



NEWS AND VIEWS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN'S STUDIES

FALL 2025 VOLUME 35 ISSUE 2

FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK



Hello to friends of the Department near and far. I am back once again as Acting Chair while **Dr. Bonnie Moradi** takes the second half of her sabbatical this semester. This Fall has brought some other personnel changes as well. **Dr. Cinnamon Williams** has left UF for a position at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. While we miss her in the Department, we wish her all the best in her new position. **Dr. Ecem Ece** is serving as a visiting lecturer this year and we are lucky to have one of our own graduates teaching core courses for the Women's Studies major and Health Disparities minor.

We have had a busy Fall with a new cohort of graduate students, exciting networking and professional development events, and ongoing research and teaching. We have hosted many wonderful events this semester, including:

- Our annual Pizza with Professors lunch in October, with the highest turn out yet. There we revealed our new merch, including sweatshirts (see photo on p. 10).
- With funding **Dr. Joanna Neville** secured from *Beyond120* and as part of our Mellon-funded professional development series, we brought alum **Anna Hochberger** to speak about her career trajectory in marketing and project management.
- We launched some extra-curricular activities, including trips to watch the UF Women's Soccer team compete and an educational event at the Matheson History Museum.

All of these events helped build a sense of community for our undergraduate and graduate students and furthered connections with faculty and alums. We continue to highlight professional development opportunities for our students, to help prepare them for their careers after graduation. In fact, **Dr. Jillian Hernandez** will be offering a semester-long class on Professional Pathways in Women's Studies in the Spring 2026 semester, which is open to both undergraduate majors and grad students.

We continue to collaborate with the **Going Gator** program, to help create a smooth pathway for graduates of Florida State Colleges to move to UF to complete their BA degrees. Toward that end, I participated in an information session at College of Central Florida (CCF) in Ocala, Dr. Neville participated in one at Santa Fe College, and the two of us hosted a group of students and advisors visiting from CCF for an experiential learning session in Ustler Hall.

From recruiting future majors to assisting our current students to find their place in the workforce, we delight in launching the next generation into their careers armed with the tools of critical thinking, written and oral expression, and community-mindedness. I am grateful to our faculty and staff for working together to create a wonderful, nurturing community.

CELEBRATING 12 YEARS OF THE MINOR HEALTH DISPARITIES IN SOCIETY

Health Disparities describe the disproportionate burden of disease, differential access to health care, and poorer health outcomes across populations. Health disparities can exist at multiple levels of society (global, national, institutional, local, and personal) and affect people of diverse geographic locations, linguistic groups, socioeconomic statuses, and sociocultural groups. The Health Disparities in Society (HDS) minor provides a framework to examine how multiple social inequalities can produce disparities in health and how to work toward preventing and mitigating such disparities.

HDS is housed strategically in our department, where it benefits from interdisciplinary perspectives on health equity. HDS began enrolling students in early 2013 and today is among the **top 5 largest minors** in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, with **more than 300 students** enrolled.

HDS is an undergraduate program that informs pre-health professional students about health disparities while inspiring and empowering them to see their role in eliminating them. The interdisciplinary curriculum also shows students with career aspirations outside of health (e.g., education, law, journalism and communication, business, engineering, and technology) the role of other professions in eliminating disparities, informs them about the US healthcare system, and prepares them to be health-literate consumers.

Practicum in Health Disparities

The capstone course for the minor is Practicum in Health Disparities, a three-credit service-learning course that assigns senior-level students to community clinics, agencies, and programs that address needs of underserved populations. The experiential service-learning model integrates guided reflection with learning experiences to develop critical thinking skills. The hands-on practicum experience deepens analysis of complex social and health systems, and engages students in creating solutions that promote health equity. Sometimes it even leads to paid employment after graduation!

Selected Practicum Sites in Alachua County and Beyond

UF College of Medicine Mobile Outreach Clinic
 UF College of Medicine Equal Access Clinics Network
 Center for Independent Living of North Central Florida
 Library Partnership Resource Center
 ACORN Dental Clinic
 VOT-ER

Health Disparities Minor Alum in Action

“

Each person speaks in the language of their lived experience: their story, their culture, and the challenges they face. I am called to Family Medicine because it allows me to honor that language by forming trusting relationships with patients and working toward more equitable care systems that uplift the health of individuals, families, and the communities around them.

”



Nicole Diaz, an alum of the Health Disparities in Society minor, is now a fourth-year medical student at the University of Florida and has received several prestigious awards. Her passion for language access in healthcare has been a driving force since her undergraduate years and continues to motivate her work. After graduation, she completed a gap-year as a Social Services Coordinator at the Rural Women's Health Project. As a medical student, she provided leadership in developing a medical interpreter elective and later spearheaded the formation of the UF Language Access/Justice Collaborative, bringing together medical educators, clinicians, medical students, community language advocates, and the UF Health Shands Patient Experience Department to pursue sustainable language access through the provision of qualified medical interpreters. This semester, she was awarded the Rosenbaum Foundation/Array Medical Student Scholarship in Family Medicine.

Nicole, who is pursuing a career in Family Medicine, was selected as an Emerging Leader Institute (ELI) Scholar from a competitive national pool through the American Academy of Family Physicians. She is completing a project in the Personal and Practice Leadership Track. The groundwork for this project began during her undergraduate studies, and she remains deeply aware of the role the Health Disparities minor played in shaping her understanding of social privilege, inequities, and the responsibility to act.

A 2018 study about the minor by **Drs. Laura Guyer, Marta Wayne, and Nancy Hardt** found that more than half of students enrolled in the introductory course for the minor spoke a language other than English at home. Collectively, they reported speaking more than 70 different languages!

As Guyer et al. note, “When patients are unable to communicate clearly with providers, the quality of the patient-provider relationship is compromised. Language barriers impair a patient’s ability to understand their diagnosis, medication regimen and self-care instructions, limit participation in informed consent, lengthen hospitalizations, and increase 30-day re-hospitalization rates.” Healthcare providers with diverse language skills, like many students in the minor, will be essential in addressing this care gap and the associated health disparities.

FACULTY AND AFFILIATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Congratulations to department chair **Dr. Bonnie Moradi** for winning the 2025 Carolyn Wood Sherif Award from the American Psychological Association Society for the Psychology of Women! This award is the highest honor conferred by the division and recognizes a senior individual who has made sustained and substantial contributions in research, scholarship, mentoring, and leadership in the fields of psychology of women and gender.



Congratulations to affiliate faculty members **Dr. Craig Smith and Dr. Ben Wise** on their publication of **AMERICAN ACE: LIMITED EDITION (2024)** by Invisible Hand press.

Congratulations to affiliate faculty member **Dr. Paola Uparela** for winning numerous awards for her book **Invaginaciones Coloniales: Mirada, genitalidad y (de)generación en la Modernidad temprana** [Colonial Invaginations: Gaze, Genitality and (de)generation in the Early Modernity], including the Victoria Urbano Critical Monograph Award and the LASA Visual Culture Studies Book Prize.



Congratulations to core faculty member **Dr. Ocqua Murrell** for publishing a book chapter "Creating Critical Thinkers Through Decolonial Assessment," which appears in *How to Decolonize the Feminist and Queer Studies Classroom* edited by Atia Sattar.

Violence Against Women
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Sage Journals

Research Article

Strengthening the US National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence: Making Perpetrators Visible

Maddy Coy 

Congratulations to core faculty member **Dr. Maddy Coy** on the recent publication of two articles.

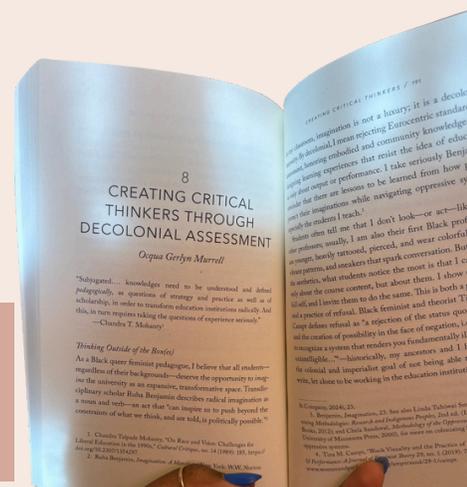
Feminist Pedagogy

Volume 6 | Issue 2

Article 4

Teaching about violence against women: reflections on threshold concepts

Maddy Coy
University of Florida, m.coy@ufl.edu



With an Attitude of Gratitude

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- ♥ Jennifer S. Vasani
- ♥ Dr. Marta L. Wayne & Dr. Charles F. Baer
- ♥ Brittany L. Weeks
- ♥ Deborah Whippen
- ♥ Robert Wilder
- ♥ John H. Williams, Jr.
- ♥ Catherine F. Wright & James M. Wright
- ♥ Sarah Ashley Wutzler
- ♥ Chuck Woods
- ♥ Vada Allen Yeomans
- ♥ Dr. Alyssa Zucker

Gifts are used to fund conferences, educational travel for graduate students, scholarship funds, speaker honoraria, and exhibit support.

Alum Profile: Daniella Gennaro

When I reflect on my journey since earning my Bachelor of Arts in Women's Studies from the University of Florida, I'm reminded how foundational that experience was to how I think, lead, and build community today. My coursework in gender theory, intersectionality, and social justice taught me to question assumptions, analyze systems of power, and advocate for equity — lessons that have carried through every stage of my career.

After graduation, I began my professional path as a middle school math teacher through Teach For America. Teaching in a Title I school deepened my understanding of how gender, race, and socioeconomic status intersect in shaping opportunity. It also gave me an appreciation for the power of representation and empathy in leadership, two values I trace directly to my Women's Studies education.

Today, I work at Dell Technologies in Austin, Texas, where I lead projects that improve the customer experience. My work involves analyzing how global technology brands deliver digital experiences and translating those insights into strategic action. While the context is different from a classroom, the underlying skills are the same: critical thinking, systems analysis, and a deep commitment to inclusive decision-making.

Along with my corporate work, I'm proud to have co-founded Plucky Comics, an activist-led company devoted to protecting and reimagining Black Queer history, alongside my good friend and MBA classmate Nathan. Plucky Comics seeks to fill storytelling gaps by centering narratives of Black Queer heroism, love, and resistance, which are stories too often overlooked. This creative venture feels like a direct extension of my Women's Studies roots. Feminist scholarship taught me how power operates through storytelling, whose voices are amplified, and whose are erased. With Plucky, I apply that lens to comics and visual media, working to make marginalized lives visible and celebrated. (pluckycomics.com)

Outside of work, I serve as the Board Chair for Teach For America Austin's Alumni Board, where I lead a diverse team of educators, nonprofit leaders, and advocates. Our mission—to advance equity in education and strengthen local leadership pipelines—feels like a continuation of what Women's Studies first instilled in me: that social change begins when people organize around shared purpose and inclusion.

My Women's Studies degree didn't just prepare me for a career, it shaped how I see the world and my role within it.



Daniella Gennaro graduated with a BA in Women's Studies in 2016. She works in Customer Testing & Insights at Dell Technologies.

Bologna Summer School: Gender, Politics, and Society



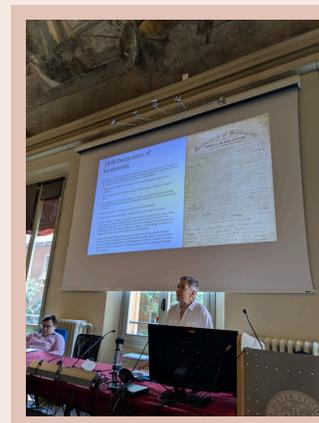
This past summer, four core and affiliate faculty members—**Dr. Maddy Coy**, **Dr. Aida Hozic**, **Dr. Juliana Restrepo Sanin**, and **Dr. Danaya Wright**—participated as lecturers in a summer program in Bologna, Italy. The department was excited to work with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the International Center, and the Political Science department to sponsor graduate student attendance as well, including our own MA student **Kay Yehezkely**. The program, developed by faculty from UF and the University of Bologna, covered a variety of topics, including gender and the labor market, political representation, violence against women, and social reproduction. Most students and lecturers involved were from the University of Bologna and other Italian universities, which laid the foundation for fascinating and productive dialogue from different perspectives.

“For one intense week in early June, we had a chance to engage in conversations about structural and contingent aspects of gender politics in the beautiful setting of the world’s oldest university in continuous operation. We were enriched by the discussions we had and by the warmth and collegiality of all attendees.” - Dr. Aida Hozic



“It was such an honor to participate in the summer school. What a brilliant, thoughtful group of faculty and students, full of intellectual curiosity!”
– Dr. Maddy Coy

“I found the students to be thoughtfully engaged and incredibly sophisticated in their readings and questions. This made the entire experience a wonderful collaboration of people from multiple disciplines and backgrounds, all trying to learn from one another. I can’t wait to do it again!” - Dr. Danaya Wright



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The Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Call for Proposals for Awards and Grants

We invite students and faculty to submit proposals for the following awards and grants:



AAUW Gainesville Student Grant:

The AAUW Gainesville Branch Student Grant provides up to \$1000 to support women's studies students to conduct research, education, or initiatives that align with AAUW's mission: <https://www.aauw.org/> and <https://gainesville-fl.aauw.net>



Charles T. Woods Faculty Grant:

The Charles T. Woods Faculty Grant supports faculty research or service projects for the LGBTQ+ communities.

Grants of up to \$6,000 will be awarded that can be used over a period of one academic year in the form of salary (e.g., summer or course release) or reimbursement for expenses required

for the project. All projects should clearly connect research and praxis, with an applied component that benefits LGBTQ+ communities.

Charles T. Woods Student Grant:

The Charles T. Woods Student Grant supports student research or service/community projects for the LGBTQ+ communities. Grants of up to \$4,000 will be awarded that can be used over a period of one academic year in the form of salary (e.g., summer, graduate assistantship) or reimbursement for expenses required for the project. All projects should clearly connect research and praxis, with an applied component that benefits LGBTQ+ communities.

All proposals are due March 13th, 2026, and should be submitted via the application portal on the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies website. Please visit <https://wst.ufl.edu/funding/> for more information.



Picture-Perfect:

Highlights from the Semester



Anna Hochberger, an Emmy award-winning graduate of the Women's Studies Department, speaking at a Professional Pathways in Women's Studies event. Sponsored by the Department for Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies; *Beyond120*; and the Mellon Foundation.



WST5933: Proseminar course pictured after their final presentations.



Graduate students wearing the Department's new merch.



The Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies' Sports Club social at the UF Women's Soccer Game.

Follow Us!



Alum Spotlight: Tatiana Falcón Rodríguez



Tatiana Falcón Rodríguez graduated with an MA in Women's Studies in 2009. She is a manager of Operations and Strategic Initiatives at Presbyterian Healthcare Services in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

I was born and raised in Puerto Rico, where community is a way of life. Neighbors look out for each other, streets come alive with music and conversation, and shared spaces are where identity and connection flourish. That foundation shaped how I see belonging and the power of place.

When I attended the UF Center for Gender, Sexualities, and Women's Studies Research, graduating in 2009, I began to understand those instincts through a more critical and systemic lens. One course in particular, Masculinity in Suburbia with Dr. Trysh Travis, completely transformed how I viewed the built environment. It challenged me to see how power, privilege, and design intersect; how neighborhoods are constructed in ways that can either welcome or exclude, empower or silence.

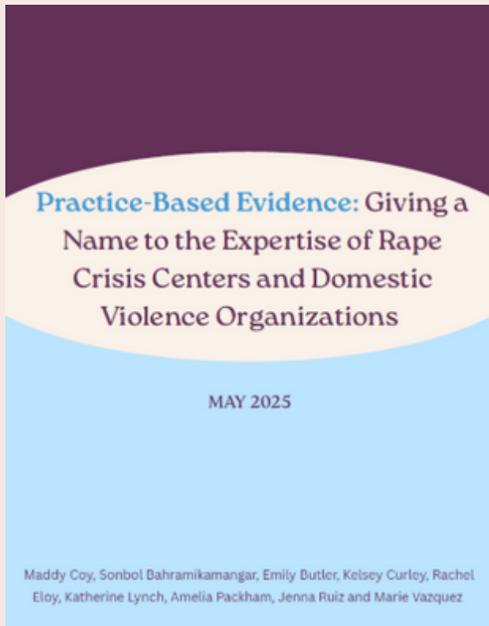
After UF, I continued my education at the University of New Mexico, earning a Master's in Public Health with a focus on community health interventions. There, I learned how theory becomes practice; how data, policy, and lived experience intersect to create tangible change. My time in both Florida and New Mexico, combined with my Puerto Rican roots, strengthened my resolve to dedicate my work to equity, connection, and wellbeing through the built environment.

Today, in Albuquerque, my work centers on walkability, pedestrian safety, food access, and community connection, particularly in underserved neighborhoods. I collaborate with residents, local organizations, and city agencies to design safer streets, create access to fresh, affordable food, and reimagine public spaces as places of belonging. From organizing open-street events to improving crosswalks and supporting local food systems, my goal is always to help communities reclaim and reshape the environments that sustain them.

The lessons I learned at UF and UNM, and the spirit of community I carry from Puerto Rico, guide me every day. They remind me that public space and access to healthy food are not luxuries, but essential to equity and wellbeing. Each time I see neighbors connecting at a local food market or families walking safely together, I'm reminded that the work we do is more than infrastructure, it's about dignity, care, and creating spaces where everyone can thrive.

Mellon Funded Research Projects

Thanks to the Affirming Multivocal Humanities grant the department received from the Mellon Foundation, we have been able to support research teams made up of core faculty and Women's Studies majors to conduct cutting-edge scholarship. As these projects wrap up, you can read some highlights below.



Practice-Based Evidence

Dr. Maddy Coy led a team of student researchers exploring the expertise of practitioners in rape crisis centers and domestic violence services across Florida. The concept of “practice-based evidence” framed the study. Over the 18 months that the project ran, Sonbol Bahramikamangar, Emily Butler, Kelsey Curley, Rachel Eloy, Katherine Lynch, Amelia Packham, Jenna Ruiz and Marie Vazquez conducted focus groups and individual interviews, analyzed the data together, and produced a final report that was shared with all participants. The team is now finalizing a manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

VIPER Lab

The Vulvovaginal Interdisciplinary Pain Experiences and Research (VIPER) Lab, under the direction of **Dr. Olivia Adams**, is dedicated to advancing the understanding of vulvovaginal pain conditions through an interdisciplinary lens. Chronic vulvovaginal pain (CVVP) is an umbrella term for several conditions that cause chronic pain in the vulva and/or vagina but that frequently have unknown or difficult-to-determine etiology. Vulvodynia, the most common type of CVVP, has an estimated prevalence of 7%-8% among premenopausal cisgender women in the U.S., but patients often experience diagnostic delay and other negative healthcare experiences when seeking treatment.



NEWS AND VIEWS OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN'S STUDIES

VIPER conducted several Mellon-funded projects, including establishing a community support group and research partnership for people with CVVP, creating both patient- and provider-focused guides to CVVP, and hosting public events such as a TV trivia night focused on painful sex.



VIPER Lab after hosting their own Trivia Night



Left to right: Ismary Ochoa, Sophia Soldatos, Sarah Wutzler, Kro Vargas, Rose Barron, Kaliope Banaag, Divya Huilgol, Andrea Orozcotorres

Full Set Project

Women's Studies students in **Dr. Jillian Hernandez's Full Set Project** research team traveled to Miami in December 2025 to celebrate a special preview of their documentary film **Nail Tech: Portrait of an Artist** at HistoryMiami Museum as part of Miami Art Week. **Nail Tech** explores the life and cultural impact of Miami Florida-based nail artist Kro Vargas, whose trend-setting designs have graced the pages of *Vogue* and

the fingertips of major musical artists like Ivy Queen and Ice Spice. The documentary highlights how nail art is a meaningful form of cultural expression that shapes larger developments in visual art, fashion, and popular culture.

The event also included the opening of an exhibition the museum mounted in collaboration with the Full Set team titled **Nail Art: A Cultural Expression** in the Folklife Gallery and the collection of oral histories about nails in the museum's Miami Stories Recording Booth. Nail artists from Spring with Friends showcased Miami-inspired nail art and provided manicures for attendees!

Through the Full Set Project, students have gained skills in oral history research, filmmaking, collaboration, team building, and marketing. The event was a resounding success and fulfilled the team's goals of studying the artistry, entrepreneurship, and working conditions of nail techs while amplifying their voices.



Welcome New Graduate Students

We are delighted to welcome five new students to our MA program this year.



María José Cordero (B.A. in Political Science), from Guatemala, researches women's political participation in social movements, with a focus on the student movement during the country's armed conflict. Her professional background includes work with non-profit organizations advancing gender equality, women's and youth rights, and she has also contributed political analysis in independent media. She now brings this interdisciplinary experience to her graduate studies, seeking to bridge scholarship and advocacy in exploring the intersections of gender, politics, and social change.



Renee Gonzalez holds a B.A. in Psychology from Smith College. They are interested in the psychology of gender formation, both socially and individually, as well as queer spaces online. Renee is interested in studying queer online community building, particularly how the medium of the internet both helps and harms efforts at queer connection.



Upendo Mtataiko holds a Bachelor's degree in Law from Tumaini University Makumira in Tanzania, and a Master's in Business Administration from Maharishi Markandeshwar University in India. A 2022 Mandela Washington Fellow, their advocacy and activism work focuses on education, land rights, and sexual and reproductive health. Upendo's research interest is cultural influences on gender-based violence among Maasai women and girls in Tanzania.



Mia Valdes is a first-generation U.S.-born Latina from Miami with dual BAs in Women's Studies and International Relations from Florida International University. As an activist-scholar, she explores intersectional feminism, human-rights politics, and the objectification and sexualization of women of color. Rooted in her Miami upbringing, Mia's work centers the stories of Latina girlhood in borderland spaces to challenge systemic barriers and uplift narratives of resilience and resistance.



William Wolfe is an MA student in the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies. He completed his BA at the University of Florida in English. His area of focus is sexual ethics. William is an avid horseman and gardener, and aspires to be a future professor.

Welcome Back MA Candidates

We are delighted to welcome back our second-year MA candidates as they continue their endeavors and their theses and projects.



Bella Adams is interested in the politics of gender, race, and class within popular American film and television. She is working on her MA Thesis, which explores counterhegemonic masculinity in the contemporary superhero genre, under the supervision of Dr. Barbara Mennel.



Alexander Ozoani is using phenomenology as a method to describe queer coping among LGBTQ Nigerians in the U.S. He is advised by Dr. Olivia Adams and Dr. Hina Shaikh. His team was selected for the Path to Purpose Institute at the Brown Center for Leadership and Service. He is currently a volunteer trainee at the Alachua County Crisis Center in Gainesville.



Rae Dela Victoria Landingin is completing their thesis on the intersections of queer and trans of color nightlife and grassroots mutual aid organizing in New York City. Supported by multiple funding mechanisms at UF, their research is guided by Dr. Jillian Hernández. They have presented their work at the Cultural Studies Association in Santa Clarita, California, and at the Tepoztlán Institute in Tepoztlán, Mexico.



Marie Vazquez's research, under the supervision of Dr. Olivia Adams & Dr. Maddy Coy, explores how queer joy can be used as a mode of resilience among LGBTQ+ college students. Marie was recently awarded a Charles T. Woods Student Grant to support her scholarship. Her thesis research was also accepted for presentation at the 2025 Annual Conference of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality (SSSS).



Sharlyen Lopez is currently writing her M.A. thesis under the guidance of Dr. Hina Shaikh. Her research explores the differences in fetal personhood and anti-immigration discourse to exemplify the differential treatment of Latin-American unaccompanied youth, women, and fetuses in the United States. Sharlyen presented her research at the REFORMA conference, where she also had the opportunity to conduct archival research. Outside of the department, Sharlyen is an active coach for UF's PUSH4IT program, which assists first-generation college students in transitioning into student life at UF.



Kay Yehezkely is interested in gendered political beliefs and behavior, and her research explores these topics by learning about how young women's political beliefs are shaped by their gendered childhood experiences. She is currently writing her thesis under the supervision of her committee chair, Dr. Alyssa Zucker, and committee member Dr. Stacey Liou. Kay was also grateful to attend a seminar on gender, politics, and society this summer at the University of Bologna in Bologna, Italy.

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The Department now offers three undergraduate certificates: **Community Engagement; Data, Science, and Technology in Sociocultural Contexts;** and **Violence Against Women.**

These certificates are open to all undergrads currently enrolled at UF and must be applied for through the admissions office at <https://admissions.ufl.edu/apply/certificates>. Questions? Contact undergrad@wst.ufl.edu.

Graduate and professional students from all colleges at UF are eligible to enroll in either of our graduate certificates: **Women's Studies** and **Gender and Development.**

Applications must be submitted to the Department's Graduate Coordinator. For more information visit the Department's graduate certificate page at <http://wst.ufl.edu/graduate-studies/graduate-certificates/>