the role of women in the Sudanese war for independence. The Sudanese war lasted 55 years, and during that time, women participated in the struggle in multiple ways. Some women fought as soldiers; others delivered food and supplies to the soldiers. Some women provided traditional health care to those on the battle lines; other women functioned as military spies or musical performers. Although the war for independence has officially ended, generations of Sudanese people grew up in a war zone, and as a result, there are a number of “new war zones” in Sudan today. Odhiambo passionately explained that illiteracy, sexual violence, early marriage, and violations of human rights are the front lines of battle on which women are now fighting.

Our thanks to Dr. Odhiambo for sharing her expertise with us!

This event was sponsored by the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies, the McAnulty College NEH Endowment, the Department of History, and the Center for African Studies.
Please tell us a little about yourself. Where are you from originally? Was there anything about studying in Scotland that was particularly formative for you as an academic?

I am originally from small town Maine, and then went to Mount Holyoke College, in western Massachusetts. Being in the wonderful environment of a women’s college really let me come into my own as an academic and as a person. I was a Critical Social Thought major in college, which was an interdisciplinary program that let you design your own set of classes in order to answer a question that you had about the world. Mine was concerned with how and why we have national identities, and what impact they have on the world, so I took history, geography, area studies, economics, women’s studies…pretty much anything that engaged with the history and impact of national identity.

And then I discovered that the University of Edinburgh had a Masters Program in Nationalism Studies. That’s pretty rare. There are about three other programs in the world, so when they offered me funding, I jumped at the chance to go. Originally I only meant to stay for the one-year Masters, but then I started working on the idea of museums as spaces of national identity formation, and was offered funding in the history department to continue to a PhD. My whole academic journey is being in the right place at the right time and being lucky enough to find what I love to do.

Being in Scotland was an accident, but it did shape my academic project, as the National Museum of Scotland is one of the only in the western world to be opened in the modern era, allowing a comparison between it and all the museums that came before. It is also in an amazing country that has a rich national identity, but is in the unique situation of being within the British state. So, it was a fantastic place to end up as a scholar interested in nationalism. Also, the Scots are so friendly and Edinburgh is so small that it was easy to make connections that led to work in the Museum. I would not trade my seven years there for anything.

How do you approach the study of museums through the lens of women’s and gender studies?

Often in museums I am looking at what is left out of exhibitions and the public narratives they present, and this is especially true when I am thinking about things relating to women and gender studies. The history of most museums is the history of rich men and their collections. Historically, elite men are the ones who collected the things that were kept for museums. Its not that women did not collect things, but when museums were founded in the nineteenth century, women’s collections, and women’s activities, were not valued. As a result, many of those things have been lost. Because of their institutional history, even now, if we really analyze it, museums are male spaces.

What can we do about that? Should we, as contemporary exhibition designers, acknowledge it somehow? These are issues that I, and the rest of the museum studies field, are starting to think about.

What projects are you currently working on?

I am working on my book manuscript, which is a study of the life of the National Museum of Scotland, from when it was first envisioned in 1780 until its opening in 1998, and through its first decade of reacting to the pressures of the social and political context of things outside its doors. In the book, I look at how artifacts like the Lewis Chessmen (the real-life models for the wizard chess sets in the *Harry Potter* films) can be displayed in the museum multiple ways over time, in order to fit the multiple agendas that they have. People think that they will walk into a national history museum and see truth. And they will, but that truth will have been constructed and manipulated, and is contingent on timing. The same object can have

(cont. p. 6)
Will Powell is a doctoral student in the English department here at Duquesne. Originally from Northern Virginia, he earned his BA in English at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas, where he studied Biblical Text and English.

What is your area of studies in English? What are your research interests?

I study Contemporary American and British Fiction. I am very interested in the ways that fiction interrogates and challenges conceptions of gender and sexuality especially within evangelical faith communities.

What prompted you to pursue a graduate certificate in WGS?

Part of what makes me pursue academic work in the humanities is the desire to better understand my own position within the structures of power, and how I might resist, challenge and subvert them. I pursued WGS to learn further about the privileges of patriarchy and heteronormativity.

What courses and scholarship have been particularly formative of your thinking about WGS issues?

The Feminist Theory course as well as the Queer Theory course here at Duquesne were especially important. In particular, reading Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* was highly influential. Additionally, J. Jack Halberstam’s *Female Masculinity* and *Gaga Feminism* have been helpful in challenging my perceptions of gender and sexuality as static signifiers.

How does Women’s and Gender Studies influence/play a role in your teaching?

As an instructor of First Year Writing, I see my job as educating students on how to recognize the systems into which they enter and in which they are constant participants. Gender and sexuality are central to these discussions. Particularly, in UCOR 102 we have discussed works that complicate paradigms of gender and sexuality by authors like Sonia Sanchez, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Sandra Cisneros, and Flannery O’Connor.

What are your career goals? How will women’s and gender issues be incorporated into those?

I find practically no intellectual membrane separating my faith, my studies, and my pedagogy. Within the faith communities of which I am a part I have recently encountered more and more emerging self-critical discussions and questions about who is privileged and who is oppressed within and outside communities of faith. With growing frequency these conversations focus on topics related to gender, sexuality, and queerness. My hope is that my work with WGS has better prepared me to ask more of those questions, initiate and participate in more of those conversations, and help facilitate heterogeneous representation in both the rhetorical space of the classroom as well as that of the sanctuary.

(Bucciantini, cont. from p. 5)

Many possible truths, and only one can be told on a label at any one time. It is the job of the curator to decide which one is needed at the time.

I am also working on an article about a travelling exhibition organized by the US and UK governments prior to the US entry to WWII. This had larger-than-life-size pictures of American men and women farming, building planes, and doing other tasks to get the US ready for war, and was made by famed modernist photographer Edward Steichen, with text by poet Carl Sandburg.

Both of these projects have WGS issues running all through them, because they deal with how society reflects itself, who it includes and who it leaves out, and what image it projects to the world. Those issues to me are at the heart of conversations in WGS.
Recent Work by WGS Students & Faculty

**Amanda Buchheit**, Psychology, Women & Gender Studies Double Major
- “Sexual Fluidity in Prison.” Course paper for Queer Drama, John Lane, Fall 2014.
- “Arthur Miller and Manhood.” Course paper for Dramatic Criticism, John Lane, Spring 2015.
- “Gender Portrayal on Sesame Street.” Course paper for Sex, Myth & Media, Dr. Margaret Patterson, Fall 2014.
- “Sexual Fluidity in Prison.” Duquesne University Undergraduate Regional Psychology Conference. Pittsburgh, PA, April 2015.

**Laura Engel**, Associate Professor of English

**Jade Higa**, Graduate student, English
- “that I may fancy you him”: The Hidden Pleasures of Mary Crawford and Fanny Price.” EC/ASECS, Newark, DE, November 2014.
- “Mary Crawford’s Fan(ny) Base: Fan Behavior and the Female Body of Austen’s *Mansfield Park*.” ASECS, Los Angeles, CA, March 2015.

**Edith H. Krause**, Professor, Modern Languages and Literature

**Magali Michael**, Professor of English

**Jessie Patella Konig**, Graduate student, Philosophy

**Maggie Patterson**, Professor of Journalism
  - “The Traditional ‘Pickup’ or ‘Death Knock’ Story: Its Role, Its Value(s) and What’s at Stake for Communities” with Romayne Smith Fullerton.
  - ‘Covering White ‘Just-Us’: What did journalists ‘really’ say about Ipperwash?” with Virginia Whitehouse and Romayne Smith Fullerton.

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**Welcome to WGS**

**Graduate Student:**
Erica Schiller Freeman, Clinical Psychology

**Minors:**
Shelby Boord, Bayer School of Natural and Environmental Science
Kaitlyn Clem, English
Nicole Cordier, Classical Civilization and History
Martha Hari, Corporate Communications
Hannah McCandless, Public Relations and Advertising

**Steering Committee member:**
Dr. Anna Haensch, Mathematics

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**Eleanore Holleck Essay Contest Winners**

Each spring we honor one undergraduate and one graduate student with the Eleanore Holleck Essay Award. This award is given to students for essays that most effectively and proficiently advance a conversation about women’s, gender, or sexuality studies. Winners of this contest receive a certificate and monetary award.

We are pleased to announce this year’s recipients, who will be honored during our spring reception on Tuesday, April 28:

**Rachel Willis,** an undergraduate Sophomore Public Relations & Advertising major, for her essay, “The Woman with the Dark Eyes: The Impact of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on the Palestinian Women’s Movement,” which was written for Dr. Emad Mirmotahari’s Honors Inquiry course.

**Will Powell,** a doctoral student in the English Department and a WGS Graduate Certificate student, for his essay, “It means I don’t know what I am’: Christological Liminality in Disability and Queerness,” which was written for Dr. Elisabeth Vasko’s Christology from the Margins course.

We also thank **Dr. Laura Engel, Moni McIntyre,** and **Julia Sienkewicz,** for volunteering to serve as judges of this contest.

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**Fall 2015 Courses**

**Undergraduate Courses**

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WSGS 202 / THEO 201</td>
<td>Women and Christianity</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 10:50 a.m. – 12:05 p.m.</td>
<td>(E. Vasko)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSGS 210 / SOCI 210-01</td>
<td>Sociology of Sex and Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 12:15 – 1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>(S. MacMillen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSGS 225 / SOCI 225</td>
<td>Family Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 10:50 a.m. – 12:05 p.m.</td>
<td>(Z. Ahmed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSGS 280 / ARHY 280</td>
<td>Gender, Vision, and Representation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWF 12:00 – 12:50 p.m.</td>
<td>(A. Mikulinsky)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSGS 321W / ENGL 323W</td>
<td>Life Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWF 10:00 – 10:50 a.m.</td>
<td>(A. Gibson)</td>
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**Graduate Courses**

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<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WSGS 556 / PHIL 556-01</td>
<td>Foucault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 6:00 – 8:40 p.m.</td>
<td>(F. Evans)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSGS 696 / ENGL 695</td>
<td>Ethnic American Fiction by Women Writers since the 1960s</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 6:00 – 8:40 p.m.</td>
<td>(M. Michael)</td>
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**Maggie Patterson, cont.**

- “The Traditional ‘Pickup’ or ‘Death Knock’ Story: Its Role, Its Value(s) and What’s at Stake for Communities” with Romayne Smith Fullerton. *Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC),* Montreal, August 2014. Awarded the Professional Relevance Award by AEJMC’s Media Ethics Division.

**Elisabeth Vasko,** Assistant Professor of Theology