

LA/W/S Newsletter

CHAIR'S NOTE

Welcome back all to a brand-new academic year! My name is Susan C. Méndez. I am in the Department of English & Theatre, and I will be the Program Director of Latin American Studies and the Chair of the Department of Latin American & Women's Studies for 2018-2020. The new Program Director of Women's and Gender Studies is Dr. Jean Harris, Department of Political Science. There has been some leadership changes in our programs and the Department of LAWS since last year, but rest assured, Dr. Harris and I are committed to highlighting and supporting the work of the faculty and students in our programs.

We finished the 2017-2018 academic year with the graduation of some stellar Senior students. You can read more about them on the next page, and on page three, you can read more about what one Women's & Gender Studies major did over the summer. There was also a Chinelos dance performed on our campus by a local group called *Compara Guadalupeana Morelos de Scranton* on May 2, 2018; Chinelos are traditional costumed dancers, who are popular in the Mexican state of Morelos and the Federal District of Mexico City. See photo above. Students joined in the dancing when they saw the outdoor performance. In this political climate, it is important to be welcoming of new cultural experiences. It is good to be reminded that we are all part of one common humanity.

For this semester, we have great events planned. We have the Latin American Studies Film Festival, which focuses on healing in Latin American films. Also, we will have Latinx novelist Angie Cruz visit our campus and read excerpts of her published and unpublished works on October 18, 2018, 7pm, at DeNaples 405, as part of the University Reading Series this semester. Please see page two of this newsletter for more details about all of these events. Finally, we get to welcome a new World Languages and Cultures & Latin American Studies faculty member, Dr. Ana Ugarte, to the University community. Read more about her and her work on the last page of this newsletter. Have a great semester everyone!

-Susan C. Méndez, Chair of Latin American & Women's Studies



WS DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When I joined the University of Scranton in the fall of 1987, there was no academic program in women's or gender studies. There were, however, numerous courses in several departments that focused on women's experiences through feminist frameworks.

In 1988, the College of Arts and Sciences dean invited faculty members to discuss our interests in a women's or gender studies program. After an initial meeting attended by dozens of faculty members, the Gender Studies Task Force (GSTF) was established to develop and propose an academic program. I chaired the task force, which successfully proposed an interdisciplinary concentration in Women's Studies.

Personally, I preferred that the program be titled Gender Studies. Some faculty members suggested we call it Feminist Studies. The GSTF, based on its research and understanding of our University, developed consensus on a Women's Studies concentration; an academic program that brought together existing University courses that focused on the experiences of women, modes of authority, and feminist theories.

With the addition of new faculty and more women's studies courses over the years, in 2008, the University approved a major in Women's Studies. Then in 2017, acknowledging the evolution of faculty scholarship and course offerings, Women's Studies was renamed Women's and Gender Studies (WGS). WGS at the University has come a long way in thirty years!

-Jean Harris, Women's and Gender Studies Director



LAS FALL FILMS

Healing in Latin American Movies

All films take place in Brennan 228 at 7:00 PM

SEPT. 18: *El Abrazo de la Serpiente* (Colombia 2015)

The story of the relationship between Karamakate, an Amazonian shaman, and two scientists who work together over the course of forty years to search the Amazon for a scared healing plant.

OCT. 23: *Una Mujer Fantástica* (Chile 2016) Marina, a transgender woman who works as a waitress and moonlights as a nightclub singer, is bowled over by the death of her older boyfriend.

NOV. 27: *La Teta Asustada* (Peru 2009) Fausta is suffering from a rare disease called the Milk of Sorrow, which is transmitted through the breast milk of pregnant women who were abused or raped during or soon after pregnancy.

University Reading Series and LAWS present Angie Cruz

A Public Reading by Angie Cruz, Latinx author and Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Pittsburgh.

October 18, 2018 at 7pm, DeNaples 405

Angie Cruz's first two novels *Soledad* (2001) and *Let It Rain Coffee* (2005) deal with the issues of race, class, gender, and immigration as they affect the Dominican-American community in the United States. Currently, she is working on a third novel entitled *Dominicana*, which is set to be published sometime in 2019. Her short fiction and essays have appeared in various magazines and journals, including *Callaloo*, a journal of African Diaspora, *The New York Times*, and *South Central Review*.



For more information, please contact susan.mendez@scranton.edu.

Sponsors: the Office of Equity & Diversity, Department of English & Theatre, University Reading Series, Department of Latin American & Women's Studies, and the Humanities Initiative.

Celebrating Latin American Studies Graduates of 2018

Please read just a few success stories below and see how Latin American studies can shape a student's personal and professional interests.

"During my time at the University of Scranton, I double majored in Secondary Education and Hispanic Studies with a concentration in Latin American Studies. On Class Night, I received the University's Prof. Joseph G. Brunner Award for Excellence in Foreign Languages (Hispanic Studies) and received recognition for winning a Fulbright English

Teaching Assistantship to Mexico. Thanks to the Latin American Studies program, I was able to better support the development of my Spanish proficiency by exploring the history, literature, and politics that surround this language both through coursework and campus cultural events." –Lauren Coggins

"I graduated recently from the University of Scranton with a triple major in International Studies, German Cultural Studies, and Hispanic Studies as well as a concentration in Latin American Studies. On Class Night, I won the awards for Excellence in International Studies and Excellence in Foreign Languages. Shortly after graduating, I started working as a Bilingual Paralegal Advocate at a nonprofit organization in White Plains, NY. I primarily work with Spanish-speaking Latinx survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. My ultimate dream is to become an immigration attorney. Through my Latin American Studies coursework, I was not only able to develop my Spanish abilities but also to gain a deep understanding of and passion for Latin American politics, history, and literature." –Kylie Mignat



Women's and Gender Student Participation in NEW Leadership Program

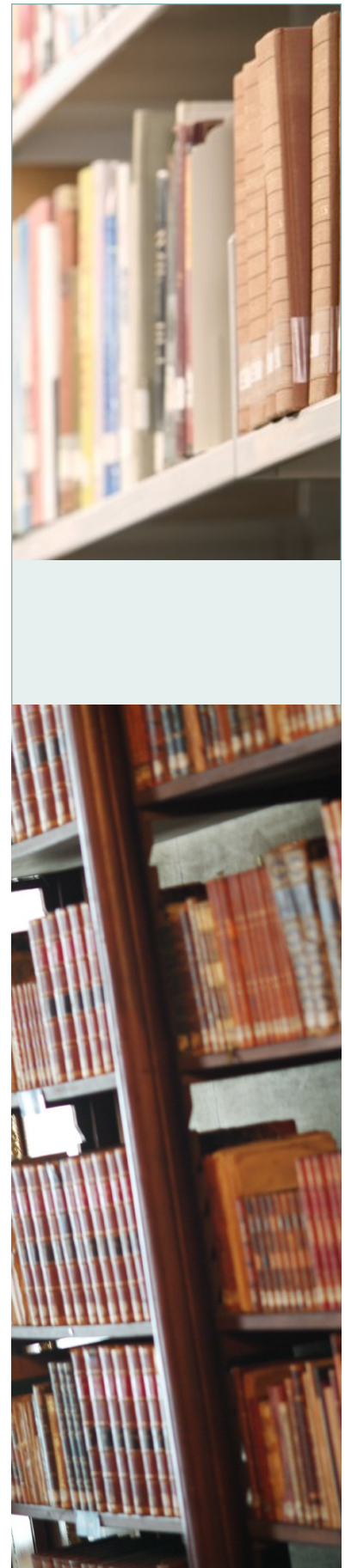


In the wake of the political divide in our country today, my participation in the National Education for Women's (NEW) Leadership program could not have happened at a more important point in my life. This intensive, week-long residential program at Chatham University offers college women the unique chance to develop their leadership skills, learn about civic engagement, and meet successful women leaders in an empowering manner. This summer, I met many incredible women with varying degrees of experience in political engagement. Our commonality was the same desire to learn how to make a difference. Like me, some women hadn't engaged much in politics beyond understanding that the personal is political. Others had already run for office before graduating from college. Prior to the program, I was worried about fitting in because of my then "disdain" for politics and refusal to ever consider getting involved in the political sphere. However, after meeting my roommate for the week and attending the first group session, I learned that there were people like me attending.

The days were long and packed full of speakers and workshops, yet despite sitting for the majority of the week, I was exhausted from all the mental energy I used. I learned an incredible amount about politics, what goes into campaigning, and different ways I can get involved in politics to aid the causes about which I am passionate. The program definitely changed my perception of politics and government, opening a field of work I would not have previously thought about exploring.

Perhaps the thing I am most grateful for was learning how to have real conversations with those of opposing views; dialogues that further understanding, not silence and hatred. Prior to NEW Leadership, I was unable to have conversations with people holding views that differed from mine without anger overwhelming me. Therefore, I shut out important conversations. I understand how detrimental that is when it comes to working across differences in daily life. I now lean into conversations to try to understand how others think and see the world. Taking the time to really listen so that others can speak and be heard has lead to invigorating conversations.

-Angela Coen, Women's & Gender Studies and Sociology Major



Introducing new World Languages and Cultures & Latin American Studies Faculty Member, Ana Ugarte!



Although I was born and raised in Madrid, Spain, my teaching and research focuses on twentieth and twenty-first century Latin American literature with a primary focus on Hispanic Caribbean fiction and Indigenous cultures and languages from Mexico. I earned my licenciatura in Spanish Philology from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and my Ph.D. in Romance Studies from Duke University. My research interests also include Postcolonial Studies, Disability Studies, and the emerging field of Medical—or Health—Humanities. In my dissertation, I examined the representation of illness, disability, and healing processes in contemporary works of fiction from Cuba and Puerto Rico. I explored how authors from the early twentieth century to the present expose the historical functioning of tropical territories as laboratories for political, economic, and scientific experimentation. I looked into landmark Caribbean novels, such as José Lezama Lima's *Paradiso*, but I also examined the tropes of paranoia and hypochondria in pop culture and recent works of science fiction.

This Fall I am very excited to teach a course deeply connected to these topics, entitled “Fictions of the Body.” In this class, students use a wide variety of materials that include short stories, art works, films, graphic novels, and reality shows to examine discourses of illness, monstrosity, and contagion in Latin and Latinx America. We explore creativity and artistic practices shaped by the experiences of disease and disability, while also discussing how these representations intersect with issues of gender, sexuality, migration, race, and class.

During my PhD, I became very interested in indigenous healing practices. I therefore learned Yucatec Maya, an indigenous language spoken in the Yucatán peninsula, in Mexico, which reminded about the hardships of studying a new language from scratch, and —I would like to believe—made me a more empathetic language instructor. Acquiring a deeper knowledge of Yucatec Maya also helped me understand indigenous conceptualizations of the body, disease, and cure, and the struggles these communities face to translate some of these concepts to Western biomedical practices. In the future, I look forward to teaching classes on indigeneity in Latin America, as well as service learning courses. I am also working on a syllabus for a class on the 1959 Cuban revolution through its films, texts, and visual arts.

-Ana Ugarte, Department of World Languages and Cultures