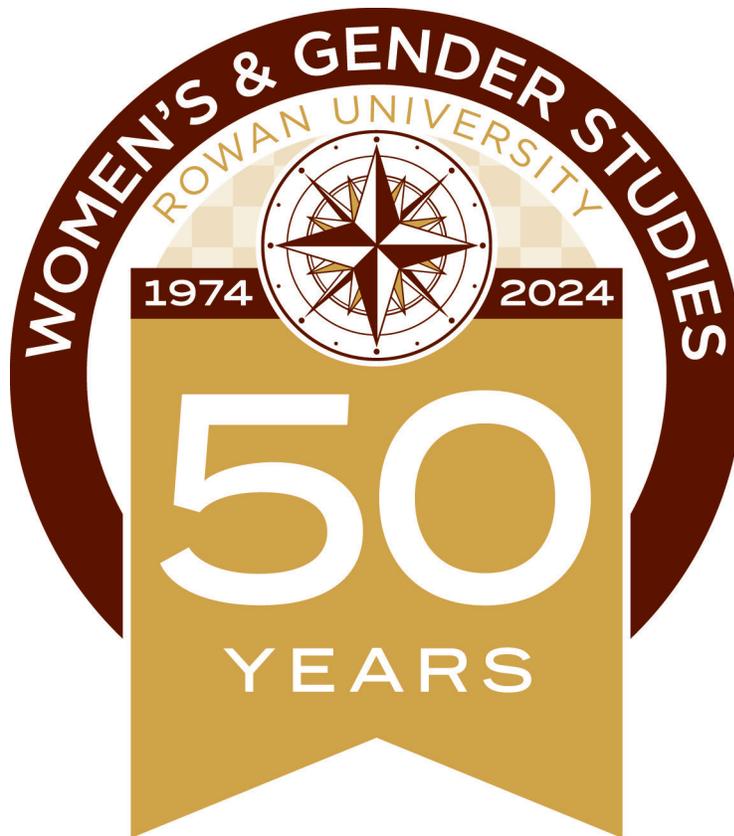


# Women's and Gender Studies



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# Faculty Spotlight



## Dr. Joel Rudin

Professor and Chair, Department of Management  
William G. Rohrer College of Business

### **Why did you decide to get involved in Women’s & Gender Studies at Rowan University?**

I was a Women’s Studies minor when I was a doctoral student (they didn’t call it Women’s and Gender Studies back then). When I found out that Rowan had a Women’s and Gender Studies council I happily joined. That was seventeen years ago and they haven’t kicked me out yet!

### **What is your favorite WGS course you’ve taught at Rowan and why?**

I have never taught a WGS course at Rowan but they all sound fascinating!

### **In what gender topics are you most interested?**

I am most interested in gender-based discrimination in the hiring process. Despite legal and societal changes, gender-based hiring discrimination remains ubiquitous not only here but in almost every other country in the world as well.

### **Why is WGS such a critical component of the university?**

WGS is a critical component of the university because it allows students to explore gender and sexuality issues in a safe and welcoming environment. WGS may not lead to career opportunities that are lucrative as engineering or finance but there is something to be said for learning something that interests you and what better time to do that than when you are a student?

### **What do you hope to see as the future of WGS at Rowan?**

I would like to see a WGS major. We have an Africana Studies major; we should have a WGS major, too.

# Faculty Spotlight



## Dr. Whitney Cox

Assistant Teaching Professor of World Religions  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

### **Why did you decide to get involved in Women’s & Gender Studies at Rowan University?**

Right after I accepted the position here, a departmental colleague encouraged me to get involved. I’ve taught in similar programs at other institutions, so it seemed like a natural fit with my interests, which are the intersections of contemporary US Christianity, gender, sexuality, and AIDS. I found a wonderful community among the faculty, staff, and students involved with the programs, especially those I might not meet otherwise.

### **What is your favorite WGS course you’ve taught at Rowan and why?**

I’d have to say *Sex & the Bible*. For one, it’s the title – I never tire of hearing people ask, startled, “That’s a class?” It’s a class! Really, I love it for what a deep dive we get to do into some parts of the text and how much time we spend deconstructing false ideas about what “the Bible says.” Many individuals have been hurt very badly by people who have justified their actions by claiming they’re just doing what “the Bible says,” but the ones who have been hurt rarely get the chance to turn around and ask of those people, *were they right?* Short answer: No! Longer answer: Come take the class.

### **In what gender topics are you most interested?**

Currently, I’m invested in talking about Queer Theory and Trans Theory. Working with my colleague Ed Kazarian, I’ve spent the past several years developing a CUGS in Queer Theory, which will be graduating its first cohort of students this May. I enjoy working with students to think critically about gender identities and sexualities, no matter what theirs might be. There is real need in the world today for more careful thought and consideration of these subjects, not just for how they impact individual lives but also for how they feed into every aspect of power and control in contemporary societies.

### **Why is WGS such a critical component of the university?**

Too often, WGS topics get dismissed as “optional” at best, and the dreaded “identity politics” at worst. Instead, aspects of gender and sexuality affect every aspect of our lives, whether we notice them or not – and too often, we have been trained not to notice them. Oppressive systems don’t want us to notice them. WGS students learn to examine, discuss, and dismantle systems of inequality that hurt everyone. They learn to ask the questions they’re not supposed to. That’s such a critical component not only of a university education, but of being a well-rounded person in the world.

### **What do you hope to see as the future of WGS at Rowan?**

More students in the program, of course! But I also want to see class offerings expand to include more colleges, more disciplines, more fields of study, and more perspectives. WGS is not a one-size-fits-all discipline – if it were, students could take a single course and be done. It is instead a way of thinking, a lens through which the world begins to make sense. I want more students to have this lens, so that when they leave Rowan, they do so with the ability to make real and lasting change.

# WGS's 50th Anniversary

In 2024 Rowan's WGS program celebrated its historic 50th anniversary. Rowan has one of the oldest WGS programs in the country, thanks to the efforts of a few persistent faculty and staff members. The anniversary year events began in March 2024 with an online panel consisting of WGS alumni in a variety of fields who spoke about the impact of WGS on their careers.

The celebration continued with a series of events on October 30, 2024, featuring Dr. Melissa Sanchez of the University of Pennsylvania. In the afternoon she spoke to students about her research and met with WGS faculty, and in the evening she gave a talk entitled "WGS in a World (Still) On Fire" to an engaged campus-wide audience. In attendance were students, faculty, staff, community members, and former Rowan dean Dr. Pearl Bartelt, one of the 1974 founders of WGS. Another one of the founders, retired professor Dr. Toni Libro, sent remarks that focused on the enormous growth of WGS over the past 50 years in terms of the numbers of both students and the variety of courses offered. Dr. Sanchez emphasized the importance of WGS to both the academic and community-focused missions of the university and left WGS energized for the next 50 years!



Melissa Sanchez and Melissa R. Klapper applauding WGS founder Pearl Bartlet.

# A Conversation with Priscilla Loomis

In February, former Olympic track and field athlete Priscilla Loomis highlighted our National Girls and Women and Sports Day (NGWSD) month-long series of events as the keynote speaker. Loomis spoke to a large and diverse crowd of students about her experiences within sport but also about finding your worth and your "why" outside of it. Loomis, who competed in the high jump for Antigua and Barbuda in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, passionately engaged the audience members by challenging them and stressing the importance of empowering themselves in whatever they pursue.

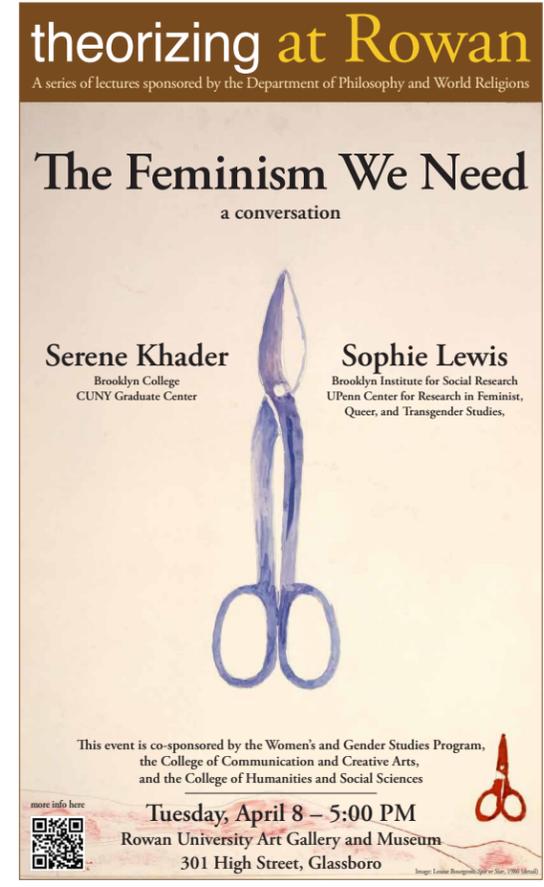
NGWSD is an annual campus-wide initiative at Rowan, which this year featured a variety of women who work in the sports industry appearing at the Center for Sports Communication and Social Impact Pizza with the Pros series, as well as a women's basketball game against Kean and documentarian Rachel Koteen showing her women's ice hockey film, *Take the Ice*, to multiple classes.



Priscilla Loomis speaking with students.

In April WGS co-sponsored *The Feminism We Need*, a discussion of contemporary feminism and its future featuring prominent theorists, Serene Khader and Sophie Lewis, both of whom have new trade books addressing the dangers of reactionary feminisms and trying to chart a way forward beyond them. Khader, who teaches at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center, spoke about her new book *Faux Feminism: Why We Fell For White Feminism and How We Can Stop* (Beacon 2024). Lewis, an independent writer and teacher, spoke about her current book *Enemy Feminisms: TERFs, Policewomen, and Girlbosses Against Liberation* (Haymarket, 2025).

The speakers each made a short presentation addressing the question of what the feminism we need in the current moment looks like. Khader drew a contrast between what she calls “feminisms for the few,” which she sees as being united by a vision of feminism as a movement for strictly individual liberation, and feminisms that oppose oppression and thus seek to dismantle hierarchical systems. Lewis stressed that feminism has a complex history, including many forms that have responded to the inequities created by gender hierarchies in ways that short circuit the larger project of liberation by attempting to leverage other systems of social inequity to the advantage of some women. After these presentations, there was a spirited and engaging discussion with the audience. Held at the Rowan University Art Gallery and Museum, the event also featured a reception, book sales and giveaways. It was organized by WGS Council members Edward Kazarian and Eva Boodman as part of the Theorizing at Rowan lecture series sponsored by the Department of Philosophy & World Religions.



Serene Khader, Sophie Lewis, and Ed Kazarian at the *Feminism We Need* event.



**Joy Acheampong, Class of 2025**  
International Studies and World Religions Major with WGS Minor, CUGS in Spanish, and Concentration in Global Comparative Studies

It was such an honor to be welcomed back to the New Jersey Women’s and Gender Studies Consortium (NJWGSC) annual colloquium for the second time in my college career. Having the opportunity to present my research project before my peers in the field is always an enriching learning experience: it helped me improve on my public speaking skills while discussing engaging topics and discussions within gender and sexuality scholarship. It has also been wonderful being able to network with fellow academics from multiple universities across New Jersey that can hopefully remain as strong connections as I transition to postgraduate life. I am grateful to the Rowan University WGS program and NJWGSC for all of the memories and knowledge I have gained throughout my past four years. I am excited to see how I take all of the lessons I have learned to forge a new path for myself as an educated scholar and advocate for the rights of women and queer individuals throughout my professional career and beyond.

**Rachel Carney, Class of 2025**  
Communication Studies Major with Minors in WGS and Sociology

My experience in the Women’s and Gender Studies program has been incredibly rewarding. The courses I have taken have not only aligned with my interests but also supported the type of work I want to pursue in the future. I have especially enjoyed how WGS intersects with other fields like sociology, allowing me to make meaningful connections across my disciplines and deepening my appreciation for the program as a whole. As a Communication Studies major, minoring in WGS has enriched both my academic and professional development by expanding my understanding of identity, power, and inclusion in diverse contexts. It has sharpened my critical thinking, strengthened my ability to engage with complex social issues, and helped me become a more thoughtful and inclusive communicator. This interdisciplinary lens continues to shape how I advocate for equity in all areas of my life. I am thankful to have been part of this program, and I recommend it to everyone!



## Riley Cowley, Class of 2025 (MST 2026)

History Major with CUGS in Women, Gender, and Society  
WGS Cohen/Caswell Scholarship Winner, 2025

I didn't discover WGS until the summer before my senior year, but once I did, joining this program was the easiest decision for me. I immediately registered for Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies and was enraptured by the topics discussed and the courses offered. From there, achieving a CUGS was easily attainable while taking classes that matched my various degree requirements, combined with my interests in early women's rights and modern feminism movements. I'm hopeful about my future in teaching future generations history with my awareness of gender complexities and their inclusion in history. I will earn my combined advanced degree in History and Education in 2026. I'm so thankful to have this program that matches my passion for life and benefits my future.



## Lindsay McLean, Class of 2025

Law & Justice Major with Minors in WGS and Political Science  
John H. Martinson Honors College concentration  
WGS Senior of Distinction, 2025

I officially began the WGS program in my junior year, and I'm incredibly grateful that I did, as the courses have combined many of my interests and have proven to be some of the most thought-provoking ones that I've taken while at Rowan. This program also opened me up to other educational areas that I would never have encountered otherwise, which have definitely had huge impacts on my learning and my interdisciplinary experience at Rowan. Most recently, in one of my WGS courses, I researched the practice of female genital mutilation in African countries, whereby I was introduced to the idea of balancing implementing humane efforts in underdeveloped countries with preventing those efforts from escalating into colonialist practices. As someone who is attending law school in the fall, this program helped me immensely in affirming that I want to attend law school and become an advocate for people who deserve and need a voice. WGS changed my experience at Rowan for the better and supported me in so many different ways.



## Gianna DiGiovanni, Class of 2026

Political Science and International Studies Majors with Minor in WGS and CUGS in Queer Theory and French  
WGS Cohen/Caswell Scholarship Winner, 2025

My experience while being part of WGS has been extremely eye-opening. I have gotten to see how people from all different academic, personal, and professional backgrounds come together to discuss such important contemporary issues. I've also gotten an opportunity to use my voice as a woman in politics, and to share my experiences and perspectives. I'm grateful to the WGS community for providing an amazing space with so many opportunities to learn about such important issues.



## JJ Van Wie, Class of 2025

BA in Communication Studies with Minors in New Media and WGS  
John H. Martinson Honors College concentration  
WGS Cohen/Caswell Scholarship Winner, 2024

My experience in WGS has expanded my perspective in all aspects of life. In my personal life, it has changed how I view the world around me, helping me to be a more understanding and open-minded person. WGS has impacted my academic life in ways I never imagined, allowing me to complete research on various intriguing topics, such as the impact of generative AI filters on transgender users and the influences that nonbinary identities have in personal relationships. My research in this department also allowed me to attend the New Jersey Women's & Gender Studies Consortium's 21st Annual Undergraduate Research Colloquium, where I presented my research to other WGS students and professors from across the state. This event allowed me and other students to engage with each other on the various topics and ideas we have been developing in our courses. WGS has changed how I view the world, myself, and my academic and professional work. After graduating college, I hope to take everything I have learned in this program and continue using it to develop my worldview and influence my professional life.



Julieann Wattley, Class of 2025 (MST 2026)

BA in History with Minor in WGS

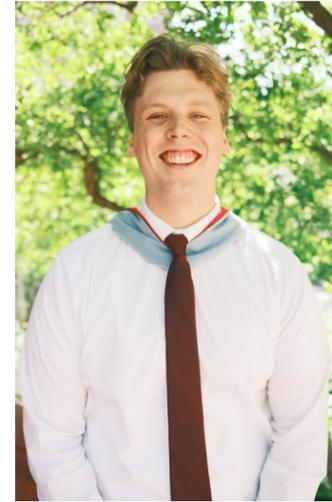
I love being in the WGS program, which has been an important part of my Rowan experience. I've gotten to work with so many amazing people who've had such a great impact on my life and have made so many connections. One of the best parts about this program is being able to take classes with my friends and amazing professors who've made coming to class very exciting. I now know that this is a stepping stone to making a difference in women's history and gender studies. My future plans include becoming a history teacher and looking to teach women's history classes. I will earn an MST from Rowan in 2026 in Subject Matter Education Social Studies.



Maxwell Armstrong, Class of 2023

Philosophy and World Religions Majors with Minor in WGS  
Advisement Administrator, Rowan College of South Jersey

After graduating from Rowan, I attended the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and more recently began my career within higher education at Rowan College of South Jersey. The knowledge the WGS professors and program provided me with is something I use every day within my academic and professional life. It has aided me in being a more compassionate individual dedicated to seeing success in each and every student I interact with. I will use this knowledge for the rest of my life, and I am so proud to have been a part of the Rowan University WGS program!



JJ Van Wie, Emily Fontelera, and Joy Acheampong at NJWGS colloquium March, 28, 2025.

**Founded in 1974, the Women's & Gender Studies Program at Rowan University is one of the oldest in the nation**, offering interdisciplinary academic programs including a minor and two certificates of undergraduate studies. Through academic programs and public events, the Women's & Gender Studies Program endeavors to call campus and community-wide attention to issues of gender, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Rowan's Women's & Gender Studies Program seeks to interrogate social and cultural norms, historical processes, and power structures through an intersectional, comparative, and global approach to constellations of identity such as gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and ability.



# WGS Requirements

Women's and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines gender roles in the complex contexts of culture and society, raising important questions about social, political, economic, and cultural institutions. Women's and Gender Studies courses provide an opportunity for intensive study and in-depth analysis. Many Women's and Gender Studies courses fit the global/multicultural designation. Interested students can contact [Dr. Melissa R. Klapper](#), Coordinator of Women's and Gender Studies, for more information.

## MINOR REQUIREMENTS

Each student enrolled in the Women's and Gender Studies minor is required to complete 18 credit hours of Women's and Gender Studies courses. Courses should optimally be taken in a sequence from general introductory courses to more specialized, upper division courses. Each student is required to take:

The core course, *Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies* OR *Honors Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies* (INTR 01.130); and

Fifteen (15) additional credits of approved WGS courses (ranked First and Second Tier), of which nine (9) credits must be from the First Tier and up to six (6) credits must be from the Second Tier.

Sample First Tier course:

CMS 04320 *Communicating Gender*  
HIST 05424 *Women in Modern American History*  
REL 10335 *Sex and the Bible*

Sample Second Tier courses:

ENG 02205 *Adolescent Literature*  
PSY 05310 *Psychology of Human Sexuality*  
RTF 01403 *Deconstructing Disney*

## CUGS REQUIREMENTS

Certificate of Undergraduate Study in Women, Gender, and Media  
INTR 01130 *Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies* OR *Honors Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies* and three electives drawn from the course list below:

ARHS 03340 *Survey of Women Artists*  
CMS 04310 *Images of Gender in Popular Culture*  
CMS 04320 *Communicating Gender*  
ENGL 02210 *Gender, Sexuality, and Literature*  
RTF 03272 *Images of Women in Film*

Certificate of Undergraduate Study in Women, Gender, and Society  
INTR 01130 *Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies* OR *Honors Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies* and three electives drawn from the course list below:

ANTH 02322 *Sex and Sex Roles in a Cross Cultural Perspective*  
LAWJ 05346 *Women, Crime, and Criminal Justice*  
HIST 05423 *Women in Early American History*  
HIST 05424 *Women in Modern American History*  
PHIL 09328 *Philosophy and Gender*  
POSC 07311 *Women in American Politics*  
PSY 01200 *Psychology of Women and Cultural Experience*  
SOC 08370 *Sociology of Women*