

# LA/W/S NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2014

## Exciting Changes Ahead



**By Sharon M. Meagher,  
Chair of The Department of Latin American Studies and Women's  
Studies (LA/W/S)  
Director of Women's Studies**

Next year we will see a change of leadership, as Dr. Jamie Trnka will become the new Chair of the Department of Latin American Studies and Women's Studies (LA/W/S) and Director of Women's Studies. Dr. Trnka is a brilliant professor and a leader who will take the department and the Women's Studies program to the next level, working side-by-side with Dr. Yamile Silva.

In her first year as Director of the Latin American Studies program, Dr. Silva has done an outstanding job.

I am proud of what my colleagues and I have accomplished together. During my leadership we made institutional changes that allowed the Women's Studies and Latin American Studies programs to form a new department. More importantly, we created and implemented two new majors, one in Latin American Studies and one in

Women's Studies. Enrollments are up, as are course offerings, and we are preparing to host a visiting Fulbright scholar next year.

Having accomplished much and seeing a new generation of leaders emerge, it is now time for me to move on. We have very capable leaders in Drs. Trnka and Silva. It's an exciting time!

I have accepted an appointment as Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and Professor of Humanities at Widener University in Chester, PA (metropolitan Philadelphia). In this new opportunity, I will greatly benefit from all that I have learned at the University of Scranton, and particularly all that I have learned from my colleagues and students in Women's Studies and Latin American Studies. I also will be drawing on my research and service in the Scranton community and in public philosophy, as Widener is deeply engaged in the city of Chester.

Of course, I am sad to leave my students, colleagues, and friends at the University of Scranton, but I know that everyone will continue to do great things. I thank everyone for their dedication to LA/W/S programs. And I wish everyone all the best for a happy and successful future!



Photo by Laura García Silva  
Cartagena, Colombia

## A Note from the LAS director

**By Dr. Yamile Silva**

Dear Students, Alumni and Friends:

The past year has been a busy one for the Latin American Studies Program. We have welcomed some keynote speakers and cultural events and our students have participated in our courses, in service learning and study away trips to Latin America, and in various curricular and co-curricular activities on campus.

Among the different events LAS sponsored this year, one of the highlights was the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the September 11, 1973 military coup d'état in Chile. We showed three movies related to that event during the Fall and welcomed Dr. Lisa

Baldez from Dartmouth College in November.

Our Spring semester started with the visit of the award winner writer from Argentina, Betina González. Dr. González visited Dr. Susan Mendez's class where students read one of Gonzalez's short stories. She also talked on "Bilingualism and Fiction Writing" on February 17.

I would like to thank all of my colleagues for their willingness to contribute time and energy to the Program; their work to support LAS reflects their commitment to their students and their love for the region. I have also learned a tremendous amount from our students—their intellectual curiosity and public engagement are inspirational. I have relied upon the exceptional

organizational skills and very hard work of Donna Rupp; the Program would not be what it is without her work as our secretary.

Finally, we also celebrated the accomplishments of our friend, teacher, and colleague, Sharon Meagher, who has accepted an appointment as Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and Professor of Humanities at Widener University. Dr. Meagher will be missed and we wish her success in her new job.

# Alumni Focus: Timothy McCormick

After graduating from the University with a double major in Hispanic studies and Latin American studies, I chose to continue my academic career by entering into a doctoral program in Spanish linguistics at Georgetown University. Although I never realized it at the time, I now see that this path towards Spanish linguistics was practically laid out for me. During my sophomore and junior years at Scranton and abroad, a series of self-discoveries made within the classroom and beyond guided me to the realization that the study of languages and language-learning was more than an interest; it was a passion. I matriculated into the program in the fall and have thoroughly enjoyed every moment of each class. My background in Latin American studies has also served me far beyond the classroom.

Many of my peers come from Latin American countries, and my knowledge of and interest in their respective cultures has resulted in the development of beautiful friendships I expect to last far longer than the five years we will be together at Georgetown.

Most of the students who graduate from the program focus their research and dissertation on second language acquisition, a field of applied linguistics. As a first-year graduate student, my classes are still theoretical and foundational, but with every week, I can see myself becoming a more analytical linguist, a trait I attribute to my major classes at Scranton. Although I am within the Spanish department here at Georgetown, the focus is very different from my undergraduate classes, as it is very science-oriented and data-driven. However, the beauty of both the

Hispanic studies and Latin American studies majors at Scranton is that, while each assumes a specific emphasis as the central theme of the major, the true lesson learned at the end of any semester extends far beyond: For example, the position of women in the Spanish-speaking world or the educational systems of Latin America and their flaws. Rather, these classes teach their students how to think critically, how to go beyond the problem, even beyond the solution, and consider the problems that a solution can cause down the line. For me, this is the essence of a truly Jesuit education. And although the problems I address in my classes have shifted from societal to empirical, the benefit of having had an education that molds the mind to be a tool for critical thought has given me an advantage in this next stage of my academic career that has made all the difference.

**Timothy McCormick graduated in 2013 with a double major in Hispanic studies and Latin American studies.**

**He was the LAS Award Winner in 2013.**



# From our Students' Desk: Stephanie Boccuzzi, LAS Award Winner 2014

Throughout my academic career at The University of Scranton I have been presented with countless opportunities to enhance my education. As a part of the Latin American Studies program, I have come to understand and appreciate how this concentration has complimented not only my Spanish major, but also my study of International Business. The combination of these programs has challenged me to think differently and pursue a future I never thought to be possible.

Touching down in Buenos Aires, I felt an indescribable peace and confidence as I imagined myself becoming part of Latin American culture. There were many uncertainties regarding the experience, but I was comforted when I realized I could rely on what I had previously learned in Spanish and Latin American Studies courses. As I became well acquainted with the city, earning the title of *porteña* by locals, I experienced a profound sense of belonging. I took a rest from the business curriculum and immersed myself in courses specific to Latin American Studies and Argentina. I realized I not only wanted to continue learning more about this region of the world, but I desired to live there. Confident after this semester abroad, I returned to campus eager to maintain the level of fluency I had achieved, but also curious to explore new opportunities. As a result, I began tutoring Spanish through CTLE and I joined the Student/Faculty Mentorship Program as a Teaching Assistant. Throughout the semester I was able to observe and participate in an intermediate level Spanish course, as well as meet independently with the professor to reflect, question, and evaluate teaching methods. I also began volunteering at the Leahy Clinic Center for the Uninsured as a translator.

My role then expanded to Board Member and Co-Director of Medical Spanish Workshops. I am now responsible for planning workshops for students who hope to gain hands-on experience with native speakers and practice Spanish beyond the four walls of a



classroom. Every other week my co-director and I develop lesson plans and build activities to simulate the real life Spanish language interactions seen in the clinic.

Continually returning to the experiences I had studying in Buenos Aires, traveling in Peru, and volunteering in Spain, I decided to apply for a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship in Colombia this past summer. Although I was not selected as a national finalist, I became aware of several other opportunities of equal interest to me. It brings me great happiness to share that I have been accepted as a volunteer at The Working Boys Center in Quito, Ecuador where I will work to support the center in a variety of ways. Choosing to compliment my business degree with Spanish and Latin American Studies has not only helped me to discover my passion, but has also made me equipped to pursue it.

# LAS Film Festival

## Spring 2014

February 11, *Después de Lucía* (México, 2012)

March 25, *El niño pez* (Argentina, 2011)

April 12, *La Yuma* (Nicaragua/Méx 2009)



## Fall 2014

September 23, *La teta asustada* (Perú, 2009)

October 28, *La batalla de los Invisibles* (México, 2010)

November 18, *El elefante blanco* (Argentina, 2012)



## **Why Women's Studies?**

**by Cassie Anderson**

I never knew what a double standard was or that it existed until my brother and I were old enough to begin dating. When he had a girl over, he was allowed to close his bedroom door; I was told to keep mine open.

I would always ask my mother why this was and tell her it wasn't fair. In return, she would give me excuses about how my brother and I were different or she would ignore my complaints and inquiries all together.

Once I became aware that something in this world existed that could make someone feel that they could treat me differently from another person, it was all I could think about. How and why did gender inequality exist? What could I do about it?

I spent the rest of my high school days counting down the minutes until it was over and researching other causes that I felt passionate about. By the time graduation rolled around, I had gathered all of these feelings that I didn't know what to label them. All I knew was that at eighteen, I wanted to change the world.

I'm not sure if I can pinpoint a certain moment in time where I knew that enrolling in the women's studies program was the perfect thing to do. Given my passions, a friend recommended the University's program to me. But I knew that it was the right thing to do after my first class of "Feminism and Social Change." I didn't enroll until my senior year, but Dr. Meagher was able to help me figure out how to complete the concentration—which just shows that it is never too late!

Through my involvement with the Jane Kopas Women's Center and the year that I have spent as a student in the Women's Studies program, I have finally found the right words to describe those feelings I uncovered in high school. I'm an advocate, a feminist, a social change agent; I want to spend the foreseeable future lending my voice to those whose voices are stifled or ignored. The Women's Studies program and the Women's Center have given me all of this and more.

When I graduate in June with a bachelor in Political Science and a concentration in Women's Studies, I will be ready to start empowering others and listening to every voice, just as the Women's Studies program has taught me to do.

*This is the text of Sharon Meagher's Keynote Address presented at the Jane Kopas Women's Center 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Luncheon, March 1, 2014*

## **Feminist Praxis: 20 Years of Collaboration between the Women's Center and Women's Studies at the University of Scranton**

**Sharon M. Meagher, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy, Chair of the Department of Latin American Studies and Women's Studies (LA/W/S), and Director of Women's Studies**

I want to begin by thanking Justine Johnson, Dr. McShea, Dean King, and the entire Student Affairs Division for funding and otherwise lending support to this special event. And I also thank the students, faculty, staff, and graduates who are here—and also the many who could not be here—all those who have worked tirelessly to found the center and to carry on its good work. And last but not least I want to extend a warm welcome and hearty note of appreciation to the former Women's Center directors who are here — Karla Weiss, Elizabeth Randol, and Jane Kopas. It has been much too long since we last welcomed Jane to this campus, but we all honor her every day. During her storied career at the University of Scranton, Jane embodied a commitment to peace, social justice, and gender equity, and even though few faculty and even fewer students now associated with the Center had the pleasure to work shoulder-to-shoulder with Jane (as I did), we all still sit on the coaches that Jane bought for the Center and we all continue to associate the highest and best ideals of the campus and the Center with the name and person "Jane Kopas." To those alumnae/i who have travelled to come here: welcome home to the University of Scranton, and welcome back to this special community of women and men who fight tirelessly for social justice on all fronts, paying particular attention to gender injustices and the ways that it is connected to other oppressions such as racism, homophobia, ageism, and classism.

We are here to celebrate the tremendous accomplishments of the JKWC, and it therefore seems fitting to talk about feminist praxis—since that was the impetus for the founding of the Center. Praxis is defined as "the synthesis of theory and practice seen as the basis for political and economic change." (OED online, def. 1). "As bell hooks discusses in her article "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression" there is no feminist movement without praxis"

(<http://afeministtheorydictionary.wordpress.com/2007/07/02/praxis/>).

Paolo Freire's concept of praxis informs the feminist understanding and is based on the analysis of the simplest element of human dialogue: the word (Freire, 1994). Freire explains that the word is two dimensional, comprised of reflection and action. He contends that these two dimensions are "in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed—even in part—the other immediately suffers" (Freire, 1994, p. 68).

Feminists know that they need helpful theories—theories that reveal the world in meaningful ways and enable them to act differently, to navigate the world differently—to move! But we also know that when we move we keep learning and we need to keep reformulating our theories; sometimes when we move we learn that our theories are not as helpful or as adequate as we had thought or hoped and we need to use what we learn on the move to reshape our theories and redirect our movements.

I hope that it is clear why feminist praxis is important to women's studies and to the Jane Kopas Women's Center. It is too simple to say that women's studies provides the theory and the women's center provides the practice. While some women's studies courses focus on theory, others invite students to imagine women's experiences through literature, theater, or visual arts while still others analyze the social and behavioral phenomena and social institutions that help or hinder gender justice and change. So women's studies courses themselves integrate theory and experience—but in a very different way than is possible through the JKWC. Likewise the JKWC does not merely provide "practice"; programs are developed after clear consideration of needs, challenges, and problems, and students often alter their theoretical conceptions in light of their experiences developed not just through the programs but through their skills and their experiences as event planners, team members, and campus leaders.

### **Great accomplishments:**

We are currently doing a survey of women's studies alumnae/i and while we do not yet have the full results, it is clear that those graduates who were most deeply shaped by their experiences here were those who combined their experiences in women's studies classrooms with volunteer or paid work at the JKWC. And I'm proud to say that many are now sharing their

knowledge and experience by volunteering to serve as mentors to our current students.

Feminist praxis is developed and carried out through our work in community and solidarity with one another, and we have made great things happen for both the University and for those who participated in this work. When I first arrived on this campus and we started this work, there was a significant group of faculty, staff and students committed to feminism and to making positive changes on campus, but there was also significant blow-back: for example, posters or announcements for anything feminist would often be torn down as soon as they were put up and there was strong, vocal opposition to both the formation of the women's studies program and the founding of the center. We had no funding for either a women's studies program or a women's center, and countless faculty, staff members, and students worked dozens of hours per week to realize our dream. Although today there still are a few anti-feminists on-campus, students with passions for feminism, equality, anti-racist work, and social justice flock to the Jane Kopas Women's Center and to the women's studies program; and other students develop those passions through their interactions with the Center and/or women's studies classes.

### **So what's next?**

I think that the most exciting challenge that faces both the women's studies program and the JKWC is to work together to help students find smoother paths when making the transition from their undergraduate lives to their post-graduate work and life commitments.

I challenge us to consider initiatives that might strengthen our work and that will require collaboration between the women's studies program and student affairs:

- 1) Founding a Women's Global Leadership Academy: some of us have been talking for several years about the possibility of offering a women's global leadership workshop that would bring the international feminist leaders, local women leaders and our faculty and students together to learn from one another and grow as leaders.
- 2) Working for Justice seminar that incorporates intentional work at and with the JKWC and even more alumnae/i involvement as men-

tors. This semester I have been piloting a seminar for advanced students in Women's Studies, Latin American Studies, Peace & Justice Studies, and Environmental Studies. The course offers students the opportunity to reflect on their academic and extra-curricular work at the University and to think critically about opportunities for meaningful paid post-graduate work that focuses on social change and social justice.

Together we can continue to make the Center and the Women's Studies program prosper and grow—but the purpose in doing both is to insure the continual betterment of the University as a place for the formation of our students as adults committed to social justice and the eradication of oppression. That work is best accomplished through on-going dialogue.

Thank you, and thank you all for coming. Let's keep the conversation going — here and after we leave today.

### **Announcing Visiting Fulbright Scholar in Residence Dr. Farid Benavides, recent Minister of Justice, Colombia.**

**In the fall 2014 semester, Dr. Benavides will offer two courses:**

**WOMN 384 ST: Women at Peace TR 10:00- 11:15am**

**LAWS 384 ST: Peace Processes in Latin America, TR 1:00pm - 02:15pm**

*Both courses will be offered in English. Courses fulfill Women's Studies and/or Latin American Studies course electives. Political Science credit may be available; see the Chair of Political Science for additional information.*