



EMU
WGST Graduate Conference
Intersectionality:
Theory & Activism

December 3rd & 4th, 2015

McKenny Hall

Featuring Keynotes by
Dr. Nicole Carter, Wright State University
Dr. Peter Higgins, Eastern Michigan University

This event is IBC Credit approved.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

DR. NICOLE CARTER

Keynote Address: "My feminism will be intersectional...": On Intersectional Praxis from Combahee and Beyond.

The speaker will explore the political herstory of intersectionality. She will explore the necessity of intersectional praxis, and what that praxis might look like in a classroom, cultural center, and community when its origins are considered.

Dr. Nicole April Carter graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies from Eastern Michigan University. She is currently the Director of the Women's Center at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. Her areas of research are Critical Public Pedagogy, Performance, Endarkened Feminist and Black Feminist Epistemologies, the Politics of Place, and Intersectionality. She is a proud Detroit native who is dedicated to gender-based justice through advocacy, activism, scholarship, and art.

DR PETER HIGGINS

Keynote Address: "Five Claims of Intersectionality".

In this presentation, Professor Higgins will draw from the literature on intersectionality from the late 1970s to the present to address several questions: What kind of thing is intersectionality? Is intersectionality a method? Is intersectionality a concept or a theory? If it is a concept or a theory, what does it mean? And, what can it not or should it not mean?

Peter Higgins is an associate professor of Philosophy and department member in Women's and Gender Studies at Eastern Michigan University. He completed his Ph.D. in Philosophy and a Graduate Certificate in Women and Gender Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2008. Dr. Higgins specializes in social and political philosophy and generally focuses on issues that are global in scope, approaching them from a feminist perspective. His book *Immigration Justice* was published in 2013 (Edinburgh University Press). Dr. Higgins' current research interests involves the analysis of fundamental concepts in feminist theory, such as oppression, privilege, and intersectionality.

WORKSHOPS

Finding Time to Survive and Advocate: Roundtable Discussion on Strategies to Engage in Activism as a Working or Lower Class Individual

Facilitated by: Mark Doeblen III, MA Candidate WGST, EMU

Building Relationships Through Dialogue: An Invitation to Connect

If you ever find yourself getting frustrated with your neighbor, uncle, cousin, or colleagues because they are "racist," "sexist," "homophobic," or just "wouldn't get it," come join us. In this workshop, we will first examine the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effects of privilege on individuals. With this understanding as a foundation, participants will then learn dialogue tools to connect with the person in ways that will allow them to better understand the person's experience and build (or rebuild) relationships needed to make changes.

Facilitated By: Dr. Hsiao-Wen Lo, Private Practice, Community Member

Advocacy and Academia: Bridging the Gap Between Community Organizing and Academia Scholarship on College Campuses

Facilitated by: Tristan Morton, Undergraduate, EMU

Zines for Pedagogy and Activism

This is a zine-making mini-lecture and workshop. A brief, interactive lecture about zines and using zines as teachers and activists will be followed by an opportunity for participants to make their own intersectionality-themed zine. All zine-making materials will be provided by workshop leaders.

Facilitated by: Lzz Johnk, MA Candidate WGST, EMU, Sofia Brewer-Berres, MA Candidate WGST, EMU, and Preston Johnson, Undergraduate, EMU

THURSDAY

- 1:00** Registration – McKenny 2nd Floor Lobby
- 2:00 – 3:00** **Panel** - Feminist Pedagogies for A World on Fire – McKenny Ballroom
- 3:30 – 4:30** **Panel** - Perceptible Intersections: Performative Praxis – McKenny Ballroom
- KEYNOTE SPEAKER** **Nicole Carter – McKenny Ballroom**
- 6:30** **"My feminism will be intersectional...": On Intersectional Praxis from Combahee and Beyond.**

Reception immediately following.

FRIDAY

- 8:00** Registration – McKenny 2nd Floor Lobby
- 9:00 – 10:15** **Workshops**
- Finding Time to Survive and Advocate: Roundtable Discussion on Strategies to Engage in Activism as a Working or Lower Class Individual – Tower Hall
- Building Relationships Through Dialogue: An Invitation to Connect – Alumni Hall
- 10:30 – 12:00** **Workshops**
- Advocacy and Academia: Bridging the Gap Between Community Organizing and Academia Scholarship on College Campuses – Tower Hall
- Zines for Pedagogy and Activism – Alumni Hall

FRIDAY

- 12:00 – 1:00** **Lunch Break**
- 1:00** **Panel** – Intersectional History: Erasures – McKenny Ballroom
- 2:00** **Panel** - Positional Intersections: Points of Inclusion – McKenny Ballroom
- 3:00** **Panel** – Epistemic Intersections – McKenny Ballroom
- KEYNOTE SPEAKER** **Peter Higgins – McKenny Ballroom**
- 4:00** **"Five Claims of Intersectionality"**

PANELS

Feminist Pedagogies for A World on Fire

“Conversations with Girls” – Prof. Dyann Logwood

Prof. Dyann Logwood will discuss how an En-darkened feminist pedagogical approach informs her WGST 230L2 Conversations with Girls course. The course (which includes field experiences) provides students with the opportunity to participate in an innovative program, that involves mentoring students, at a Ypsilanti middle school. This learning experience is both reflective and collaborative in nature, allowing space for student knowledge to actively shape the curriculum, and transform the mentor/mentee experience.

“Inside/Outside Pedagogies of Incarceration” - Prof. Jessica Kilbourn and Dr. Kathryn Ziegler

Prof. Jessica Kilbourn and Dr. Kathryn Ziegler will discuss their WGST 202 Introduction to Gender and Sexuality Inside/Out course. Panelists will discuss how this unique course, comprised of Inside and Outside students, fosters an environment of awareness, compassion, and scholarly collaboration that challenges stereotypes of college and incarcerated populations, and the barriers between them.

“Feminist Pedagogy and #BlackLivesMatter: Towards a Praxis of Dignity” - Dr. David Green

Dr. David Green’s discussion will focus on, Feminist Pedagogy and #BlackLivesMatter: Towards a Praxis of Dignity. What does a central imperative of feminist teaching in the age of Black Lives Matter? Proscriptive in its scope and reflexive in its delivery, this paper imagines a theory and practice of dignity, as a crucial learning outcome, for WGST 202: Introduction to Gender and Sexuality. Dignity does the critical work of re-imagining civic engagement practices that are based on inclusive justice--unleashed by immutable gender-racial-sexual freedoms!

Perceptible Intersections: Performative Praxis

(Im)perceptible Smoke: Groupworking Relations of the Cigarette Smoker and Tobacco Pickers - David Boeving, MA Candidate Creative Writing

For this hybrid talk/performance I’ll explore the many often hard to perceive relations that consumers share with producers. Specifically, this talk/performance will explore consumer/producer relations within tobacco consumption and production; my work looks to shed light on the relations I share as a smoker living in Michigan with Mexican migrant farmers working in North Carolina. In that consumer/producer relations are often made seemingly imperceptible by cultural formations—such as branding—I look to deconstruct cultural forms through poetic language as a ways of seeking less mediated relations between consumers and producers. I do this in order to shed light on human rights violations, and in hopes of enacting social change that reduces and prevents further violations. This talk/performance will feature a blend of performance poetry, Marxist political theory, theories of embodiment, oppression, and privilege, and Lynn Hejiniian’s poetic composition theory of “openness,” which highlights the audience’s meaning-making role in poetic works. I will blend theories and poetry in-performance through improvisation. Improvisation will aid in the deconstruction of the cultural formations which render the consumer/producer relationship tough to traverse. In this way, I’ll enact a kind of openness with the audience that may allow us to deconstruct mediating cultural forms as a group. My aim for this type of group-work is to kick-start social change while leaving room for individual impressions and opinions.

The Book On War & Peace - Christine Cook, MA Candidate WGST

Christine Cook will be reading an excerpt from a novel she is writing as her MA capstone project. THE BOOK ON WAR & PEACE, explores different manifestations of gender and marginalization in four generations of a military family. The work is intersectional because it addresses different forms of oppression within the military, based on sex, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and transgender issues.

The Discrimination Games: A Discussion of Race, Class, and Gender in The Hunger Games - Micheal Brewer-Berres, Undergrad, Alma College

This presentation on discrimination in The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins shows how race, class, and gender persist in a dystopian world and affect the characters' lives. There are examples of how racial discrimination occurs in the novel when its main character, Katniss Everdeen, who is described as being a woman of color, receives harsher treatment from the government as compared to her partner in the Hunger Games, Peeta Mellark, who is described as a white man. The examples for class divisions in the novel are shown by the extreme difference between the low life expectancy rate of the District citizens and the high life expectancy rate of the Capitol citizens. Gender comes into play when it comes to the masculine traits Katniss has that make her the heroine of the story, and the feminine traits Peeta has that make him simply the love interest. These discriminations in The Hunger Games happen in the real world, and this novel is simply a gateway to get people to start thinking about the way in which discrimination occurs in the real world. In addition, the essay provides a careful analysis of the importance of studying intersectionality in literature.

Intersectional History: Erasures

The Coloniality of History: Rewriting Time, Gender, and National Identity in the Valley of Mexico - Patrick T. Gonsior, MA Candidate, EMU

In the paper presented here, I seek to problematize the decontextualized nature of history colonized in two ways. First, I analyze the complexities of gender in the world of the Triple Alliance, which has been renamed the 'Aztec Empire' through the colonizing processes of history. Particularly, I will explain how, following the arrival of the Spanish in 1519, ideas of gender in the Valley of Mexico transformed. The second part of my presentation will focus upon the Mexican Revolution and the colonial streamlining of mythohistory which supported the construction of a revolutionarily national Mexican identity.

Bayard Rustin, A Forgotten Hero from the Civil Rights Movement - Sandra Simone Dixon

As a queer woman of color, I've always longed for role models within the queer community who were people of color. I need someone to understand the discrimination I face not only as a queer person but as a person of color as well. However, such role models are few and far between as homophobia runs rampant within communities of color and more specifically the black community. Just as well the reverse can be said to be true about racism within queer community. Amidst my search for role models, I discovered Bayard Rustin, a Quaker queer pacifist and activist who was forgotten as a civil rights leader and organizer as a result of his queer identity. Drawing from theories of intersectionality by feminist scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, I demonstrate how homophobia within the black community overshadowed Bayard Rustin's other intersecting identities around race, religion, and gender. Bayard Rustin was essentially erased from the Civil Rights Movement and the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. My research contributes to an intersectional dialogue about homophobia within communities of color. Just as well my research will allow more people to learn and spread their knowledge of Bayard Rustin with those around them.

Positional Intersections: Points of Inclusion

Fitting In: A Study of Lesbian Mothers in Rural Southeastern Michigan - Allison Ransch, EMU MA Candidate, Sociology

Lesbian parents residing in rural communities have received little scholarly attention. The primary focus of the existing research has highlighted the isolation experienced by lesbian parents within rural areas, but little examination has been made of other issues or their coping mechanisms. To address these deficits in knowledge and understanding, I designed and conducted a research study in which I qualitatively interviewed eight lesbian women living in rural areas of Southeastern Michigan. My presentation will outline my findings involving several direct quotes from the participants of my study. It is my hope that this presentation will help raise awareness to the unique experiences lesbian rural women have as they seek acceptance in their rural communities, and the barriers they encounter along the way.

Queer Enough: Examining Asexual-Inclusion in Queer Spaces – Dominique Canning, Eastern Michigan University

As the list of sexual identities grows, so does the number of conversations about what these identities are and how, or if, they should be included. One such identity is asexuality, which is defined by the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) as a lack of sexual attraction (“Overview,” n.d.). By examining previous research that focuses on identity, discourse, and boundaries between identities, this presentation will analyze the discussion of whether asexuality should be considered to be “queer.” The goal of this research is to enrich our understanding of how language is used to make identity statements, and to negotiate and manipulate boundaries between identities by answering the following questions: 1.) Why might boundaries exist between identities? 2.) How does discourse vary, based on a group’s status within a conversation? 3.) Why is the conversation surrounding asexual inclusion important?

Must Have Adequate Documentation of Need”: Accessibility in Social Service Provision - Nathanael Romero

Access to social welfare programs is a key site of political struggle, from access to income and food assistance to healthcare and disability provision. With the passage of the Affordable Care Act and the rise of Bernie Sanders’ brand of “democratic socialism,” we are witnessing a growing public demand for the expansion of social programs. The present offers an opportunity to look critically at the prevailing models of social service provision and to think of ways to implement more just and accessible models of social welfare. Under neoliberalism, welfare programs in the U.S. have become less about providing for human needs and more about channeling people into work and into the arena of economic competition (all under the guise of promoting “personal responsibility”). Within such conditions of generalized competition and precarity, the goal of welfare provision has become one of providing a temporary “safety net” whereby those facing hardship are continually expected to bounce back into a fierce, high-stakes economic game. Disability and poverty become seen less in terms of human need and more in terms whether one can compete in the marketplace. As a consequence, we are faced with a model of means-tested, temporary, contingent benefits, access to which depends on whether or not one provides the right kind of answers on a welfare application. I will explore the question of accessibility in relation to social service provision, underscoring the inherent inaccessibility of prevailing models of social welfare. I will take up the question of accessibility from a standpoint of critical disability theory and critical theories of neoliberalism. I will identify contemporary sites of struggle and activism and how a politics informed by intersectional analyses of disability, race, class, and gender can offer a more expansively democratic and just vision of politics and society.

Epistemic Intersections

Good Geminist Garnet: Social Justice on the Forefront Through Easy Images and Tough Issues. – B. Preston Johnson, Undergraduate, EMU

In May of 2015, an university student in Sydney, Australia identifying themselves only as "Sam" began the facebook page, Good Geminist Garnet. The page was a space where the student created and shared memes featuring the character Garnet from the Cartoon Network program Steven Universe with such text as "There is not ethical consumption under late capitalism", "Feeling uncomfortable is a necessary part of unlearning oppressive behaviors" and "All trans womn's experiences are womn's experiences" (sic)

Feminist Librarianship: A Critique of Feminist Library Theory According to bell hooks, Judith Butler and Iris Marion Young - Mary Catherine Moeller, Oakland University

There is no clear definition of feminist librarianship. While there have been attempts to apply feminist theory to the library setting, issues in information access cannot simply be fixed by solely considering the privileged-class white academic woman's experience. Academic librarians have debated the benefits of post-modernism and standpoint epistemology in library scholarship, focusing on database and digital development. However, all the current feminist librarianship theory would benefit from a close critique using the theories of bell hooks, Judith Butler and Iris Marion Young. These feminist theorists would be critical of how librarians are doing feminism in libraries and how the focus on academic libraries is troubling. It is imperative that an intersectional feminist approach to library and information science be developed and perfected in the field that houses all of the gatekeepers of knowledge. This field is a building block to every community and has the opportunity to enact serious change in our world. The only way to truly eradicate oppression is to develop equal access to information across identities and maximize our society's understanding of the experiences of others. Libraries have the power to empower oppressed identities and educate individuals in order to create a more inclusive and accepting experience for everyone.

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