GREETINGS FROM THE DIRECTOR

CAROL LASSEr, GSFS DIRECTOR, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

The Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies Institute is busy this year. Following completion of the institute’s first program review, we are working with the dean and the elected councils to strengthen our presence on campus and add faculty who will work centrally in gender studies. We hope to see appointments to GSFS to stabilize our curriculum. As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, we have an active and enthusiastic student committee coordinating student support for the appointment of GSFS faculty and the re-institution of an introductory course.

Please consider joining us in Oberlin for our big event this spring. Complicated Relationships: Mary Church Terrell’s Legacy for 21st Century Activists will take place February 26-27, 2016, at Oberlin.

Terrell, an alumna of the Class of 1884, feminist, civil rights activist, and founder of the National Association of Colored Women and the NAACP, worked tirelessly across lines of race and gender to achieve a more just and equitable society; despite disappointments, Terrell remained loyal to Oberlin, struggling with its presidents and deans to reaffirm and strengthen its commitments to the education of women and people of color.

Cosponsored by the Oberlin College Archives, GSFS, and the Department of Africana Studies at the intersection of Black History Month and Women’s History Month, this symposium celebrates a gift to the Oberlin College Archives of significant additions to the Mary Church Terrell Collection. It celebrates 40 years of gender studies and more than 40 years of Africana studies at Oberlin. Moving beyond Terrell, we will think together about how her vision can help today’s activists shape their work for social justice. For more information about this event, please see http://new.oberlin.edu.office/alumni/events/mct-symposium.dot

Introducing Mary Church Terrell to a new generation of students has been one of the pleasures of the past year for me. Students from my First Wave American Feminisms class created digital mini-editions based on collections in the Oberlin archives, including an excellent project on Terrell. In Summer 2015, their work was revised and extended by a talented group of student editors and posted with the help of student web experts. Their projects, including transcriptions of Terrell’s correspondence with Oberlin College President Henry Churchill King, is available online at americanfeminisms.org.

This will be my final year as director of the GSFS Institute, and in fact, my final year on the Oberlin faculty. After 36 years I will be retiring. I know I will miss the extraordinary students with whom it has been my pleasure to work, but I will be very busy: during summer 2016 I will still be supervising students, working with a team to edit the digital projects from my spring 2016 class on Second Wave American Feminisms. In July 2016, I will be installed as president of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic. Their scholarly periodical, Journal of the Early Republic, is scheduled to pub-

continued on page 2
In November 2014, **ANN COOPER ALBRIGHT** became president of the Society of Dance History Scholars. In June 2015, she chaired the conference committee and produced *Cut and Paste: Dance Advocacy in the Age of Austerity*, an international dance studies conference in Athens, Greece, that addressed issues surrounding dance advocacy on a local as well as a global level, and also put dance advocacy into practice by supporting a dance community that has been hit especially hard by the ongoing financial crisis in Greece. In addition to a scholarly conference, there were free dance classes offered and curated performances by Greek companies. Scholars also donated over 100 books to seed the first international Dance Research Collection in Greece. In addition, Ann guest edited a recent special issue of *Choreographic Practices* on dance and disability. Titled *Dis/abilities: the Politics of a Prefix*, the international collection of essays was a collaboration with Gabriele Brandstetter, professor of theater and dance studies, University of Berlin, and the 2013 Harold Jantz lecturer in German at Oberlin. She also recently published “Split Intimacies: Corporeality in Contemporary Theater and Dance” in the new *Oxford Handbook of Dance and Theater*. Ann is pleased to report that Girls in Motion is still going strong and in its 12th year!

**ROSTOM MESLI** is an Oberlin-Michigan Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow and visiting assistant professor in GSFS this year. He received his PhD from the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan last year. His dissertation, “In Defense of Identity Politics: A Queer Reclamation of a Radical Concept,” analyzed 1960s and 1970s feminist movements and movements for sexual liberation. In fall 2015 he taught Feminist Research Methodologies, and in spring 2016 he will teach Theories and Controversies in the Study of Sexuality. In addition to turning his dissertation into a book, he is also working on a second book project titled *The Invention of Radical Sex; Or, How Sexual Deviants Became Political Radicals.*

**HARRY HIRSCH**, professor of politics, has completed a memoir about academic life, *Office Hours*, to be published by Quid Pro Books in spring 2016. The memoir speaks candidly about his experiences as a gay student, graduate student, and faculty member at various institutions, including Oberlin, the universities of Michigan and California, Harvard, and Princeton.

**Professor PAM BROOKS** is chair of the Department of Africana Studies and cochair of the spring 2016 symposium, Complicated Relationships: Mary Church Terrell’s Legacy for 21st Century Activists. She recently presented her work on her father’s memoir (Owen Brooks, a veteran of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement) at the Jimmie Travis Civil Rights Legacy Symposium Series at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Miss. Pam is especially excited about teaching Black Feminist Thought again in the spring 2016 semester.

**MARGARET KAMITSUKA** is the Francis W. and Lydia L. Davis Associate Professor of Religion. She has served on the GSFS Advisory Council from its inception and was director of GSFS from 2012 to 2014. She teaches courses at all levels on gender and religion and upper-level courses on methodologies in gender studies and religious studies. Her monograph, *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2007. Abstracts of the book’s chapters are available at Oxford Scholarship Online: [http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/search/results/1](http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/search/results/1). She was the editor of and contributor to *The Embrace of Eros: Bodies, Desires, and Sexuality in Christianity* (Fortress Press, 2010). Her essay “Feminist Scholarship and Its Relevance for Political Engagement: The Test Case of Abortion in the U.S.” appeared in the inaugural issue of *Religion and Gender* (Vol. 1, no. 1 [Fall 2011], [http://www.religionandgender.org/index.php/rg/article/view/2](http://www.religionandgender.org/index.php/rg/article/view/2)), the first refereed online international journal dedicated to the systematic study of gender and religion in an interdisciplinary perspective. She is working on a book-length discussion of abortion rights tentatively titled “Abortion, Women’s Experience, and Fetal Life: A Feminist Theological Proposal.”

**PATRICK O’CONNOR** was on sabbatical for the 2014-15 year. He spent the first nine weeks of the year in Buenos Aires, doing research for a book he is writing on Julio Cortázar (1914-84). While there, he met with some of the authors he continued on page 4
**ALUMNI UPDATES**

**JULIE BEICKEN ’03** completed her PhD in sociology at the University of Texas at Austin in spring 2015 and is now assistant professor of sociology at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Mont. She was married in August 2015 to Ryan P. Young. Wedding photo courtesy of Paul Gargagliano ’03.

**RACHEL BENSON MONROE ’08** was awarded licensure to practice psychotherapy in the state of Massachusetts. She is a licensed mental health counselor at MEDA, the Multiservice Eating Disorders Association, in Newton, Mass. MEDA is a nonprofit assisting individuals and their families working to overcome eating disorders and body image concerns, as well as providing vital public health information to those in the medical, nutritional, and mental health fields.

**EVA SCHLESINGER ’87** is a contributor to *Changing Harm To Harmony: Bullies & Bystanders Project* (available through Small Press Distribution). In June she produced “Healing the Wounds of Bullying: A Performance of Poetry and Playback Theatre.” The first time she performed at The Moth, she won the StorySlam. Eva was a Grand Slam contender on The Moth stage, and her story made the audience of 1,400 people laugh nonstop. She is also a contributor to *Chicken Soup For The Soul: Thanks To My Mom* and her poetry is forthcoming in *Cooking With The Muse* (Tupelo Press, 2015). In addition to writing, she improvises daily on five instruments, including xylopipes, Native American flute, and guitar as well as drawing and doing photography.

**MAJOR REPRESENTATIVES**

My name is Tony Moaton, Class of '17, and I have an individual major in performance studies and a minor in GSFS. I am serving as one of the two GSFS student representatives this year. It has been a very exciting start to the year to say the least; I was fortunate enough to be a part of the process of creating a petition to help improve the infrastructure of GSFS. Not only have the majors and minors become really excited about the possibilities of having an Introductory GSFS course reintroduced and a return to full-time GSFS faculty, but even more people outside of the GSFS field have been very supportive and are now more interested in taking GSFS courses. I can’t wait to see what happens next!

My name is Talia Nadel, Class of ’17, and I am a double major in GSFS and history. Like Tony, I am one of the student major representatives. I feel very lucky to be serving at such an important time for GSFS, when students both within and outside of the Institute are working together with faculty toward a common goal. It has been really exciting to mix my activist work with my academics in trying to get GSFS the resources and recognition it deserves through this petition. Tony and I are also working on setting up meetings for GSFS majors and minors to provide students with more opportunities to talk to the faculty about upcoming courses.

*Editor’s note: Tony and Talia’s petition garnered 447 signatures!*

**DIRECTOR’S LETTER, CONT.**

lish a roundtable I conducted and edited on directions in women’s history for the early American republic. And I will be finishing the book on which Gary Kornblith and I have been working too long. Now titled *Elusive Utopia: The Strange Career of the Color Line in an Abolitionist Community*, the book explores how the town of Oberlin retreated from its early commitment to racial egalitarianism, even as the town’s residents of color continued to push for full equality in an increasingly hostile environment over the course of the “long nineteenth century.”

I appreciate a special symmetry in my Oberlin career: when I arrived, I was fully immersed in what was then women’s studies; in fact, chairing the Women’s Studies Program Committee was my first administrative responsibility. Now, as I retire, directing the GSFS Institute will be my last official responsibility. Much has changed, but much still needs to be done to position gender studies at Oberlin to best serve our remarkable students today and tomorrow.
LEAH FREED MEMORIAL PRIZE
FALL 2014 RECIPIENTS

KAIA AUSTIN
Comparative American Studies and Environmental Studies major
Project: Interning at Justice Now
I spent my winter term interning at Justice Now, a prison abolition law office in Oakland, California, that works with and is led by people in women's prisons. Justice Now tackles prison abolition with a multifaceted approach, fighting for the rights of people currently in prison while recognizing the importance of avoiding tactics that will funnel more money into the prison system. This internship taught me the importance of refusing to compromise your ideals; many organizations make concessions in order to be “pragmatic,” however Justice Now’s commitment to its members inside prison means that it is committed to fighting for transformative change rather than reform. Using a gender justice framework, Justice Now challenges the idea that criminalization is the solution to violence against women and LGBTQ folks, as the ‘justice’ system itself is responsible for violence against people.

One example of this violence is the string of illegal sterilizations forced onto people in women’s prisons over the last decade. Justice Now was instrumental in getting an Anti-Sterilization bill passed in California, and part of the work I was doing was ensuring that the bill has in fact been implemented. I am incredibly thankful to have had the opportunity to learn from the wonderful people involved with Justice Now, and deeply admire the work that they do.

MADELEINE AQUILINA
Art History major
Project: Representing the Daily Manifestations of Feminist Theory
My project researches theory around the intersection of art and feminism. Currently, I am also developing a body of work inspired by a few key texts, most significantly works by Butler, Lorde, Lacan, and Munoz. I wanted to make work that articulated a feminist aesthetics that avoided the biologically ‘female’ body. This direction was inspired by Butler’s thesis in ‘Gender Trouble’ that challenges the fixed category of ‘woman’, and instead envisions a coalitional politics. Can feminist art exist in a world without ‘women’? My work also invokes the corporeal, inspired by Lorde’s work in ‘Uses of the Erotic’, but does not rely upon a marked ‘female’ body to articulate its politics. To me, it stills feel pertinent to acknowledge the centrality and power of the body to my feminism, as a resistance to what Lorde identifies as masculine rationality. In addition, I have derived two key images from the theory I read: the grid, which for me is a visual translation of Lacan’s Symbolic; and the horizon, which comes from Munoz’s work around queer hope and futurity. In my paintings, these symbols are ideologically opposed. The body and the horizon work to resist the grid that they cannot replace. From this point, I want to investigate daily manifestations of these theories. Much of the dynamics of feminist politics becomes accessible today via the Internet. I want to use found text on different message boards to investigate how theory is interpreted in the vernacular digital sphere. The use of text paintings will hopefully recall work by Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer, but the clout of my work with text has yet to fully realized.

PHYLIS JONES MEMORIAL AWARD
SPRING 2015 RECIPIENTS

GABRIELA GARCIA GRECO
Environmental Studies and Geology major
Project: Tacones Morados (“Purple Heels”)
Tacones Morados (“Purple Heels”) is a nonprofit research and art collective formed by Latin-American LGBTQ people, and it is currently based off of Bogotá, Colombia. Tacones Morados aims to create accessible spaces of collaboration, learning, leadership and empowerment for the LGBTQ community. The objective of these spaces is to promote the exchange of creativity and knowledge, as well as giving visibility to the voices and realities of the LGBTQ community in Colombia. Art can be a tool for self-examination, a means of acknowledging and healing from trauma, and a vehicle for personal and social conflict resolution, education, and social justice work. Therefore, it is a key tool in order to acknowledge, raise awareness of and heal from the violence that both LGBTQ people and women face in Bogotá—which ranges from daily microgressions to discriminatory laws and social cleansings. As a co-founder of Tacones Morados, I helped program and carry out our second workshop series this past summer, which was cost-free and open to all. This second series included creative writing, photography and scratch art workshops, as well as a discussion on media. I also developed and taught the creative writing workshops in person, and assisted with the other workshops. Tacones Morados is a growing project, and future goals
include the publication of an anthology, authored by the people in the Colombian LGBTQ community. This anthology will be a vehicle to represent marginalized voices and silenced narratives from the human and artistic perspective. We welcome donations at our fundraising website: https://www.gofundme.com/c5etkg

KARA MAHON
Africana Studies major
Saltwater/Down by the Riverside
Kara Mahon’s senior honors performance project presented through dance a spiritual journey addressing issues of childhood sexual abuse by invoking Afrekete, a Dahomey deity of the ocean, to achieve spiritual cleansing. It built on the African American Ringshout while also incorporating dance from Kara Mahon’s own Bajan ancestry.

HANNA WAGNER VAN REED
History major
Freewheeling Women?: The Normalization of Female Cycling in the U.S., 1890-1900
What led Susan B. Anthony to claim in 1896 that “the bicycle has done more for the emancipation of women than anything else in the world?” Between 1890 and 1900, American women’s cycling transformed from an unthinkable transgression into an accepted part of middle-class leisure culture. Using popular periodicals and specialized cycling magazines, this thesis considers how such a dramatic transition could be effected in ten years and asks what this rapid process of normalization reveals about contemporary views of the female body and the ability of bicycle manufacturers and advertisers to negate, obscure, or contest their sport’s radical implications. I specifically explore objections to women’s cycling based on the categories of aesthetic, sexual, and reproductive concerns, tracing how bicycle enthusiasts grappled in turn with each of these areas of anxiety as the 1890s progressed and women’s cycling shed its connotations of scandal. By chronicling this gradual process of acclimatization, this thesis seeks to complicate the prevalent assessment of the bicycle in secondary scholarship as an agent of women’s liberation, and instead bring to light the various conservative interpretations of the bicycle that made such later consequences possible.

PRIZES AND AWARDS CONT.

SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENT:
ANNE BUCKWALTER
Hi! I’m a senior pursuing Honors in GSFS. Based on a concept developed in the Feminist Research Methodologies course, I am creating a graphic narrative (think: comics) about gender studies topics and my personal experiences. The working title of my project is “Gendercomic,” and I will self-publish it both online and in print through the Oberlin Comics Collective.

GSFS FACULTY & STAFF

DIRECTOR:
Carol Lasser, GSFS Director, Professor of History

PROGRAM COORDINATOR:
Linda Pardee, GSFS, Rhetoric & Composition, Writing Associates Program, Comparative American Studies, Mediator at the OC Dialogue Center

GSFS ADVISORS (2015-2016):
Ann Cooper Albright, Professor of Theatre and Dance
Pamela Brooks, Associate Professor of Africana Studies
Harry Hirsch, Professor of Politics
Margaret Kamitsuka, Associate Professor of Religion
Greggor Mattson, Associate Professor of Sociology (Sem. II)
Patrick O’Connor, Associate Professor of Hispanic Studies
Ellen Wurtzel, Assistant Professor of History

STAY IN TOUCH!

Tell us what you are doing! We are interested in building networks of our alums involved in various fields and activisms. To follow GSFS at Oberlin, go to http://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/gender/ or follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/GSFS.OberlinCollege

You can support us by giving online at http://oberlin.edu/giving. When you reach this page click on Donate. When asked to choose a designation, please choose Other. Under Special Instructions, please type Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies, which will direct your donations to GSFS.

Finally, please be sure to update your email address (and other information) with Oberlin via the Alumni Association’s TAPPAN Network at https://alumni.oberlin.edu/. Registration is free and takes only a moment. Please direct questions to alumni@oberlin.edu or call the Alumni Association at (440) 775-8692.

Terrell, Oberlin College Class of 1884, a feminist and civil rights activist and a founding member of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and the NAACP, worked tirelessly across lines of race and gender to achieve a more just and equitable society. Despite disappointments, Terrell remained loyal to Oberlin, struggling with its presidents and deans to reaffirm and strengthen its commitment to the education of women and people of color.

The symposium is cochaired by Carol Lasser, director of the GSFS, and Pam Brooks, chair of the Department of Africana Studies. Cosponsored by the Oberlin College Archives, the Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies Institute, the Department of Africana Studies, the Oberlin Alumni Association of African Ancestry, and the Office of Alumni Relations—and held at the intersection of Black History Month and Women’s History Month—this symposium celebrates a significant gift to the Oberlin College Archives of original documents to the Mary Church Terrell Collection.

In addition, we’ll mark 40 years of gender studies and more than 40 years of Black studies at Oberlin. Moving beyond Terrell, we will think together about how her vision can help today’s activists shape their work for social justice. Please join us!

To register and to see a full schedule of events, visit http://new.oberlin.edu/office/alumni/events/mct-symposium.dot