Given today’s political and social climate, many individuals have found themselves frustrated. With so much negativity in the world, it has become almost imperative that we find a forum to express ourselves and speak out against the many social injustices that are happening across the country. A popular platform many have taken to express themselves is art in its myriad of forms. Art has always been a popular medium for individuals to make statements, political or otherwise. This is especially true for women who throughout history have expressed themselves through song, dance, dress, paintings, and stories.

A recent example of women’s artistic activism through art was the creation of the “pussyhat.” You may recall many wore the pussyhat during the Women’s March on Washington, to take back the derogatory term “pussy,” after its use by Donald Trump during his 2005 remarks where he stated that women allowed him to “grab them by the pussy.” We can see artistic activism reflected in poetry, such as the poem written by Nina Donovan, titled, “I Am a Nasty Woman.” We can also see it through the formation of organizations such as FORCE: Upsetting Rape Culture, an artist-activist collaboration to upset the rape culture that is so rampant in our society.

It is instances such as these that inspired the 2018 Women’s and Gender Studies conference theme, The Art of Activism. And it is with great excitement that we announce Donna Kaz as our keynote speaker! Kaz is a celebrated multi-genre author of such titles as Performing Tribute 911, JOAN, The Wanderer, and her memoir, UN/MASKED, Memoirs of a Guerrilla Girl on Tour. Her alter ego, Aphra Behn, is noted as a performer, playwright, producer, artistic director, a feminist activist, and a member of the Guerrilla Girls.
The Guerrilla Girls, formed in New York City in 1985, are an anonymous group of radical women activists and artists who work to bring racial and gender biases found in pop culture, art, film, and politics into focus. They are not seen in public without their gorilla masks on, which allows them to keep the focus on the important issues at hand, and all members take on pseudonyms of deceased female artists who have been rendered invisible by this male dominated industry. Donna Kaz has been a member since the late 90’s under the pseudonym of Aphra Behn, who was the first professional female English author in the 1600’s. Their posters, books, stickers, and billboards have become a prominent feature of the national and international art community. In addition to using their art as a statement, the Guerrilla Girls on Tour! has staged an annual protest around the time of the TONY awards since 2001 to put a spotlight on the sexism in theatre.

Have you felt angry, sad, and frustrated by recent events in which members of marginalized groups have had their rights revoked or have been targets of discrimination and oppression? Maybe you have asked yourself, “Where do I begin? I am only one person. What can I do? How can I effect change?” If that is the case, you will be sure to enjoy Kaz’s talk. Using her experiences as a member of the Guerilla Girls for twenty years, Donna Kaz will provide a guide to answer the most prominent question she has received throughout her book tour: How can one person institute change? The title of the keynote address will be: “Push/Pushback: 9 Steps to make a difference with art and activism.” She will also be doing a signing of her memoir, UN/MASKED, Memoirs of a Guerrilla Girl on Tour, which will be on sale during the keynote address. UN/MASKED follows the journey of unmasked Donna Kaz as she began to navigate New York City as a theatre artist at twenty-four years old and the masked Aphra Behn of the Guerrilla Girls, who is helping to lead a radical movement against discrimination in the arts. With alternating chapters, UN/MASKED creates two separate narratives: One of a survivor of domestic violence struggling to find herself in the world, and one of a radical, masked, activist fighting against bias and corruption in politics, art, film, and pop culture.

The keynote speech will take place at 7pm on April 9th in the Ballroom of the Henry Student Center. For more information regarding the Women’s and Gender Studies conference, please contact the director of Women’s and Gender Studies, Dr. Jennifer Thomas, at jennifer.thomas@wilkes.edu.

Table of Contents:

- Week Without Violence......................... pg.3
- What is Privilege?.............................pgs.4+5
- Faculty Spotlight..............................pg.6
- Meet the Interns...............................pg. 7
- Feminist Alliance...............................pg.8
- Events..........................................pg.8

For more information on Donna Kaz:
http://donnakaz.com/

For more information on the Guerrilla Girls:
http://guerrillagirlsontour.com/
https://www.guerrillagirls.com/

Contact WGS

Dr. Jennifer Thomas
Director of Women's and Gender Studies
jennifer.thomas@wilkes.edu

Rachel Kubicki
Women's and Gender Studies Intern
rachel.kubicki@wilkes.edu

Nicole Nyce
Women's and Gender Studies Intern
nicole.nyce@wilkes.edu
In a report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it was found that 55% of murders of women in 18 states between 2003 and 2014 were committed by an intimate partner and in 93% of these cases, they had been committed by a current or former romantic partner. These staggering statistics show that intimate partner violence (IPV) has reached epidemic proportions in the United States. What exactly is intimate partner violence? Why are women disproportionately affected compared to men? Who is at risk to experience it and what are we doing to reduce it?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies intimate partner violence as, “a serious, preventable public health problem that affects millions of Americans.” Who could forget the notion that we have an epidemic on our hands when it is a fact that three women and one man are killed by their partners in the United States every day, and that one in four women and one in seven men will experience intimate partner violence? These shocking statistics indicate that while IPV occurs to both men and women, the majority of victims are women. This is clearly gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence is “the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society.” In other words, women are targeted because they are women. IPV is a way for men to use their power and status to keep women in a submissive position.

When many people are first introduced to the topic of gender-based violence, especially that which occurs in relationships, there is always that one question: “Why remain in an abusive relationship? The person should just leave.” Unfortunately, if leaving one’s abuser was this simple, many more people would be able to do it. Instead, these situations are far more complex.

It is important to recognize that abuse within relationships often involves three separate phases: The tension building phase, where the tension builds over various issues; the acute battering episode, in which physical violence ensues; and the honeymoon phase, wherein the abuser expresses remorse and promises that things will get better. The honeymoon phase may help to shed light on why many individuals remain in abusive relationships despite the fact that the abuse is a cycle and will eventually return to the first phase, beginning again.

Victims may also feel that they somehow deserve the abuse, as abusers often psychologically abuse their victims and convince them that they cannot leave. And many victims are financially or otherwise dependent on their abusers. Taking the first step to getting help may seem impossible due to the fact that they will lose access to so many things such as housing, transportation, and money, not only for themselves but for their children as well.

Although identifying as a woman is a risk factor for experiencing IPV, it is best understood through an intersectional approach. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals are complex and that we have many social identities thus factors such as one’s race/ethnicity, being homeless, having a disability, or identifying as LGBTQ+ also heighten one’s risk for IPV.

In fact, in her 2016 op-ed for The Huffington Post, Dr. Tara Richardson-Heron, the CEO of the Young Women’s Christian Association, stated that, “over 92% of homeless mothers have experienced severe and/or sexual abuse... 80% of women with disabilities have been assaulted... lesbian, gay, and bisexual students are three times more likely than their heterosexual peers to be assaulted... and "48% of Latinas report that their partners’ violence against them actually escalated after they came to the United States.”

These are startling and important statistics about individuals who so very often are overlooked and left without a voice. If these individuals, who are historically marginalized, are left without a voice, how can they be expected to speak up to request help? If we do not understand the different causes of violence, how can we provide the resources to help? The fact of the matter is that they either cannot speak up or they will not for a variety of reasons, such as lacking resources that will provide them with the security necessary to leave their abuser.

We often fall into the trap of blaming the victim instead of asking: What causes people to commit acts of injustice? In other words, why are men psychologically and physically abusing the women who love them? IPV occurs in a social context. It is a socially constructed problem and not something that people are biologically driven to do. Therefore, we must also examine our culture to better understand how this epidemic has been allowed to occur.

We must look at the concept of misogyny: The ingrained prejudice against and hatred of women. We must look at the concept of rape culture wherein rape is prevalent and normalized. We must look at traditional gender roles, where the woman is expected to be submissive and plant to men who are seen as more powerful, dominant and therefore more capable.

Furthermore, the media sexualizes women and girls and normalize violence which results in the dehumanizing of women. Women are seen as objects whose purpose is for the pleasure of others. When we are desensitized to violence, we may become blind to violent acts when they happen around us. Worse yet, we risk no longer viewing violent acts, such as IPV, as a problem that needs to be addressed. It is imperative that we recognize the role our culture has played in creating the epidemic of IPV in order to make substantive changes.

Now that we better understand that IPV is not the victim’s fault and that it is, in part, the result of a society we have created, what can we do to battle this epidemic? What are some solutions? The CDC has defined IPV as being a, “serious preventable health problem.” The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence recognizes three types of prevention: Primary, which occurs before the violence has taken place; secondary, which is intervention focused on finding short-term solutions for survivors of ongoing violence as well as consequences for their abusers; and tertiary, which is ongoing support for survivors of intimate partner violence.

The secondary and tertiary types of prevention have been heavily addressed within our society through the abundant resources provided within communities and online. However, because IPV is preventable, it is incredibly important that we focus on the primary level of prevention to circumvent violence before it ever occurs. All of this can only happen through active education, which is why resources, and knowing where they are located in your community, are important.

In the Wilkes-Barre area we have women’s shelters and resource centers that you can turn to. There are also a multitude of organizations and websites with information on their pages, including the Young Women’s Christian Organization (YWCA), the largest and oldest multicultural women’s association in the world. Every year for the past twenty years, the YWCA sets aside the week of October 16th as a Week Without Violence. YWCA, on a mission to empower women, eliminate racism, and strengthen communities through helping families and standing up for social justice, has created this global movement to shed a light on gender-based violence and work towards its end. This includes IPV, trafficking, harassment, and sexual assault.

This year, WGS along with the Feminist Alliance Club will honor A Week Without Violence with an activity on campus that you can take part in to help raise awareness. We will also provide resources for victims and information for bystanders who may not be equipped to recognize the signs of gender-based violence. Stay tuned via our Facebook page and Wilkes Today for the specific events occurring on campus.
What is Privilege?
By Nicole Nyce

Consider the news stories on television and social media today and it is no surprise that privilege seems to be the new buzz word. Imagine a world in which a rapist like Brock Turner can have his actions justified because of his “potential” and reputation and have his sentence reduced to only three months while his victim, Emily Doe, is forced to carry around the burden of her attack for the rest of her life. Would the outcome have been different if he was of another race or ethnicity? What if he had belonged to a lower socioeconomic status and background?

What if the violent white supremacists rallies in Charlottesville were instead peaceful protests by a Black Lives Matter group? Would the coverage or public reaction have been different? Think about the fact that a leader can dehumanize and publicly damn people belonging to certain races and ethnicities as well as condone sexual assault, but still maintain the highest position of leadership in a democratic country and be respected and idolized by many.

Racism, sexism, and other issues of privilege and oppression have been rampant throughout history, but only now seem to be getting attention. “Privilege” is the common denominator between all of these events, but what does it mean? The term refers to the amount of unearned advantage one has based on the identities or groups they belong to such as their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, able-bodiedness, and so on. One way in which to help transform society into a more democratic and just place is to better understand privilege as it relates to power and oppression.

Privilege is used to help us understand power and the amount of status and opportunity one has in society. Each of us has different social identities, such as our gender, race, and class, and they intersect within an interconnected set of societal institutions and systems. Our society and culture ascribes value to each of our identities. For example, men are valued more than women, upper classes are seen as “better” than lower classes, and youth is cherished over old age. We all experience different levels of privilege depending on the aspect of our identity that is being focused on at any one time. A white middle-class woman can experience privilege if her socio-economic status or race were being focused on, but less privilege if her identity as a woman were to be the main focus.

Who decides which social identity will be deemed “better” or more privileged and how are these systems of advantage maintained? Various institutions and cultural norms have been created, resulting in some groups receiving and maintaining advantage, entitlement, and power over other groups.

In our country, voting takes place on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November. To be able to vote, one must have the time during the middle of the work week to cast their ballot. While voting is something every American citizen age 18 and over has the right to, often only those with certain privileges are able to participate in this important activity that shapes our society.

Individuals in low-wage jobs often do not have the flexibility to be able to get to their polling place before it closes, which in turn does not allow for their voice to be reflected in who their elected officials become. In this way, the law surrounding when elections take place only provides certain individuals with the ability to vote. This advantage enables certain groups to maintain their more privileged place in society.

Because privilege provides advantages for some social identities over others, it leads to oppression in the form of sexism, racism, classism, colonialism, and so on. Oppression refers to instances in which certain members of a society are mistreated, discriminated against, and denied opportunities based upon an aspect of their social identity.

Oppression becomes systematic and institutionalized, meaning it is fixed and established in our society, when certain societal institutions such as schools, churches or religious organizations, and the government sanction, and support the mistreatment of certain groups in a way that becomes socially acceptable. For instance, in our country Christian holidays are recognized and many people receive time off to enjoy them. We do not receive time off to celebrate the lunar New Year or Muslim holidays. In this way, social institutions have sanctioned Christianity as the “norm,” and other groups may be oppressed as a result.

Think about the gendered pay gap, in which women are paid significantly less than their male counterparts for performing the same job. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2016 women made approximately $80 for every $1 a man made. However, this was only true for white women. African-American women earned only $.65 for every $1 a white man made, and Latinas earned only $.58! How does this happen? More importantly, why does this happen?

The gender pay gap can be justified because men are seen as more deserving than women. The practice of paying women workers less than their male counterparts is often ignored or justified (i.e., it is the woman’s fault for accepting less), which oppresses women and encourages their mistreatment systemically. Furthermore, these cultural stereotypes perpetuate themselves when we internalize them.

In fact, research has shown that girls do not receive the same encouragement from parents and teachers to participate in activities that foster math and science skills. This has resulted in girls being far less likely to enter these careers. The cultural stereotype that women are less skilled in certain areas becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy which undermines women, and justifies their lower status.

In recent news, the Trump administration terminated a policy
instituted by the Obama administration which sought to lessen the gender pay gap. According to the Washington Post, this policy required private employers with over one hundred employees to reveal pay data to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This data would include pay details based upon gender as well as race and ethnicity to allow for more transparency in employee pay grades and to hold companies accountable for sexist and racist pay scales.

The decision by the Trump administration to terminate this policy has evoked outrage and is described as, “a deliberate attack on women” according to Tracy Sturdivant, cofounder of the “Make It Work” campaign. The government has used its power to suppress efforts to reduce the gender pay gap and in so doing has made the practice appear socially acceptable.

The media is another institution which perpetuates privilege and can be used to systematically oppress different groups. For example, most “geniuses” and smart people portrayed on TV or highlighted in news stories are white men. Think of popular sitcoms featuring “smart” characters such as the Big Bang Theory and Criminal Minds. The brilliant characters are men. When women are portrayed as smart they are seen as exceptions to the rule. This is problematic because it perpetuates the myth that men are naturally “brilliant” and intellectually superior to women.

Another pressing societal social justice issue is the prevalence of racism, white supremacy, and white privilege. As a race, white people and those who appear to be white experience more privilege in social situations and daily life than people of color. As previously mentioned, women of color earn less money for their work than do their white counterparts. And many people of color live in more fear of their safety than do white people.

For instance, people of color often fear law enforcement and are treated differently by police officers and the court system than are white people. This form of oppression has come to light in part due to the Black Lives Matter Movement. A major obstacle the Black Lives Matter Movement faces is the refusal of some white people to acknowledge that racism exists and to demonize individuals who speak out about racism. The point of the movement is to bring attention to the oppression and mistreatment black people face and not to discredit and belittle any other race or group.

The fact of the matter is not “all lives” are at risk of experiencing police brutality or mistreatment as black lives are. Most white people do not fear for their safety when confronted with officers of the law for minor offenses such as a traffic stop. In becoming educated about white privilege and systematic and institutionalized racism, we can work together to transform society to be more of a meritocracy in which people truly earn their place due to their efforts and not their unearned advantages.

So what can you do to transform society? First, critically reflect on the news, laws, gender roles, and our beliefs about social identities. Where do these ideas come from? Who benefits from these cultural beliefs? We need to be consciously aware of oppression. Education is key. Take a WGS eligible course. Second, we need to remember that recognizing our privilege does not necessarily mean we are racist or sexist. It does not mean we should feel guilty or ashamed. We cannot control the family we were born into. Third, do something with your privilege. Change social norms. When you see something oppressive, call it out!

During this tense and extremely important time in our country, remember the words of social rights activist Desmond Tutu: “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.” Do not tolerate racist or sexist jokes. Do not support companies that oppress certain groups of people. Become an activist in your everyday life. Finally, listen to others whose social identities are different from yours. There are so many ways to be a human being. Embrace diversity. Have empathy for others.

Privilege is a powerful social construct and must be used wisely. As American author, activist, and feminist bell hooks stated in her book Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black, “Even in the face of powerful structures of domination, it remains possible for each of us, especially those of us who are members of oppressed and/or exploited groups as well as those radical visionaries who may have race, class, and sex privilege, to define and determine alternative standards, to decide on the nature and extent of compromise.”

This reminds us that we have the power to make a difference in the world we live in. We do not have to be submissive recipients of oppression. We can decide on social norms and we can change the narrative of who is entitled to privilege and power.
WGS Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Heather Sincavage
by Rachel Kubicki

For this edition of Faculty Spotlight, we wanted to take an opportunity to welcome one of our newest WGS faculty members, Professor Heather Sincavage, by highlighting her hard work and incredible talent. If you have not had the pleasure of meeting Professor Sincavage, she serves as the Director of the Sordoni Art Gallery (opening October 6th at 4:30pm!) and is also an Assistant Professor of Integrative Media Art and Design. Prior to joining the Wilkes faculty in the Fall of 2016, she was a faculty member at the University of Maine at Presque Isle, where she also acted as the Director of the Reed Gallery. In addition to being a teacher and heading art galleries, Professor Sincavage is also an accomplished visual artist, using such mediums as drawing, performance art, and sculpture as part of her practice. I had the privilege to speak with Professor Sincavage about her art, her inspirations, and her new roles here on campus.

To get started, I asked Professor Sincavage how she knew she had an interest in art—has being an artist always been something she wanted to pursue? The answer was a resounding yes. “I love what I do and feel so fortunate that I am able to create. There was never a question about what I would pursue. It was the one thing that has always been a part of me.” Indeed, she was introduced to art at a young age. Her father is an artist and her mother a (now retired) local arts advocate in Lehigh Valley. “For as long as I can remember, my parents took my sister and me into New York to the museums and galleries,” she explained. “I feel very fortunate that my parents valued exposing me to the art world—without any censoring of material and treating me any different because I was a child.”

Having spent most of her life around art, I had to ask: Where do you draw your inspiration from, and through what mediums do you express them? Professor Sincavage replied that she uses a variety of mediums including performance, sculpture, and drawing. I use the body as a form of measure to investigate emotional politics. Most recently, that has been an exploration of “longing.” What that means is that if I use an object or perform a task, it most likely references the body or time in one way or another.

An example of this is one of Professor Sincavage’s recent performances, titled ‘A Transfiguration of Longing,’ where she rapped a stone that was ten ounces against a wall for seven hours. The stone represented the human heart which, on average, weighs ten ounces, while the seven hours stood for seven years of “performing the task of longing and watching its destruction.” As for where she draws her inspiration from, Professor Sincavage named Yoko Ono and her ‘Cut Piece.’ Performed first in 1964, Yoko Ono sat upon a stage with a pair of scissors and invited the audience to approach and cut away the cloth of her “best suit” piece by piece until it fell away from her body, breaking down the division between art and life while creating a powerful narrative regarding the idea of viewing without responsibility.

Speaking of her own performance art, Professor Sincavage’s most recent piece, “The Burden of This” was an extremely moving performance that referenced the emotional baggage we all contend with, along with, “the idea that our emotions are something that are both very real and not real at all. Our experiences are impacted by our emotions and often we use art to explore the effects of that in our bodies, yet we cannot pick them up and prove their existence.” In this performance, Professor Sincavage pulled her own body weight in manure down the street. “It made me very angry but I thought it important to complete. Working through the difficulty not only strips bare my vulnerability but in doing so, I hope that people can relate to their own lives, understand the necessity of perseverance, and experience empathy.” When asked if there was a particular message she tries to send with her own work, Professor Sincavage replied, “I believe I do my work—and my work deals with difficult feelings—to encourage empathy in others.”

On that note, the theme of our 2018 WGS Conference is Activism Through Art. Some of the most powerful statements can and have been made through art. It is a very enthralling and different type of activism as compared to more “traditional” forms of activism such as protesting, holding rallies, or contacting our representatives. I asked Professor Sincavage if she had any favorite artist-activists or groups or pieces of her own. She stated that right now is an important time for art and activism, and recognized the pussyhat movement that occurred right before the Women’s March on Washington. “The most basic movements—the pussyhat—I find to be monumental. Anyone could make one and therefore they were artists in solidarity...That is a beautiful thing.”

As far as some of her favorite artist-activists? Professor Sincavage named Félix González-Torres, a visual artist who used his work to address his sexuality and AIDS. Specifically, she mentioned his piece ‘untitled (portrait of ross in LA)’ where 178 lbs of wrapped taffy, signifying his partner’s ideal body weight when healthy, was piled in a corner on the floor of a room. “Visitors were invited to take a piece of the candy and eat it to know the sweetness of his partner before dying from AIDS.”

Along with González-Torres, she also noted gender non-conforming trans masculine visual artist Cassils, formerly known as Heather Cassils, and the piece, “Becoming the Image.” Here, she explained, “Cassils attacked a 2000 lb clay block that was only illuminated by camera flashes, referencing how the LGBTQ community struggle while in the eye of the media.” This eventually evolved into a sculpture which is titled, “Resilience of the 20%.” Here, the block of clay was casted bronze. This represented the increase of the murders of trans individuals by 20 percent.

In addition to this, she has also been made aware of sexism and discrimination in the art world when trying to represent the human body in her work. At times this requires nudity, which makes some uncomfortable. While her work is not salacious, Professor Sincavage has experienced that some audiences would sexualize her work. “On one hand, I worry because because the rights of what we do with our bodies are in jeopardy. And on the other hand, I am optimistic because I see so much changing in this generation of students. It’s encouraging to see smart acceptance of one another’s individuality as opposed to fitting with an image constructed in media. All of this contributes to how viewing the body is accepted.”

Another way Professor Sincavage uses art to break boundaries and work towards gender equality is through teaching. This semester Professor Sincavage is teaching Art 298: Women in Art. If you have ever taken an art history course, you may have noticed that the artists studied are white men. Very rarely are the works of women included in these courses and if they are, a token woman is discussed. This is even true for those who go to art school. Professor Sincavage said she found herself asking, “Why? Why are women artists omitted from textbooks? Why do women have men sign and take credit for their art? Why are more women likely than men to be denied the right to make art? Issues of gender have been encoded in art practices, exhibition, and collection because we are seeing that in history, women have been denied opportunity to practice an art form and when they did, their abilities were questioned, or even stolen.” The purpose of the class is not only to expose students to women artists, but also to expose how and why sexism has plagued the art world.

In addition to her role as Assistant Professor, Professor Sincavage is also the Director of the Sordoni Art Gallery. She said that the gallery is, “an opportunity for students to see academia work in a different way,” and she has been working to find innovative ways in which she can connect classroom content with the visual arts. The gallery will be displaying an exhibit she has curated from October 6 to December 20, titled 15 Minutes: From Image to Icon, which will focus on the work of Andy Warhol. In addition to this, she will bring scholar Dr. Benjamin Kahan to campus on October 25 to discuss the influence of Andy Warhol’s celebrity on his sexuality in his lecture “Andy Warhol is a V: Philosophical Bachelorhood and the Celibate Factory.” This is a part of the Warhol Wednesday Lecture Series and will be taking place at 4:30pm on the KC, Room 135.

The WGS department is very excited to have Professor Sincavage on campus! Not only has she already begun to provide new and interesting perspectives, but she will be bringing fascinating exhibits to the Sordoni Art Gallery and offering thought-provoking WGS courses to the art curriculum where students will benefit from learning about art from a more inclusive perspective. If you are interested in learning more, you can email Professor Sincavage, whose office is Rm 139A in the Karambelas Center, at Heather.Sincavage@wilkes.edu.
Meet the Interns

Hi everyone! My name is Nicole Nyce and I am a junior psychology major with a women's and gender studies minor. I am very excited to be one of the interns this semester and look forward to getting involved within the Wilkes community. I hope to spread awareness about different gender-equality issues such as the hardships women face trying to advance in their careers as well as everyday sexism which describes incidents that mistreat or otherwise belittle women, such as the act of catcalling or denying a woman an opportunity based solely upon her gender.

I have always been interested in gender. I faced adversity when I was younger and wanted to play video games and physically aggressive sports like football. I was teased because these were not "feminine" activities. This upset me. As a child I did not understand gender roles and norms. Eventually I found joy in other activities, such as reading and art, as well as theater and music, where there was less backlash towards my participation likely because these activities fit the "feminine" gender role. As I continued to grow and mature, the notion of everyday sexism became evident as I witnessed women being treated unfairly in everyday life. I yearned to understand more about the history of gender inequality and to find ways to try and help combat sexist thoughts and behaviors.

My understanding of gender inequality was heightened after having completed the Introduction to Women’s Studies: WS 301 class. The course helped me understand the oppressive nature of institutions such as schools and workplaces which create and often justify gender inequality. Workplaces often belittle the work of women by paying them less than men which is referred to as the gender pay gap. Similarly, schools often encourage girls to become interested in more "feminine" academics such as reading and writing as opposed to math and science. This course also helped motivate me to want to participate in events that advocate for the advancement of women such as the Women's March on Washington in 2017. I was unable to attend the event in person, but used the power of social media to help show my support and to promote the event. In addition, WS 301 connected me with like-minded individuals who also felt strongly about social justice and the rights of oppressed and marginalized groups and people.

For anyone interested in women's rights or social justice, I highly recommend this course.

I am so excited to be a part of a program that seeks to make a difference in our community and offers many opportunities to get involved by hosting programs, film screenings, and even having guest speakers and panel discussions. This semester WGS will host a “Week Without Violence” in which we bring awareness to gender-based violence. This is just one of the many events WGS will host to help spread awareness and encourage community participation and unity.

I will hold office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays from 11am to 2pm and on Thursdays from 2:15pm until 5:15pm in Breiseth 323. Please stop by and chat about social justice events you would like to see happen at Wilkes or any other questions you may have about the WGS program. You may also contact me via email at nicole.nyce@wilkes.edu.

Hi everyone! My name is Rachel Kubicki and I am excited to be returning for my second semester as one of the WGS interns. I am a senior majoring in criminology and psychology with minors in sociology and WGS. As a returning intern, I am very excited to organize activities and to continue to make a positive impact on campus and in the community. From a young age, the social injustices in our country and across the world have interested and infuriated me. It was not until I transferred to Wilkes that I was introduced to the idea that I was not helpless in this exhausting battle. Wilkes gave me, and continues to give me, the tools and environment I need to open my eyes and see that I hold the power to make a change in the world, through being educated and speaking out against things like rape culture, misogyny, and the stigmas and misconceptions that so often surround sexuality and gender identity.

Something I have grown very passionate about over the past few years is the idea of "everyday sexism." I was introduced to this through the Everyday Sexism Project, founded by Laura Bates, in 2012. While we certainly live in a day and age that is much more liberal compared to the past, there is still so much work to be done when it comes to sexism, women’s rights, and equality not only in the United States, but all around the globe.

Because of the modern society we live in and the advances that women have made over the years, it is becoming more and more difficult to open up a dialogue about the sexism that is still so rampant in our society due to the fact that many individuals now see women as being treated “equal” to men. Some of this sexism has recently found itself in the spotlight, such as gender rating insurance premiums wherein women pay more for their coverage than men. This was legal until the Affordable Care Act. But sometimes it is not so obvious, nor is it being put in the spotlight in order to be corrected. Much of this sexism is so engrained in our everyday lives that it can be tough to notice. In fact, often we accept such sexism as being a “normal” part of our society and lives. An example is the price difference between plain regular pens, and those that are labeled “for her” (and, for the record, it is $6.17 on Amazon). It is these subtle nuances that we usually do not think twice about that have captured my interest. Now that I am more aware, I challenge myself to not only look at things critically, but to call out sexism when I see it.

I am hoping to see new faces and continue working with familiar ones on campus throughout the Fall 2017 semester. If you need to contact me, I can be reached by email at rachel.kubicki@wilkes.edu. You can also find me in Breiseth 323 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11-1, along with Wednesdays and Fridays from 3-5. Please feel free to stop by to chat, ask questions, share what issues are important to you, and offer some ideas for what you would like to see from us this semester!
Wilkes University’s Feminist Alliance Club
by Nicole Nyce

Looking to join a club on campus but not sure which one is right for you? Feel strongly about women's rights and helping make a difference in your community? Look no further because the Feminist Alliance is the right club for you!

Club president, Toni Pennello, founded the club last spring because she noticed that students were angry, sad, and frustrated with the sexism, misogyny, racism, and other social injustices that came to light during and since the 2016 presidential election. She wanted a place where students who wanted to make a positive change could come together and be empowered to create a more socially equitable campus, community, and world. With the guidance of Dr. Thomas, the director of WGS, Toni was successful in petitioning student government for official club status.

The purpose of the club is to foster a sense of multiculturalism and gender equality on campus, and to represent and protect women and other marginalized and oppressed groups including transgender individuals and people of color. Feminist Alliance members seek to reach this goal in a variety of ways.

For instance, social justice issues, feminism, and diversity are discussed during club meetings. Members decide on issues that they want to learn more about and then we come together to share information. Through planned community events, such as film screenings and panel discussions, the club also informs the community about equity issues and social justice. In these ways, club members can be agents of positive change. Anyone who is interested in learning more about feminism, equity, and ways to transform society to be a more just place is encouraged to join!

This semester the club has a number of exciting events planned! For instance, they will host the second annual Comfy Clothes Fashion Show on October 20th at 4pm in the SUB lounge. This is held in conjunction with Love Your Body Day and is meant to poke fun at traditional fashion shows that create unrealistic beauty standards for women. See below for more information.

Have any clothing you do not wear anymore? Donate it to the club! They are organizing a "Pop Up Thrift Store" the proceeds of which will support Planned Parenthood. Everyone is invited to purchase the gently used goods that will be for sale. There will also be information about the variety of services Planned Parenthood provides for free or at reduced cost including cancer screenings, STD/STI testing, pelvic exams, and so much more. The event will take place in October. More information will be posted around campus. The club will also host an informal discussion about what feminism is, women's health care and reproductive rights, violence against women, and more.

If these are events that are of interest to you, consider joining the club! Meetings take place every other Thursday. For more information or to join contact Toni at toniann.pennello@wilkes.edu.

Love Your Body Day: October 17, 2017
by Nicole Nyce

Love Your Body Day (LYBD) is a campaign established by the National Organization for Women Foundation to bring awareness to the narrow, unrealistic beauty standards society imposes on girls and women, and to encourage women to value themselves for their minds and contributions to their family, community, and society. On Tuesday, October 17th, WGS along with Psi Chi, the national psychology honors society, will celebrate LYBD by offering self-care activities, such as coloring mandalas, in addition to information about healthy living on the first floor the SUB. You are also welcome to complete a mental health screening or talk to our campus counselors, who will be available to answer any questions you might have. Anonymous mental health screenings are also available online at http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/WILKES.

And you will want to pull out your coziest clothes and slippers to take part in our second annual, “Comfy Clothes Fashion Show,” organized by the Feminist Alliance Club. This special event is tentatively set to take place in the SUB Lounge on October 20th at 4pm. It is meant to poke fun at traditional fashion shows which feature unrealistically thin models showcased in uncomfortable, impractical outfits, as well as to highlight the importance of being comfortable in one’s own body. Anyone can enter! Just wear your comfiest clothes. Participants will be judged on categories such as how “soft” and “warm” their outfits are. And we will have free comfort food. For more information contact Toni Pennello, Feminist Alliance president, at toniann.pennello@wilkes.edu. We hope you can join us for a night of empowerment, food, and fun!