
LA/W/S NEWSLETTER

Notes from the Chair

Happy Spring!

The Department of LA/W/S and its two programs, Latin American Studies and Women's and Gender Studies, have had a very productive semester. Inside the newsletter you will find information about many activities, events, and projects carried out by faculty and students. Specifically, the newsletter features Dr. Mike Allison's honors tutorial on immigrants and asylum and showcases the profiles of students Isaiah Livelsberger and Crysta O'Donnell who are actively involved in helping the immigrant population. The newsletter also features an interview with LA/W/S alumna Kylie Mignat who graduated in 2018 and went to NYU to pursue a MA in Latin American and Caribbean Studies; interviews with LAS concentrators Rachel Weber and Katia Ramirez; details about events organized by the Jane Kopas Women's Center (Take Back the Night will be held in April); information about Dr. Billie Tadros' class on bodybuilding; an interview with Women's and Gender Studies major Emma Barber; a synopsis of the films featured in the LAS Spring film series; faculty scholarship contributions; and information about a community-based learning event on April 12th, co-sponsored by LA/W/S. A special thank you, as always, to our work study students, Sam Gurn and Katia Ramirez, and to LA/W/S secretary Donna Rupp whose invaluable work is key to the success of the department. Best wishes for a safe and healthy Spring and Summer!



Dr. Marzia Caporale
Chair of LA/W/S
Director, Women's and Gender Studies

Dear LAS Friends,

I want to start my note quoting the poem “The Year of the Goldfinches” from poet Ada Limón that remind us there is always a chance at being nurtured by the things that bring us pain — or a possibility that it won’t bury us. An essential message for the times we are living:

There were two that hung and hovered
by the mud puddle and the musk thistle.
Flitting from one splintered fence post
to another, bathing in the rainwater’s glint
like it was a mirror to some other universe
where things were more acceptable, easier
than the place I lived. I’d watch for them:
the bright peacocking male, the low-watt
female, on each morning walk, days spent
digging for some sort of elusive answer
to the question my curving figure made.
Later, I learned that they were a symbol
of resurrection. Of course they were,
my two yellow-winged twins feasting
on thorns and liking it.

I hope that you enjoy reading more about our department’s activities over the past semester in this newsletter. As usual, this newsletter brings you snapshots from a semester full of intriguing courses such as the Honors course taught by Dr. Allison (Political Science and Latin American Studies) where students work with immigrants and asylum cases. His students Isaiah Livelsberger and Crysta O’Donnell’s thoughts are included in this issue. Also, you will read about exciting adventures from our alumna Kylie Mignat beyond the University of Scranton as well as reflections from our current students Katia Ramirez and Rachel Weber, and thought-provoking events. Once again, I thank you all for your dedication to our program. Finally, I would like to thank our work study student Sam Gurn and our secretary Donna Rupp for creating and editing such a wonderful newsletter.

Very best regards,

Yamile Silva, Director of Latin American Studies



Dr. Allison's honors tutorial working with immigrants and asylum

Dr. Allison is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science



Dr. Allison is facilitating an Honors Tutorial with juniors Isaiah Livelsberger, Crysta O'Donnell, Koebe Diaz, and Stephanie Alvarez. These students help Dr. Allison research many different South American countries and the conditions of these countries. They then help translate the testimony given from immigrants and corroborate their stories to be true based off of the research this team of students have done on the immigrants home country. Isaiah and Crysta give their perspective of this research project on page 4.

The process starts with Dr. Allison being contacted as an expert country conditions witness by lawyers who need his help with cases. He then lets his team of students know the circumstance and read the transcripts. The team will then conduct thorough research into the specific countries conditions and help prove the immigrants testimonies. "We help individuals who are fleeing persecution from a lot of different things ranging from gang violence, domestic abuse, political violence, land being taken away, and religion."

- Dr. Allison

“We have to use our education to help others who don’t have these same opportunities.”

Isaiah is a junior double major in International Studies and Philosophy, with a minor in Spanish, and a concentration in Latin American Studies.

Isaiah loves this honors tutorial with Dr. Allison because he feels challenged not only academically and intellectually but emotionally.

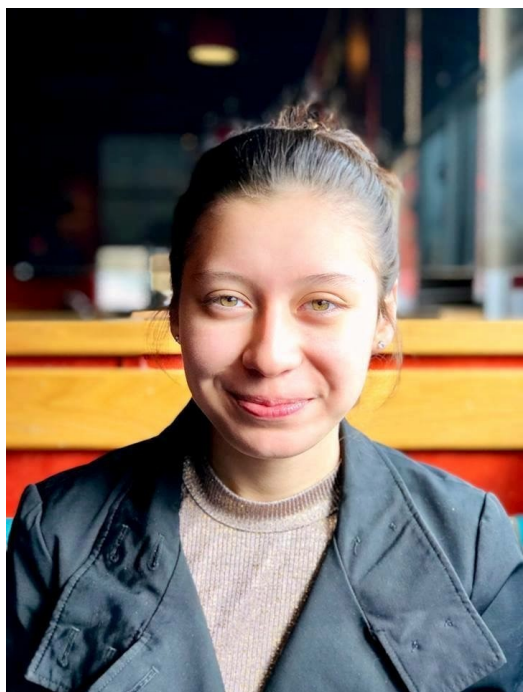
Isaiah and his fellow students are given the opportunity to work with these families who are immigrating to the US. He loves helping them and learning their stories.

Isaiah and his fellow students are able to stay objective in some of the more difficult cases because that is what is expected of them. Sometimes the cases can be emotionally heavy and it can be hard to remain objective and positive, but at the end of the day this team of students goal is to help these families come to the US with asylum.

After graduation Isaiah hopes to take what he has learned within this honors tutorial and go abroad, potentially going back to graduate school after traveling.



Isaiah Livelsberger



Crysta O'Donnell

Crysta is a junior double major in International Studies and Spanish and has a French minor.

Crysta finds it really interesting and helpful learning about immigration and the system because she immigrated to the US in 2009. Crysta wants to share her experience and help others to ensure that they and their families have the opportunity for a better life.

Crysta also spends a lot of her time tutoring at the language learning center and is able to use her knowledge of English, French, and Spanish to help teach people English. Crysta is also president of the Spanish Club.

Crysta hopes to be an ambassador someday. The work she does with Dr. Allison and their team helps educate Crysta in the process of immigration and become more familiar with legal systems. She may also take the foreign service officer exam after graduation. “Wherever I am needed I would be honored to go. I just want to help others.”

“I just want to help others.”

Interview with LA/W/S Alumna Kylie Mignat

Kylie graduated from the university in 2018. She studied International Studies, German Cultural Studies, and Hispanic Studies. Kylie has gone on to NYU to pursue a MA in Latin American and Caribbean Studies, with a focus on Guatemalan immigrants.

Right after graduation, Kylie started working at My Sister's Place as a paralegal. Here she helped survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. Kylie now works as a senior paralegal at Kids In Need of Defense, KIND, in New York. Kylie is able to fulfill her goal of helping others everyday and loves her job.

What is the best part of your job?

I work with a lot of younger kids and I find the most rewarding part of the process is gaining their trust and being an adult figure these children can rely on. A lot of them have just learned to distrust adults and I want to help them gain that trust back. My favorite thing is when the children I work with are able to open up to me and talk about their experiences.

What do you hope to do with your MA from NYU?

I am not entirely sure yet. I am applying to law schools and would eventually like to become a lawyer.

What was one of the most helpful tools you learned from Scranton?

I did a lot of work with Dr. Allison and helped draft expert witness reports my senior year at the U. Working with him definitely helped me pick my line of work after graduation. I learned a lot with him about the legal process but also about myself and what field I wanted to focus on.

What is a bit of advice for current undergrads?

Trust the process. When I started my freshman year I was a bio major. You are going to find your place at the university. Just trust the process and above all have fun. You meet some of the most important people of your life while at school. Make the most of it!



Latin American Studies Perspective from Students

Rachel Weber

Rachel is a senior double major in Criminal Justice and Hispanic Studies, with a minor in International Studies, and a concentration in Latin American Studies

Why did you add a concentration in Latin American Studies?

The region of Latin America has always intrigued me. I was really interested in the culture and language. Due to my double major in Spanish I had already filled a lot of the required courses for the concentration. I thought adding the concentration would be more beneficial because I learned even more about Latin America but more about the politics.



What do you want to do after graduation?

Right now I want to travel. I really love Latin America and I am hoping that after graduation I can travel and see the cultures in person. I was given the opportunity to study abroad in Spring 2019 in Seville, Spain and it was one of the most exciting experiences I have had in my college career.

Career-wise, I am not sure of the exact path I want to take but I definitely want to work with immigrants from Latin America and help them either adjust to the states or possibly something in the legal field to help immigrants with the process. I know I do not want to be a lawyer but something related to law. I want to use my Spanish language skills and my educational background in criminal justice to help the people of a culture that I love.

Katia Ramirez

Katia is a double major in History and Hispanics Studies, with a concentration in Latin American Studies

Why did you add a concentration in Latin American Studies?

I added the Latin American Studies concentration because of my roots. I've always been curious of my background and I noticed it also filled in requirements for my major and general education like free elective spaces. It's nice I get to learn about who I am and still be able to fill in requirements.



What do you want to do after graduation?

After graduation, I'm really aiming to get a masters and a PhD because I want to teach in a college setting. Whether it would be History or Spanish, it would be my goal to do one or the other. I feel Latin American Studies has helped me by learning more in the Hispanic and Latino Culture not only of my background but of others as well. The knowledge of such will keep me open minded and diversify my profile.

What is the Women's Center planning this semester?

Planning for Take Back the Night is in full swing at the Jane Kopas Women's Center

The theme for TBTN this year is "Our Voices Move Mountains."

Senior Ashley Walker is the student coordinator for Take Back the Night this year and responds to a couple questions:

Why is Take Back the Night important to you?

"Take Back the Night is one of the most important events on our campus, in my opinion. As a University, it shows that we do not stand for sexual, interpersonal, and gender-based violence that occurs both on our campus and in society as a whole. A big part of the event, and why I love it so much, is the Speak Out. The Speak Out is the portion of the event where anyone can choose to share their story of sexual, interpersonal, and gender-based violence or support for those who have experienced it. Title IX does not apply, so a person can freely use their voice to tell their truth knowing no action has to be taken. The Speak Out is by far the most empowering event I have ever been to. To me, it emphasizes the importance of the TBTN as a whole. Many people who have experienced sexual, interpersonal, and gender-based violence lose a lot, including their voice, so giving them their power back for even just this one night is so important. Overall, TBTN is important to me because it shows how strong every single person is and how our community empowers one another."



What does this year's theme mean to you?



"This year's theme is Our Voices Move Mountains. To me, this theme means that each individual's story, in the form of their voice, is important. When we all come together, we will be heard and will make a change. This theme encompasses our hope of building a sense of community of those who have experienced sexual, interpersonal, and gender-based violence as well as their allies. Supporting and lifting one another will continue to push for an end to sexual, interpersonal, and gender-based violence."

Dr. Tadros and her new class Bodybuilding



Good news! If you missed it this semester, Dr. Tadros's class "Bodybuilding" is now a permanent elective. Within this course Dr. Tadros discusses personal testimony, sexuality, and gender.

This course goes into the depth of what language does. How different people reading the same thing can understand it completely differently. And how this different understanding of language has real material impacts on people.

"This is a really fun course and I have a lot of fun teaching it. I am hoping more people will want to join next spring!"

"We discuss what language does as a whole and how different people will respond differently given their experience with a word."

Why is Women's and Gender Studies important to study?

Get the perspective from current WGS Major, Emma Barber
Emma is a sophomore double major in Communication with a public relations track and Women's and Gender Studies.

Emma spends a lot of her time competing with the Speech and Debate team and has won many competitions with them! She loves double majoring because the WGS courses give her a better look at gender inequalities and she learns the tools to learn from mistakes commonly made within the workplace, when dealing with gender. She feels like the WGS courses have helped teach her innovative thinking and that the courses are applicable in any field people work in. Emma loved the course Gender and Communication because it overlapped within both of her fields of study.

Emma feels Women's and Gender Studies is so important to learn about not just in the work place but to learn about acknowledging social norms like racism and sexism. "When you acknowledge those things you can foster social change and resistance. And those are the kind of things you learn how to do with in the WGS classes."

After graduation Emma hopes to either work in public relations or journalism. Emma has found that it is not difficult to double major and that it is very doable because the courses are so interesting. "I sometimes take 18 credits but when you are learning about something you love it doesn't even feel like a heavy workload."



LAS Spring 2021 Films



[Pelo malo \(2014\)](#)

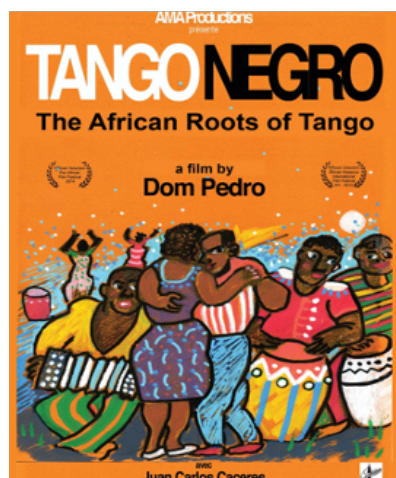
Colombia

Directed by Mariana Rondón

Junior is a young boy whose outward appearance just doesn't match up with what he feels inside. He fervently hopes for "pelo bueno" instead of "pelo malo"—for him this means elusively straight, free flowing locks that he can only achieve by applying enormous amounts of effort and sometimes oil or mayonnaise to his naturally curly, kinky hair. As the darker-skinned older boy of his mother's two children, it's not just his more African features but also his more effeminate ways that make him the brunt of her anger. However, his grandmother understands and even encourages young Junior's differences.

Synopsis By: Maria-Christina Villaseñor

Link: <https://scranton.kanopy.com/video/bad-hair-pelo-malo>



[Tango Negro: The African Roots of Tango \(2013\)](#)

Argentina

Directed by Dom Pedro

Tango is generally believed to have originated in mid-19th century Argentine slave societies, and the man widely recognized as the country's first tango musician, Rosendo Mendizábal, was Afro-Argentine. Yet many Argentines are loath to accept the African origins of their most cherished and internationally recognized cultural expression. To set the record straight, an Angolan filmmaker by the name of Dom Pedro took to the streets of Buenos Aires and beyond to get the lowdown on tango's African roots. Along the way, he discovered a nation deeply ambivalent about its African heritage.

Synopsis by: Andrew S. Vargas

Streaming access link: <http://rose.scranton.edu/login?url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=237451&xtid=110332>



[Obscuro Barroco \(2018\)](#)

Brazil

Directed by Evangelia Kranioti

A documentary-fiction about the dizzying heights of gender, political struggle, and metamorphosis in Rio de Janeiro. This cinematographic piece follows the late Luana Muniz (1961-2017), a famous activist and leader in the trans community, through the backdrop of Rio Carnival. Obscuro Barroco asks questions about the desire for transformation of the body, both intimate and social.

Streaming access link:

http://rose.scranton.edu/login?url=https://search.alexanderstreet.-com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7Cmind-mhs-dAoXyzadbY?account_id=28588&usage_group_id=84107

LA/W/S Faculty Scholarship

Dr. Billie Tadros

released a book of poems in January, *Graft Fixation* (Gold Wake Press, 2020). Dr. Tadros says :” *Graft Fixation* is equal parts elegy, queer feminist manifesto, love poem(s) to running, and #metoo story: the book’s impetus was a motor vehicle accident in which I was a passenger, which gradually disabled me from running. (I performed blackouts and erasures of my emergency room and accident reports. I adopted the lexicon of medical language and repurposed it. I coupled my poems with my own MRI images. And I used the archive of my Facebook status updates following the accident as source text for procedural poems.) The final project is one I’ve called a cyborg, much like the body following a surgical reconstruction: it is both human and machine, a grafted body, text and testament to the processes that are injury/recovery, grief, and poetics.”

Dr. Paul Datti (conference presentation)

Charette, J., Connell, A., Dalton, S., Datti, P. A., & Loeffler, D. (2020, October). Building virtual community: Supporting LGBTQ+ folks through tele-health. Practice-oriented session provided at the annual Pennsylvania Counseling Association fall conference (virtual)

Dr. Marzia Caporale (conference presentation)

“Queering Masculinities: Reinterpreting Gender Boundaries in Contemporary Italian Pop Culture.” NeMLA conference, March 12, 2021.

Dr. Habib Zanzana (conference presentations)

“Covid-19 and the New Normal in France and Beyond.” French and Francophone Studies International Colloquium, March 10, 2021.

“Reclaiming the Heroism of the Forgotten Women of the Algerian War in Nora Hamdi’s *La maquisarde*.” at Northeastern NeMLA Conference, March 11, 2021.

“Masculinity, Queer Identity, and Modern Arab Society.” NeMLA conference, March 13, 2021.

Dr. Aiala Levy (workshop)

As a faculty fellow in the Slattery Center for Humanities, Dr. Levy will be workshopping on April 22 a chapter from her book manuscript, *Cosmopolis: Theaters and the Making of an Urban Public in São Paulo, Brazil*.

Dr. Yamile Silva (Panel)

“Representaciones del miedo/Representations of Fear.” was accepted for the LASA2021 Virtual Congress: Crisis global, desigualdades y centralidad de la vida, May 26-29, 2021.

She will be the guest editor, with Dr. Ana María Díaz (Oberlin College), of the thematic dossier “Yo llana estoy”: jerarquías, transgresiones y despliegues de género en América hispana colonial (1492-1898) to be published in the Journal of Gender and Sexualities (Michigan State University). Also, Dr. Silva has been working on the article “La intervención de Estados Unidos en la República Dominicana através de las crónicas de Abigail Mejía” to be submitted this May to an academic journal.

Finally, Dr. Silva has been promoted to Full Professor at our institution.

LAWS Cosponsored Event, April 12th!

COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING SPRING 2021 CBL TALKS

Providing University students with information and insights into major challenges and opportunities facing the Scranton area and how they can be part of positive change.

Live sessions with Q&A during the spring semester and recorded to serve as a resource for CBL courses.

Black Scranton Then and Now with Glynis Johns, M.A.

Tuesday, February 23 @ 7 PM

Co-sponsored by the Black Student Union and the Cross Cultural Centers

Glynis Johns, M.A., the Black Scranton Project founder and CEO, provides an overview of the Black history then and now in the City of Scranton. Ms. Johns will present on her own original research into the longstanding roots of the Black community in the city of Scranton, highlight notable figures, and look ahead to the future of Black Scranton.

Economic Insecurity Amidst a Pandemic with Lisa Durkin, United Neighborhood Centers of NEPA and Megan Loftus, Friends of the Poor

Tuesday, March 16 @ 7 PM

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the city of Scranton already had a high number of individuals and families below a "living wage." Now combined with the nationwide economic downturn and resulting closures, the people of the city face even greater challenges. This presentation will identify the contributing factors and impact of economic insecurity in Scranton. Speakers are Lisa Durkin, CEO of United Neighborhood Centers and Megan Loftus, CEO and President, Friends of the Poor Scranton.

Immigration Inclusion with Alejandra Marroquin and Jenny Gonzalez

Monday, April 12 @ 7 PM

Co-sponsored by the Latin American Studies Program

An examination of the recent waves of immigration from Latin American nations that continue to cultivate diversity in the city of Scranton and highlight the challenges and promise of the American immigration experience. Speakers are the chairs of Scranton's immigrant Inclusion Committee, Alejandra Marroquin and Jenny Gonzalez, who have worked to address bias in our community and advocate for greater inclusion.

Information and Registration at:
www.scranton.edu/CBLtalks

Questions?

Email: community@scranton.edu

Sponsored by the Office of Community-Based Learning in collaboration with the Office of Community Relations and the Center for Service and Social Justice





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SCRANTON
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