

DUKE

# Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies

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Graduation Edition Newsletter 2023



## *Congratulations* to our 2023 Graduating Class!

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# Congratulations

## to the Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies Class of 2023

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### **GENDER, SEXUALITY & FEMINIST STUDIES FIRST MAJOR**

- Danica JoAnn Schwartz

### **GENDER, SEXUALITY & FEMINIST STUDIES SECOND MAJORS**

- Chaya Brennan Agarwal  
(1st Major in International Comparative Studies)
- Claire Isabella Budzik  
(1st Major in Asian & Middle Eastern Studies)
- Gabrielle Anne Marie Butler  
(1st Major in Evolutionary Anthropology)
- Laila Grace Edelman  
(1st Major in Biology)
- Brandi Nicole Martin  
(1st Major in English)
- James Mbuthia Ndung'u  
(1st Major in International Comparative Studies)

### **GLOBAL GENDER STUDIES MAJORS**

- Audrey Irene Alexander  
(Interdepartmental Major with International Comparative Studies, 2nd Major in Global Health)
- Amanda Jill Padden  
(Interdepartmental Major with International Comparative Studies)

### **GENDER, SEXUALITY & FEMINIST STUDIES MINORS**

- Ila Amiri (Major in Public Policy)
- Madeleine Clare Downey (Major in Psychology)
- Lorayna Anne Hinton (Major in Psychology)
- Payton Clark Little  
(Major in Public Policy and Global Health)
- Diane Sharyn Sanchez (Major in History)
- Rebecca Paige Schneid (Major in English)
- Anna Grace Shenk-Evans  
(Major in Environmental Sciences)
- Nicole Elizabeth Stepovich (Major in Neuroscience)
- Kiran Sundar (Major in Psychology)

### **SEXUALITY STUDIES MINOR**

- Daniel Lee Sutton (Major in Linguistics)

### **GRADUATE STUDENTS COMPLETING THE CERTIFICATE IN FEMINIST STUDIES**

- Carolin Benack (PhD, English)
- Jieun Cho (PhD, Cultural Anthropology)
- Julien Fischer (PhD, Literature)



# Honors Thesis



*"I do a close reading of Melinda Gates' word choices in her book The Moment of Lift (2019), TedTalk, and the Gates Discovery Center, a public museum in Seattle, to dissect the saviorism underlying her philanthropic work."*

## Audrey Alexander

**Thesis Title:** The Saviorism of Melinda Gates: Eugenics, Philanthrocapitalism, and the Perils of 'Western' Feminisms

**Abstract:**

In this thesis, I aim to historically analyze and explicate long-lasting issues with philanthropic programs, specifically their health programs, by using Melinda Gates and her family planning programs at the Gates Foundation as a case study for the forms of philanthrocapitalism. Philanthrocapitalism was initially defined by Matthew Bishop and Michael Green in their book *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World* (2008) as a form of philanthropy conducted through a capitalist business-model by entrepreneurs. In addition to looking at the dangers of Melinda Gates' philanthrocapitalism, this thesis also focuses on the specific history of family planning programs and outlines its history with eugenics to show how eugenics continue to shape Gates' family planning programs. I analyze examples from the Population Council, a population control organization founded by eugenicists and funded by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations among others. Comparing the Population Council's eugenic research and programs to Melinda Gates' work in the Gates Foundation, I show the throughlines between past eugenic movements and her work today. Finally, I do a close reading of Melinda Gates' word choices in her book *The Moment of Lift* (2019), TedTalk, and the Gates Discovery Center, a public museum in Seattle, to dissect the saviorism underlying her philanthropic work. I connect the saviorism in her work to past and current philanthropy foundations as well as contextualizing her language choices as examples of Western feminist frameworks. Overall, this thesis shows the issues underlying Melinda Gates' family planning programs by connecting them to past racist, imperialist programs of a similar nature.



*"I endeavor to trace an alternative genealogy of sex work by critically juxtaposing empirical research alongside film and literary works created by sex workers to trace the political, economic, and social implications of labor and identity."*

## Hanna Tawasha

**Thesis Title:** Hard Jobs: a Study on the Political, Demographic, and Labor Conditions that Contribute to Material Inequality Amongst Sex Workers

**Abstract:**

Sex workers are a diverse, vulnerable, and understudied population who experience a unique amount of regulatory interference when compared to other multi-billion-dollar industries. I endeavor to trace an alternative genealogy of sex work by critically juxtaposing empirical research alongside film and literary works created by sex workers to trace the political, economic, and social implications of labor and identity. Interspersed within this study are excerpts from interviews I have conducted with sex workers to learn more about how their interactions with colleagues, clients, digital platforms, and state authorities contribute to their understandings of safety, well-being, and power in the workplace.



# Senior Stories

## Audrey Alexander

I am incredibly grateful that I chose to major in Global Gender Studies (GGS) and to have the opportunity to create my own intellectual path that integrated International Comparative Studies (ICS) and Gender, Sexuality, Feminist Studies (GSF). To me, ICS and GSF had a lot of overlap, and I wanted to take classes in both departments but didn't have time to pursue both majors. When I discovered GGS, the interdepartmental major for ICS and GSF, I instantly changed my major to GGS... I am currently planning to continue my education in Gender Studies and plan to apply to PhD programs after taking a gap year post-graduation.



## Laila Edelson

In combination with my major in Biology, majoring in GSF has helped me to realize my passion for SGM health. Going into my freshman year, I knew I was interested in the health sciences but wasn't sure where my interests and experiences as a queer, disabled woman fit into the industry. Studying gender and sexuality gave me a new lens through which to examine patient experiences and outcomes, and the intersectional ways that they are influenced by the diverse identities of the patients themselves. In the future, I hope to work with medical schools to create a curriculum that addresses the social determinants of health and improves the care provided to diverse patient populations.





## Brandi Martin

I came to the Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies department simply by enrolling in the courses that caught my interest. Once it was time to declare my major, I realized that my intellectual interest kept pulling me back to the department. As a double major in English and Gender Studies, I have explored the intersections between identity, literature, & transcendent liberation, becoming empowered to pursue my own creative writings. I pursued a thesis in the GSF department, developing a long-term analytical project in conjunction with the fantastic scholars at Duke, in GSF and beyond. The opportunity to write about culture through a critical feminist lens has aided me immeasurably in preparing for my post-graduate life, where I will pursue a career in the field of writing and publishing. My time in the GSF department has left an indelible mark on the way that I conceptualize culture, kinship, & personal identity, themes which will be central to the essays and novels I plan to write.



## James Ndung'u

My first name is James, so almost naturally I took to writing. Retrospectively, I find that GSF enhanced my visions of the world and the possibilities therein. By sharpening my mind, it also sharpened my pen to write critically, engagingly, and creatively about the world around me and the brighter futures we all as students hope to create. For people who enjoy writing and care to grow in their writing, you should consider majoring, minoring, or even just taking classes in this department. It is guaranteed to expand you and enrich your Duke experience tremendously.





## Amanda Padden

Studying Global Gender Studies at Duke was immensely meaningful and transformative for me. My professors and peers challenged me to imagine new worlds that are safe and just for all and to inform my understanding of today's issues with histories of colonialism, racial capitalism, and the ideas and theories of non-Western people. GGS at Duke helped me to expand what I understand as possible, and I carry these lessons and changed worldviews as I pursue working in environmental education and justice. Thank you to the faculty and staff of the International Comparative Studies and Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies departments!



## Danica Schwartz

I chose to apply to Duke because I knew I would be able to major in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies here. I wanted to go into medicine at the time, and felt that a combined GSF and Medical Sociology background would allow me to identify (and therefore later address) the ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality construct the social, cultural, and biological experiences of people in all societies. Though I have moved off of the premedical track (with touching support from numerous GSF faculty members who have served as mentors for me throughout my time at Duke), I will use my theoretical and practical background on gender, sex, intersectionality (with specific focus on Black feminism), queerness, transness (transexual/transgender/trans\*), and disability that I have gained throughout my GSF coursework to ground me as I hopefully move into a career centered around fertility accessibility.



# Class of 2023: From Rowing to Research: How Gabrielle Butler Learned to Embrace Challenges at Duke

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By Elizabeth Richardson, Trinity Communications

Senior Gabrielle Butler has wise advice for incoming Duke students: Challenge yourself to try something new and stick with it.

"First-years and incoming students tend to try and find the 'best fit,' i.e., where they feel most comfortable," said Butler. "In a lot of ways that's great, but change happens when we're being challenged, and the risk of taking that challenge ends up with many rewards."

Butler is a double major in Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies (GSF) and Evolutionary Anthropology with a minor in Chemistry.

During her first year at Duke, Butler did something she never thought she would do: joined the Men's Rowing Sports Club as a coxswain.

"There were a lot of times when I thought about quitting but sticking with something that was a bit outside my comfort zone has made me into a better, more confident, and stronger individual," Butler said. The role of coxswain not only helped challenge Butler to build confidence, but many of the skills she learned have transferred to academic pursuits as well. Her senior thesis focuses on intimacy and transactional relationships by analyzing contemporary art. "When I reflect on my journey in the major, it's a culmination of all the work I've done before: without realizing it, I have been writing about art, intimacy, and gendered transactional relationships since my sophomore spring," she said.

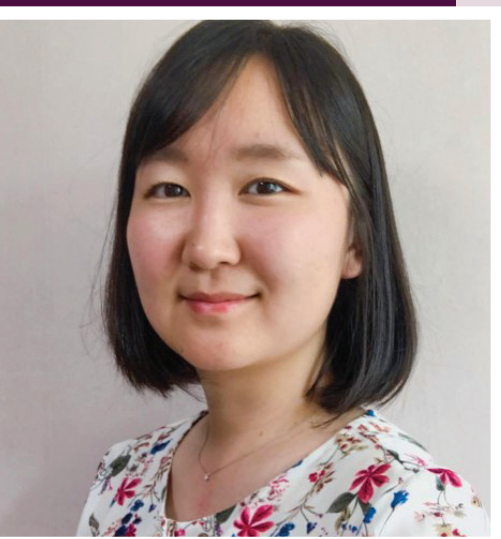
She describes the project as a combination of intense scholarship, an exploration of her own personal life, and the subjects that have been animating her journey in Gender Studies.

One of her favorite things about GSF has been the faculty she's gotten to know during her time at Duke. "The GSF faculty are so accessible and accommodating, while also pushing you to be the best critical thinker and writer you can be," said Butler. She said that she has formed close relationships with many of the faculty and has loved the variety of discussions she's gotten to be involved in in classes.

After graduation, Butler will pursue a Masters' Degree in Biomedical Sciences at either Duke or Tufts Medical School. "I'm excited to continue my education before pursuing an MD, and especially excited to see how my GSF education will factor into my medical education!"







# Jieun Cho

Cultural Anthropology, PhD and Certificate in Feminist Studies, Duke University

## DISSERTATION TITLE:

### **Anxious Care: Radioactive Uncertainty and the Politics of Life in Post-Nuclear Japan**

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT:

Since the 2011 meltdown, the health of “Fukushima children” has become a problem for parents, politics, and future imaginaries in post-nuclear Japan. What are the ethical and political implications of making life around a child imperiled by radiation when (re)productivity of life must be remade in a compromised environment? This dissertation explores post-nuclear life in the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in Japan by studying reproductive labor to raise children within and against radiation: what I call “anxious care.” By foregrounding the family as a site for environmental struggles in an emerging politics of life, I examine the radical implications of caring for children in environmental uncertainty. In particular, this project focuses on inner cities of Fukushima Prefecture that have been on the frontline of radiation debates for having been exposed to disaster-induced radiation while not designated for evacuation. Shifting focus to the

edges of delimited hazard zones, I examine the multifaceted aftermath of the nuclear disaster, ranging from differentially altered forms of life conditioned by radioactive uncertainty, the unequal distribution of radiation risk through public/private organizations such as the family form, and the everyday impact of post-Fukushima radiation. By examining how caretakers of “Fukushima children” make home and cultivate children against and within radiation, I argue that conventional notions of “life” are undergoing reconfiguration in post-nuclear Japan both at the level of real-life families and the family form. In doing so, this project critiques individual-centered approaches to environmental risk by broadening the anthropological horizons of life amidst environmental uncertainty in and beyond Japan.

“By foregrounding the family as a site of environmental struggles in an emerging politics of life, I examine the radical implications of reproductive care labor amidst environmental uncertainty.”



# Julien Fischer

Literature, PhD and Certificate in Feminist Studies, Duke University

## DISSERTATION TITLE:

### The Lure of Origins: Sexology and the Trans Autobiographical Mandate

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT:

Trans Studies has had a fraught relationship with sexology. While the field's political commitment to trans affirmation entails a rejection of sexology's authority to define trans life, trans people depend on access to medicine to pursue our transitions. The result is a political bind, one borne from the conundrum of sexual modernity in which the promise of arriving at authentic self-knowledge is contingent on the authenticating power of medical expertise to define what counts as self-knowledge in the first place. Taking the antagonism between Trans Studies and sexology as its point of departure, *The Lure of Origins* traces the historical itinerary of an autobiographical case study that is interpreted today as the sexological origin of the trans figure. Published by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in 1890, the case study appears as an anonymous letter and the author's real name has never been known. I call it "the case of the metamorphosing physician" because of the narrator's magical transformation from man into woman.

Over four chapters, I follow the case study's transformation in the 20th century sexological canon as various sexologists read and interpreted it anew. In doing so, I call attention to the multiple diagnostic inheritances buried within the contemporary signifier "trans," including those that carry a pathologizing history which the field has sought to disavow. I attend to the complex archive of pathology that troubles Trans Studies from the inside, not to recuperate pathology for more liberatory ends, but to disrupt the fantasy of a formation I call "the trans autobiographical mandate" which demands a self-authorizing and self-knowing trans subject. Ultimately, *The Lure of Origins* argues for a de-exceptionalizing story of the trans "origin" which refuses to pull this figure from the past into the self-conscious form that Trans Studies now desires.



*"The Lure of Origins* argues for a de-exceptionalizing story of the trans "origin" which refuses to pull this figure from the past into the self-conscious form that Trans Studies now desires."



# Research & Conference Travel

## Spring 2022 Research & Conference Travel Awards

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### Martha Espinosa

(Graduate Student, History, and Certificate in Feminist Studies)

Attended the International Congress on the History of Reproductive Rights in Glasgow from June 9th-10th, 2022. During the conference, researchers discussed topics ranging from second-wave French feminist critiques to the birth control pill, the Neo-Malthusian paradigm guiding family planning organizations in Yugoslavia, to the legal frameworks regulating abortion in Italy. Espinosa notes several key takeaways from the conference; the unequal representation of voices and perspectives in the discourse surrounding this historiography, as well as the central presence of *Roe v. Wade* in discussions, regardless of the temporal gap between the historical themes of the gathering.

### Dana Hogan

(Graduate Student, Art, Art History, and Certificate in Feminist Studies)

During the summer of 2022, graduate student Dana Hogan traveled to Dublin, Ireland, and Blois, France, to conduct research. Her dissertation, "Expanding Worlds: Women Artists and Cross-Cultural Encounters in Early Modern Europe," discusses the construction and legacy of women artists' engagement with the world through a decolonial and Black feminist lens. During her time in Dublin, Hogan visited the National Gallery of Ireland, where she examined *The Visit of Queen Sheba to King Solomon* by Lavinia Fontana and its accompanying materials. The visit to the museum allowed Hogan to observe changes made to the painting by the artist during a current restoration process, which added to her overall analysis of Fontana's composition choices. Following the visit to Ireland, Hogan studied another of Fontana's works at the Royal Chateau de Blois. This visit provided unique insight into the viewpoint of the work's original audience. Hogan's overall research was aided by a firsthand exploration of the historical context which produced Lavinia Fontana's paintings.

### Tania Rispoli

(Graduate Student, Romance Studies, and Certificate in Feminist Studies)

Over 3 days in June 2022, Rispoli participated in the European Feminist Research Conference at the University of Milan, Bicocca. Rispoli presented her paper "Immediacy, Mediation, and Feminist Logics," previously published in the *Journal of Philosophy and Public Issues*. Rispoli highlights the insight that she gained from discussing gender, sexuality, and feminist studies topics, as well as the production of these topics outside of Duke and the United States at large. The encounter allowed Rispoli to improve her research framing to better include care studies and expand her vision of feminist theory to work across genres.

### Lorenza Starace

(Graduate Student, Romance Studies, and Certificate in Feminist Studies)

In June 2022, Starace presented at the panel for the American Association for Italian Studies. Starace's paper, "A Feminist Reading of Elsa Morante's novel, *Arturo's Island*," discusses the role played by Nunziatella—the only female character in the novel—as a traditionally feminine figure and an essential element of the plot construction. Starace's analysis challenges critiques of Morante's stance on gender politics and affords the author greater consideration. Starace explains that the responses she received to her presentation both boosted her confidence in her final draft as well as pushed her to reexamine her claims to make them accessible to a broader audience outside of Italian Studies scholars.

## Fall 2022 Research & Conference Travel Awards

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### Julien Fischer

(Graduate Student, Literature, and Certificate in Feminist Studies)

Fischer attended the Freud Lacan Institute's 18-week virtual seminar series, "Freud's Case Studies in Contemporary Contexts," between October 2021 and May 2022. The course offered a new



# Awards / Named Awards

perspective on Freud's case studies, examining their significance in the twenty-first century and particularly emphasizing the questions of gender, sexuality, and diagnosis. Fischer highlights that the theories presented in the course included the clinical as well as theoretical psychoanalysis of Freud in a discussion of GSFS, which is often avoided in those conversations. Fischer, rather than entirely rejecting Freud's theories, concludes that his work is a resource to understand the social and historical construction of gender and sexuality. Fischer's observations will aid in the production of a dissertation engaged with Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis as well as trans studies.

## Named Awards

### Ernestine Friedl Research Award (2022)

#### SaeHim Park

(Graduate Student, Art, Art History & Visual Studies and Certificate in Feminist Studies)

Dissertation Research: "Scenes after Rape: Art of Ishiuchi Miyako and Ishikawa Mao against US Military Empire"

In terms of academic progress in my doctoral program, this award allowed me to digest and translate readings I have done from my preliminary exam toward writing my dissertation chapters. For my preliminary exam, I read sex debates and feminisms. Looking into the primary sources taught me to be humble and showed me the difficulty of the term "situate," when I claim that I want to situate the artists' artistic activism in the Cold War feminisms of East Asia discussed by Suzy Kim and Lisa Yoneyama, to analyze the role of aesthetics in Anpo protests (1959-70s) against the U.S. military presence in the postwar Japan (c.1957-present). Two questions emerged from completing this project: what to call rape? what does my reluctance and hesitation mean? I plan to sit with these two important questions going forward.

### Race and Research Award (2022)

#### Bailey Griffen

(Undergraduate Student, Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies)

I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to research something pertinent to my life as a female-identifying college student and to this moment in medicine, given the Supreme Court's recent overturning of Roe v. Wade. Although I could not have imagined that the latter would come to fruition during my lifetime, my exploration of the biopolitics enmeshed in reproductive rights and birthing practices sheds light on the fact that maternal health care has always been an emotionally charged topic, and one which cannot be isolated from its political, social, and economic environment.

I had a plethora of questions, and the Race and Research Award allowed me to look for answers. It helped me stay in Durham for part of the summer to complement my secondary source reading with trips to Duke University Medical Center's off-campus archives.

### Race and Research Award (2022)

#### Leann McLaren

(Graduate Student, Political Science and Certificate in Feminist Studies)

My dissertation project is examining how Black immigrant politicians (both men and women) as intersectional candidates, negotiate and present their identities in the American political sphere. A portion of the award went towards an ongoing omnibus survey data collection for my dissertation. Another portion went towards travel to the Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA) that took place September 14-17th, 2022. As a result of this experience with the award, I was able to focus heavily on the research design for my experimental chapters as a part of my dissertation and pre-test my arguments before I do a more full-scale data collection. This experience was immensely helpful because it allowed me to integrate data into my theory making process, ultimately helping me to get closer at the social phenomena that is actually going on in the world.



## Fall 2023 COURSES

**GSF 89S.03**      **First-Year Seminar** (seminar)  
**Gender and Science**  
Ara Wilson

**GSF 199S**      **Thinking Gender** (seminar)  
Kathi Weeks

**GSF 244S**      **Politics Of Motherhood** (seminar)  
Jennifer Nash

**GSF 263S**      **Representing Breast Cancer** (seminar)  
Kimberly Lamm

**GSF 265S**      **Digital Feminism** (seminar)  
Rachel Gelfand

**GSF 278**      **Sex/Gender – Nature/Nurture** (lecture)  
Christina Williams, Ara Wilson

**GSF 355S**      **Black Feminism And Fashion** (seminar)  
Kimberly Lamm

**GSF 361**      **Money, Sex, Power** (lecture)  
Kathi Weeks

**GSF 364S**      **Race, Gender, and Sexuality** (seminar)  
Anna Storti

**GSF 367S**      **Feminist Ethics** (seminar)  
Mary Rudy

**GSF 382S**      **Intimacies** (seminar)  
Anna Storti

**GSF 499S**      **Senior Seminar** (seminar)  
Frances Hasso

**GSF 890S-01**      **Advanced Topics** (seminar)  
**Bell Hooks**  
Nikki Lane

**GSF 960S-02**      **Interdisciplinry Debates** (seminar)  
Gabriel Rosenberg