This has been a beautiful fall in Virginia—one of our favorite times. Much as we are enjoying the brilliant landscape we are thrilled with our terrific students as they display their creative energies as scholars and artists, activists and organizers—all to the benefit of feminist transformative goals. This newsletter by alumni Safyia Bridgewater and Jessica Jude is an example. It is proof that all that’s needed to make a statement is a dynamic outlet and the superior energies of committed people. We are very fortunate to have both in our Department.

Several items of note: We will be entertaining students, alumni and community guests at the Crenshaw House for our bi-annual art festival where dynamism meets creativity. I can promise you a ‘shocking’ experience! Read more about the show in this newsletter. Also, we will be saying farewell to six students who will be graduating in a few weeks.

We wish them every success and trust that they will stay in touch. We expect that our newsletter will provide a bridge between past and present students keeping us informed of their personal and career milestones.

Administratively, there are several items of note. First, we have been authorized to hire another full-time faculty member to replace me when I retire from VCU at the end of my contract year, June 30th. The search has begun, and as was the case for our last hire, students will be invited to meet the finalists before a decision to hire is made. Finally, we will be changing the prefix for our courses and the course, Introduction to Women’s Studies, to GSWS and Intro. to Gender, Sexuality and Women’s studies beginning fall 2013. That means that the fall schedule will show this prefix when enrollment begins in a few months.

Please enjoy the final weeks of class and the winter break. Be safe wherever you’re travel.

Janet Hutchinson
Chair
I’m Becca Ellis Amos. I’m a 23-year-old from a gorgeous small town called Orange, Virginia. I spent roughly four and a half years in Richmond, filled with ups and downs, coffee shop jobs, bike rides, and good buddies. After graduating earlier than expected from VCU with my GSEX degree, I upped and left to blow my hard earned money traveling out west until I was offered a room in New York City back in April. So now I live with four other roommates in a makeshift plywood room in a loft on the fourth floor of an old piano factory turned apartment building on the border of Bushwick and Bed Stuy. I immediately got a job at an amazing garden center at a dead end right on the water, deep in isolated Red Hook, Brooklyn. The second week after moving, I started volunteering at *Bluestockings.

Q: What are you excited about?

A: I’m excited about so many things right now—Sometimes I have a hard time sleepin’! New York is DENSE, to say the least. I just have that feeling of over-stimulation everyday. There’s so much to look at and hear and smell. I swear, I’m just trying to soak it all in and process the things around me daily.

In particular, though, I’m excited about a new magazine position at Bluestockings where I am in charge, along with my beautiful friend Brianne, of communicating via e-mail and face to face with magazine distributors, stocking, inventory, and all of that. I’m also currently learning to be a staffer there as well as holding down my regular three hour Friday shift.

I’m also excited about a potential farming opportunity with some like-minded folks down in Pennsylvania, Christmas-tree selling season/Carhart wearing weather at the garden center, some winter travel plans, frosty bike rides, and some really good music, books, and friends.

Continued...
Q: What inspired you to move to Brooklyn, and to apply to Bluestockings? Do you think your GSEX degree helped you get the job?

A: After graduating and before traveling out west, I visited my friend Joe in Brooklyn, googled something along the lines of radical/feminist bookstores, and biked across the Williamsburg Bridge to Bluestockings, where I spent so much time that day that a volunteer told me I ought to fill out an application. So I did. Then I moved here and started right away.

I'm sure my GSEX degree didn't hurt my odds of getting asked to volunteer but it certainly isn't required to have a college education to work there. For me though, I'm forever indebted to GSEX. GSEX professors and classmates and literature gave me the words I needed to be able to write about and discuss all of the experiences, feelings and opinions I've had throughout my life-the tools that led me to identify as queer, as a feminist, to be able to discuss hip-hop properly, and ultimately to work it with hairy armpits.

Q: In what ways did GSEX prepare you for what you’re doing now? Are you meeting lots of like-minded folks out there in the ~*~real world~*~?

A: Bluestockings is filled with the most incredibly radical, passionate, sexy, political bookworms and I’m honestly overjoyed that I get to work alongside them. Since moving, I’ve also kept in touch with a real nice handful of Richmond folks who’ve provided me with immensely valuable knowledge that I’ll carry with me for a long time. Basically, I’m surrounded by radical folks who are teaching me things every damn day. I only hope I can do the same for folks somewhere down the line. Mostly I just keep reading lots and lots, trying to recognize and check my privilege, working on controlling anxieties in healthy ways, always remembering self-care, and listening intently. I’m very interested in learning how to talk about and address white supremacy and race within a group dynamic right now.

Bluestockings is a feminist bookstore, fair trade cafe and activist meeting space in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New York City. They have a huge selection of books spanning topics such as “queer and gender studies, global capitalism, feminism, police and prisons, democracy studies, and black liberation.” They also carry magazines and zines, alternative menstrual products and more things GSEXers are likely to love. Check out their events calendar which is booked up with workshops, performances, readings and films that you will want to attend when you visit NYC next.
The Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Department is premiering our Fall/Winter art show. The theme is “Politics of Place and the Poetics of Space” which imagines, broadly, the ways that bodies (broadly defined) interact with various spaces and how the interaction between/among bodies and spaces opens up political, poetical, and aesthetic possibilities.

Below, Corset by Leah Simmerman

This show will be the most interactive, genre-diverse, show the GSEX department has put on to date. Please come view, watch, experience, and interact with these pieces. The opening for the show will be Wednesday, November 28th, 4 to 6pm

Crenshaw House
919. West Franklin Street

Electric Feel by Dana Ollestad
tested by Department Chair, Dr. Hutchinson
On Halloween we invited folks to come in dressed in their GSEXiest best, which means in a costume that’s not necessarily feministy, but definitely not racist, sexist, or appropriative. It was a success! We gave out baked treats, candies, and contraceptives.

Below, Dr. Hutchinson, the Department Chair Witch
OTHER GSEX EVENTS

Suzanne Pharr

On November 8th, Queer Action, OMSA, the GSEX Department, and Southerners on New Ground (SONG) hosted a talk by internationally acclaimed theorist, scholar, and activist Suzanne Pharr and locally and regionally famous activist Cathy Woodson in the VCU’s Commons Theater to dialogue about the role of race, class, gender, and sexuality (and the intersections thereof) in the election, and what it might mean to those of us living in the South.

12th & Delaware

On November 15th, GSEX hosted a documentary showing by Alena Yarmosky, the Advocacy & Communications Manager with NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia and Safiya Bridgewater, one of the administrative assistants of the GSEX office and also the VCU campus intern for NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia. The documentary shown was 12th & Delaware, a documentary of a Crisis Pregnancy Center and an abortion clinic across the street from each other in Florida. The documentary was followed by a discussion about what NARAL is doing in Virginia to overcome the barriers to reproductive freedom.

The Highway Marker

On November 20th, a Virginia Historic Marker was unveiled, at nowhere else but the Crenshaw House! The sign marks the founding of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia in 1909. The sign reads:

Eighteen women dedicated to obtaining the vote and expanding women’s traditional roles formed the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia (ESL) at 919 West Franklin Street on 20 Nov, 1909. Under Lila Meade Valentine’s leadership, the ESL grew to over 100 local chapters and 30,000 members statewide. The ESL held public suffrage rallies and supported social reform movements to urge the General Assembly to amend the state constitution. Although the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution passed in 1920, when the ESL became the League of Women voters, Virginia did not ratify it until 1952.

Conversation Brunches

This year GSEX is working to bring together students, alumni, and the Richmond community to hangout, chat, and have a good time. Each event will be a great opportunity to see old faces, get to know unfamiliar ones, and bring curious friends to learn more about the department and community work affiliated outside of VCU. Our first event this year was a casual conversation about consent at Strange Matter on October 28th. If you weren’t able to make it, no worries; all events will span a number of dates and places to accommodate different preferences and schedules. So come out if you can and bring alll your friends. Our next brunch will be a conversation about accessibility on December 2nd at Mojo’s from 11am to 2pm. We hope to see you there!
We love you. And we want to keep up with you just as much as you want to keep up with us. We have a new tumblr! And it’s so so fresh. Also we will be posting and responding regularly on Facebook and Twitter. Please follow us. These social medium will be a way to get the most up-to-date word on what’s going on within the department.

Social Media

tumblr  vcu-gsex.tumblr.com
twitter  twitter.com/vcuWMNS
web  gsws.vcu.edu
facebook  www.facebook.com/groups/119296113604/

We miss you. Just stop by to say hi! Reasons to come into the GSEX Crenshaw House: Check out the current art show, Get a sip of water from the water fountain in between classes, Get a sip of water from the water fountain in between classes, Get some condoms, dental dams, or lube, Check out our new book collection, Pick up a GSEX department zine, Check yourself out in the big mirror in the hallway, Get some condoms, dental dams, or lube, Check out our bulletin board for upcoming feminist events, Chill out or study in the conference room when it’s unoccupied, use our gender-neutral, single occupancy bathroom, Introduce yourself to the new administrative assistants.

Come In

Advisory Board

We need you. The GSEX Advisory Committee needs new and returning members to get the ball rolling for next semester. If you want to help to grow and create progress for your department, this is a great way to be engaged as a student. There are a few main goals of the committee, such as recruiting new GSEX majors and finding creative ways to encourage departmental growth. We will also be creating programming through GSEX that will be open to the entire VCU community (a great way to get more folks involved with the department!), and most importantly you will be the voice for the GSEX student body. Email gsws@vcu.edu if interested.

Donate

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To donate: mail checks payable to: VCU Foundation/Hellmuth Fund PO Box 842026 Richmond, VA 23284-2026

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Next Issue: student projects alumni news GSEX grads & more

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