About the Gender and Queer Studies Program

The Gender and Queer Studies (GQS) Program at Puget Sound was one of the world’s first women’s studies programs. The University of Puget Sound has a long tradition of exploring the shifting meanings of gender and sexual identity. The current GQS program illuminates the ways in which gender and multiple other converging axes of identity frame every aspect of life. Our courses explore the constructions, distinctions, relations, and connections between gender and identity, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. They draw upon a rich array of intellectual traditions, including feminist, queer, race, and postcolonial theories. The study of gender opens up broader interrelated questions about the nature of gender constructions and the effects of gender on all persons.

Gender and Queer Studies Governing Board

Director, Gender and Queer Studies Program; Professor, Religious Studies
............................................................................................................. Greta Austin

Interim Director, Gender and Queer Studies Program (Spring 2020)
Visiting Assistant Professor, Religious Studies and
Gender and Queer Studies ................................................................. Heather White
Assistant Professor, English .............................................................. Regina Duthely
Associate Research Professor, Religious Studies and
Gender and Queer Studies ............................................................... Tanya Erzen
Assistant Professor, English ............................................................. Laura Krughoff
Assistant Professor, Psychology ....................................................... Melvin Rouse

Gender & Queer Studies
Commencement Reception
Spring 2020

Friday, May 15, 2020 2:30pm - 3:30pm
Virtual via Zoom
University of Puget Sound
Tacoma, WA
Graduating Seniors—Class of 2020

Elan Bowman is a senior majoring in History, with minors in Politics and Government, and Gender and Queer Studies. She hates admitting that she has a physical form, let alone writing about herself. She is from Santa Cruz, California and enjoys cooking, video games, and fashion in her spare time.

Emma Catanzaro is a senior Theatre Arts and English double major, minoring in Gender & Queer Studies, from rural North Carolina. She has performed in three mainstage productions at Puget Sound and will be acting as the Production Dramaturg for the Spring show, Telephone by Ariana Reines. She hopes to make a name for herself in the Seattle theatre community when she grows up, and is excited to see what Seattle brings. She enjoys acting and doing research in her free time—a self-proclaimed nerd. She also loves to knit, cuddle with her cat, and be generally goofy with friends.

Nina Kranzdorf is a senior studying Psychology and Gender & Queer Studies. They currently work for the Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (FEPPS). In their free time they like cooking for people they love and cultivating community. They co-facilitate Gender Identity Workshops and a Trans Support Group at a women’s prison.

Odhan Mullen is from Connecticut and will complete their History and Gender & Queer Studies double major at the University of Puget Sound in 2020. They are interested in public history and they completed an oral history collection with members of Tacoma’s LGBT+ community with a 2019 Arts & Humanities Summer Research Award. They hope to continue to engage in recording oral histories as a way to preserve the histories of underserved communities, particularly the transgender and non-binary community. Odhan hopes to continue pursuing public history by attending graduate school in the future to make community histories accessible.

Hannah Ritner is a junior from San Clemente, California. She is currently studying Political Theory, Gender & Queer Studies, and African American Studies. She is currently the Editor-in-Chief of Wetlands, an identity-based magazine affiliated with the GQS department. Hannah’s involvement with college policy debate has fostered an interest in critical theory, particularly queer theory. While Hannah is unsure as to what post-grad life holds for her, she is hoping to combine her interest in social justice, writing, and/or art.

Bronte Segura is graduating in the spring with majors in Japanese Language and Literature and Gender and Queer Studies and a minor in Sociology and Anthropology. They grew up in St. Louis, Missouri and she enjoys being able to chat with President Crawford about being gay in St. Louis. She is interested in learning more about how people in other countries express their gender and sexuality. They spend their time reading, avoiding speaking English, and eating copious amounts of chocolate.

Message from the Program Directors

Congratulations to an historic cohort of GQS graduates! The list of your accomplishments from these years in college was already long. Among this group are winners of impressive awards and honors. We can also count the first two GQS majors, who overcame institutional challenges and helped to open the door for future majors. Collectively and individually, you are a remarkably creative, persistent, and talented cohort. You have truly earned our commendations.

And yet, a mere “congratulations” feels inadequate, because you have also faced untold challenges this last semester. In addition to completing a Bachelor degree, you all have also effectively earned an unaccredited and involuntary immersive Masters degree in surviving a pandemic. You completed the last and hardest stretch of your college degree while pivoting to an unfamiliar learning medium, with the looming threat of infection and fear of death, and amid new economic uncertainties. The question that graduates always ask at this time—“what comes next?”—is a question that you are asking as the world shifts and buckles under our feet. No one knows precisely what comes next.

These unusual circumstances mean that we are congratulating you, in part, for the usual, conventional accomplishments of college graduates. You have: completed at least one thesis project; taken exams; connected the learning of classrooms to the learning of your life; won awards; gained intellectual facility with specialized academic knowledges, particularly in gender, queer and feminist studies; completed internships and experiential learning courses that connected these knowledges to various kinds of everyday challenges.

And we are also necessarily acknowledging some unexpected and especially hard-won achievements. You have developed new survival skills; learned new technologies; asked “why am I doing this?” with an even more acute sense of loss; found ways that it mattered and found ways to get it done even if you weren’t sure why it mattered; encouraged each other; shared your fears; asked for help; kept going as you watched the world and your place in it shift; became even more aware of systemic injustice; felt even more angry; cared for others and for yourself; missed friends, missed acquaintances, missed parties, and missed the sight of people whose names you don’t know; and you have even missed sitting in those tiny desks in Wyatt. This is an incomplete list.

In sum, class of 2020, you are totally amazeballs. We are so proud of you. We predict that you will change the world. You will change the world with knowledge gained through formal studies, and you will also change the world with the expertise that you have seized, invented, and hacked during these past months. The world needs all your talents and skills now. We are grateful for what you have taught us. And we look forward to a time, hopefully soon, when we will gather and celebrate in person all that you have accomplished.

Heather White, Interim Director-Spring, 2020
Greta Austin, Director