Faculty Spotlight:

Dr. Cara Snyder

Dr. Cara Snyder is the newest addition to the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department. She will be teaching brand new classes Fall 2020. Check out the Faculty Spotlight to learn more about our new professor, her academic interests, what she does for fun, and more!
Free Speech vs. Hate Speech: The paradox of speech on a public university campus

In February 2020, University of Louisville became the focal point of a contentious and age-old question: what sorts of speech are protected under the First Amendment?

The case of the anti-gay pamphleteer as raised as many eyebrows as it did concerns for the safety and well-being of LGBTQ students on campus. This is what Inside Higher Ed had to say about the incident:

"An unnamed student distributed a pamphlet called God and Sexuality containing anti-gay material during an Intro to LGBTQ studies [taught by Dr. Kaila Story] on Jan. 28 before the class had begun and then waited outside the class once it was in session, according to news reports. The incident was reported to administrators, who met with the student and said he was free to return and distribute more pamphlets to the class. It's unclear what has changed since the representatives of the office of the dean of students met with the student and made the original determination. Karman declined to provide more detail. What is clear is that its reversal has left many people on and off the campus puzzled."

The student returned to the class for the next class period, to be intercepted by campus police. The student demanded to speak.

Initially, Dr. Neeli Bendapudi, who is the President of the University of Louisville, had stated that there is no legal way to punish the student, as they did not violate any free speech policy outright because religious materials are very heavily protected by the First Amendment. This sentiment was later contradicted by the University, which claimed that the University does have the authority to restrict access to spaces that a student may be in, if they have given cause to warrant legitimate concern for the well-being and safety of others.

Adam Steinbaugh, director of the Individual rights defense program for FIRE, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, told Inside Higher Ed that, "[the] restriction of contact with specific students, faculty and staff* is a sanction for an array of conduct violations, such as disruption of normal university processes and harassment. The legality of the no-contact rule depends significantly on who the student is prohibited from contacting and the basis on which the order is imposed".

Steinbaugh goes on to say "If it's to prevent disruption of a particular class, that may be enforceable," Steinbaugh wrote in an email. "But if it's not narrowly tailored to directly advance the university's interests in a non-disruptive learning environment, it may present First Amendment problems."

For some, the University focusing on the free speech element of this incident is the University constructing a strawman argument--as some argue the central concern was not whether or not the student was allowed to distribute the anti-gay material but rather if the behavior of the student returning to this specific course, instead of distributing pamphlets to other LGBTQ or queer-centric courses that the University offers, constitutes targeted and escalated behavior. And while many are relieved that the student has since been banned from areas in which Dr. Story teaches classes, many wonder why the University back-pedaled on their initial stance on the issue of the pamphleteer. Dr. Ricky Jones, department chair of the Pan African studies department, had this to say to Inside Higher Ed:

“I can't speak to what made them change their mind,” he said. “We argued from the beginning against the fundamental stance that this was a free speech issue... We never said that the student couldn't pass out the materials; we made the argument that him returning to that class was unnerving and odd.” He goes on to say, “When he targeted a class in that way and shared an intention to return, we saw that at the beginning as something different.”
The Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies hosts our annual Carolyn Krause Maddox Essay contest during the spring semester of the academic year. Thanks to a generous donation from Eleanor and Bob Maddox, one undergraduate and one graduate student were awarded $500 each for the best papers on a topic in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Students from any discipline are invited to submit papers on topics related to women or gender. An interdisciplinary committee of WGST faculty reviewed all submissions and made award decisions. The winners were scheduled to present their papers at a colloquium during Women's History Month in March. This presentation was sadly canceled due to COVID-19 and the move to online instruction.

As a department, we value academic exploration. We encourage our students to find real world evidence of the value of gender studies. The Maddox Prize is an incentive for students to conduct research and develop scholarship in their areas of interest and expertise.

The Department wants to send a huge congratulations to Ashley Carroll, who was awarded the Graduate award for their work entitled *Buffer Zone Laws: Clinic Protests and reproductive Justice* and to Taylor Thomas who received the undergraduate award for her work entitled *Reclaiming the Black Femme Identity: An Investigation of Black Femmehood in Visual Communication.*
Dr. Cara Snyder is Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies newest faculty member. We interviewed her so we can get to know who they are as a person and as a scholar. Here is what we learned:

1) Tell me about yourself! Where do you call home?

I was born in Greenbelt, Maryland. Most of my family still lives there, as well as in Pennsylvania, near Gettysburg. I've also lived, worked, and studied in Antigua, Guatemala; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Petrolina, Brazil; and Atlanta, USA. All of these places are pieces of home!

2) What initially got you interested in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies?

I spent college trying to understand why poverty existed. Looking for answers, I majored in Economics and International Relations, but I was often frustrated by the explanations these disciplines provided. Then, in my last semester of college, I took a WGSS course, and it was like *brain exploding emoji*! Here was a place where people were asking the right questions. Everything about the experience was liberating. I was empowered by the vocabulary WGSS gave me to make sense of the world around me: terms like intersectionality, oppression, and privilege. Now, as a Professor of WGSS, I feel like I have the best job in the world, because I can be a part of that life-changing experience for others.

3) Where did you receive your PHD? What was your dissertation on?

I received my PhD from the Department of Women's Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. I also completed certificates in Digital Studies and Teaching and Learning. Here is a very academic summary of my dissertation:

My first book-length project, titled "Which Team Do You Play For?: Visibility and Queering in
Brazilian Soccer," argues that futebol is a critical and contentious space where racialized, gendered anxieties take shape and where the pressure to adhere to heteronormative gender binaries is both viciously enforced and vehemently contested. Combining methods from LGBTQ+ studies, critical race theory, anthropology, cultural studies, media studies, history, and transnational feminist theory, the project traces how formerly-excluded groups have claimed access to soccer and what it means for processes of visibility, assimilation, and ultimately, queering the game itself. I contend that in the contemporary moment in Brazil—amidst pervasive corruption, unstable governance, and rising tides of hate—women and LGBTQ+ athletes’ demands for greater participation are part of a longer-term trend in which marginalized people are claiming belonging in the national polity. The activism of these alternative soccer teams is also a response to disappointment with electoral politics, where a range of political parties uphold deep-seated cultural norms. For the athlete-activists I work with like the Meninos Bons de Bola, Brazil’s first trans men’s soccer team, their struggle represents a shift to claim political and social dignity through means other than traditional electoral ones. In the context of a culturally rightward turn in Brazil and around the world, my project highlights movements to subvert gender ordering as part of a challenge to larger social order. My work contributes to current debates in WGSS by exploring how marginalized people negotiate for recognition and belonging beyond the bounds of normative citizenship.

6) what sorts of classes are you super excited to teach and why?
I'm super excited to teach everything! WGSS Chair, Dr. Heinecken, asked me what my dream classes were, and that's what I'll be teaching next year: "Gender and the Digital"; "Transnational Feminism in Theory and Praxis", and "Feminist, Queer, and Trans Approaches to Sport". Each of these makes me excited for different reasons. For the digital course, I look forward to learning with my students about the evolving role of the digital in our lives. For the transnational course, I can't wait to work with graduate and upper level students- there are so many materials I'm dying to share and discuss! I hope I can take many of the students from the course to the National Women's Studies Association Conference in November, which is themed "The Poetics, Politics, and Praxis of Transnational Feminisms". Also, I imagine using the course as an opportunity to seek out Louisville's transnational stories, ones that evoke movements of people, ideas, and goods. The sport class will be another opportunity to get to know Louisville, since one of our projects

4) what is your area of expertise?
My areas of expertise are transnational feminism and Latin American and Brazilian Studies. I am also trained in Physical Cultural (Sport) Studies, Digital Studies, and Feminist Pedagogy.

5) what does transnational feminism mean or look like to you?
Oooo what an excellent question. Transnational feminism takes on new meaning for me in this current moment of virulent nationalisms and xenophobia, because it focuses on building critical solidarities between feminists in various locations. It is attentive to multidirectional and asymmetrical flows of power (and to U.S. imperialism), even as it exposes the nation as a constructed category. We see such constructions and their impacts right now, in the United States for example, where the definition of what it is to be USAmerican is being shaped and contested, and where this definition is being used to justify violence and grave human rights abuses, especially at the U.S.-Mexico border. Transnational feminism, in theory and praxis (the name of a class I will teach this Fall!), is an essential tool in this contemporary fight for justice. In theory, it challenges us to see how nationalism limits our thinking. In practice, it is a challenge to those who seek to close borders; it is a careful creating of solidarity amongst oppressed people around the world struggling together to get free.
will include going to a NWSL soccer game!

7) what are 5 random facts that people don't know about you?

1. I'm a twin.
2. I am fluent in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and I know some basic American Sign Language and French.
3. I went to performing arts schools, and my dream profession growing up was to star in musicals. To this day, singing, dancing, and performing bring me such joy!
4. I started working when I was 12, and there are few jobs I have not done. To name a few, I've been a pizza maker, swim instructor, cleaner, bartender, server, driver, and nanny.
5. I am a proud ti-tia (auntie) to some very adorable little humans.

Description of Featured pictures as explained by Dr. Snyder:

"In the first, professional looking shot, I'm wearing a shirt gifted to me by Brazil's first trans men's soccer tea, the Meninos Bons de Bols (the MBB or soccer star boys).

The second picture was taken during a performance I created for a conference called "The Cuir/Queer Americas". Together with my compañero Victor Hernández, we composed and performed a mashup of songs (with their music videos) that paid homage to our favorite queer artists throughout the americas. And, together with my mom, I created (sewed) a version the pussy pants Janelle Monae wears in her music video "Pynk"!

The last is a shot of me playing soccer for my college team, the Agnes Scott Scotties. This picture makes me look way better at soccer than I actually am."
Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies is fundamentally concerned with social justice and social change. It provides the critical thinking skills needed to analyze how race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect to structure our political, social, and cultural institutions and shape our real-world experiences. As a department, we serve students by offering them courses that bridge theory and practice, inviting them to engage in personal and social transformation, and equipping them to address important issues currently facing our communities.