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December 2021 Newsletter

Director's Statement



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For the Sexual Diversity Studies faculty, staff, and students, the last year and a half has been challenging, but also hopeful. In March 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic forced us to move to remote work and learning. This fall, we are slowly but surely returning to the classroom, and we are so thrilled to have the opportunity to see our students in person again. This fall also marks a turning point in the history of the Bonham Centre, because it ushers in the design and implementation of the **Queer and Trans Research Lab (QTRL)**, which will shape the activities of the BC for the next several years.

The QTRL is a collaborative research project focused on methods in queer and trans studies across the disciplines as well as across creative, activist, and scholarly research practices. Our aim is to bring innovative approaches and solutions to entrenched and emerging social and political problems affecting 2SLGBTQ+ and BIPOC lives and communities. Our inaugural [cohort](#) includes an artist residency, filled this year by trans opera singer Teiya Kasahara 笠原 貞野, and two community leadership residencies, one held by Tatiana Ferguson, co-founder of the Black Queer Youth Collective, and the second by Somali-Canadian multidisciplinary artist and videographer Abdi Osman. The artist and community leadership appointments are joined by Research Associate and program coordinator Nikoli Attai; Martha LA McCain Postdoctoral Fellow, Elif Sari; and Martha LA McCain Research Fellows Andrea Allen and Jordache Ellapen. Mónica Espaillat Lizardo, Ian Liu-jia Tian, Chido Muchemwa, and Elliott Tilleczek are our graduate research assistants; and Chelle Carter, Jade Nelson, Madison Garces, and Riya Joshi join us as undergraduate research assistants. I could not be more excited to work with this amazing collective! You can read more about the initiative here:

<https://www.utoronto.ca/news/queer-and-trans-research-lab-opens-u-t-s-bonham-centre-sexual-diversity-studies>.

Sexual Diversity Studies is deeply committed to social justice and offers a multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate program that fosters critical scholarship from diverse intellectual fields in the humanities and social sciences. Already this year we have sponsored exciting (on-line) events: for the annual [Lynch Distinguished Lecturer Series](#), we were joined by Black Queer Diaspora Studies scholar Keguro Macharia; next term, we look forward to the annual Sexual Representation Collection lecture with Professors Hoang Tan Nguyen and Ariane Cruz; and the annual extravaganza, Queer Directions—this year with theme of “Queer Care and Radical Hospitality.”

As we move through the 2021-22 academic year, we will continue to prepare students to become anti-colonial, anti-racist, and critically queer thinkers ready and able to confront the challenges of our times. We encourage you to visit our website to learn more about our programs, students, staff, and faculty, and to contact us if you would like to become a part of the collective work of building the world we want.

Alumni Spotlight

**Ricky Rodrigues:****What have you been up to since graduating from SDS?**

After graduating from SDS, I completed a master's degree in social work (also at UofT) and then went on to complete work in both direct practice (e.g., service provision) and indirect practice (e.g., research) with the goal of improving the health and wellness of individuals and communities across Canada, particularly 2SLGBTQ+ communities. I'm currently working as the Reporting and Evaluation Lead at the [Community-Based Research Centre](#), and as a social work counsellor in private practice.

Do you have any advice for students currently pursuing their undergraduate degree in SDS?

Liberal arts programs, like SDS, can sometimes feel overly theoretical, and this can be difficult for students pursuing their degrees during times of economic precarity and global turmoil, which create pressure to study something practical that will lead to a well-paying and/or impactful job. Although it can be hard to disconnect from these larger societal challenges, dive deep into the theoretical world of SDS and you'll find that, in time, you'll learn how to apply the theoretical in ways that support your career growth and/or change the world around you.

What is something you learned in SDS that you hope to take with you in your life and/or career moving forward?

SDS introduced me to many critical theories, frameworks, and perspectives, which have been essential to the work I've done with 2SLGBTQ+ communities and other populations that continue to navigate complex systems of oppression.

What were some of your favourite moments from your time in SDS?

David Brennan's HIV & Social Work class opened my eyes to some of the ways I could use my SDS background to support others and create social change, and I enjoyed having that sense of direction. I also enjoyed the LBGTOUT Student Awards, where my peers and I were celebrated for our academic, volunteer, and career accomplishments.



Marie Laing:

What have you been up to since graduating from SDS?

After graduation, I worked for a year and then decided to do my M.A. in Social Justice Education at OISE. Since graduating from that program in 2018, I have been working in a variety of

education and research jobs! One constant has been my work with the [Native Youth Sexual Health Network](#), where I work with fellow Indigenous young people to support sexual health and reproductive justice in our communities. I also recently published the findings from my master's thesis as a book, [Urban Indigenous Youth Reframing Two-Spirit](#) (Routledge, 2021).

Do you have any advice for students currently pursuing their undergraduate degree in SDS?

Put your health and wellbeing first! No assignment or exam is worth more than your health, so if it's a choice between staying up until 3 for a week and writing a less-than-perfect paper, hand in the imperfect paper and go to sleep. And also: get to know your classmates. I learned just as much from building relationships with my peers as I did in the classroom during my time in SDS.

What is something you learned in SDS that you hope to take with you in your life and/or career moving forward?

One thing I learned in SDS that I hold dear is the importance of knowing our history as queer and trans people. Knowing where we come from -- including both the badass activism of the 60's and 70's, and the racism and transphobia that were present in those movements -- allows us to contextualize the world around us and better take care of one another as advanced capitalism and settler-colonialism continue to wreak havoc on our communities.

What were some of your favourite moments from your time in SDS?

Many of my favorite moments at SDS were made with the Sexual Diversity Studies Student Union. I got involved in the SDSSU during my 4th and 5th years of the program (shout out to my fellow alive-in-five comrades!) and I am so glad that I did. Organizing events where SDS students could come together and agitating for change within the department were particular highlights for me.

Student Spotlight



We had the opportunity to catch up with Chelle Carter, president of the Sexual Diversity Studies Student Union. The SDSSU is the undergraduate course union for everyone who has ever taken a Sexual Diversity Studies course at the University of Toronto.

Hi Chelle, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Hi Bonham Centre! My name's Michelle, or just Chelle for short. I'm a 26 year old Black/biracial, pansexual, non-binary, Mad/disabled femme and I double major in Women and Gender Studies and Sexual Diversity Studies. I greatly enjoy chocolate, cannabis and stuffed animals (I hesitated on including the weed part, but I thought, "I bet I wouldn't include a disclaimer if I was giving wine mom energy.") Isn't it funny how pleasure-seeking has a hierarchy? Anyway, hello!

Can you explain the SDSSU to us?

The Sexual Diversity Studies Student Union is a really small, student run union that, first and foremost, serves the population of Sexual Diversity Studies students—those are folks taking an SDS course, cross-listed course for the program, or enrolled in the program itself, which you can do starting second year. A really great entryway for past and present members has been taking

Queer Popular Culture, which has no prerequisites!

We serve both the SDS and larger U of T student body by creating and hosting academic and social events relative to Sexual Diversity Studies. We also act as a liaison between the SDS student body and the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity, which houses the SDS program.

What made you want to get involved with the SDSSU?

Finding the Sexual Diversity Studies program itself was really exciting; I'd already fallen in love with Women and Gender Studies, and a friend suggested the Queer Popular Culture course. I became enamoured with the interdisciplinary aspects of both WGS and SDS, and as a multiply marginalized person interested in community engagement, deepening my immersion into the SDS community felt inevitable. I'm very passionate about what I study!

What is one of your favourite events that the SDSSU hosted last year?

Certainly, our collaboration with UTStudent Life to host the Queering the Future Summit! I was approached by the incredible Kerry-Ann James, who had the idea of conceptualizing a summit based around reconciling the law with BIPOC lives—that often includes multiple forms of marginalization—and BIPOC futures. We wanted to create a space where students and faculty could engage in questions like: what role, if any, should the law play in the lived experiences and futures of folks marginalized along lines of race, dis/ability, gender and sexuality? How can we envision departures from systemic violences that are often facilitated by the law toward queer, disabled BIPOC? What does queering the future look like? Dr. Brenda Cossman was the keynote speaker, with a film screening by the amazing Ayo Lineo Gariba, followed by a talk moderated by Dr. Beverly Bain with panelists Sarah Edo, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Ayo Lineo Gariba. It felt incredible to build and share a space with such brilliant people I look up to, and have been instructed by in some cases. I'll never forget it!

What do you hope to accomplish with the SDSSU this year?

This past March, I began talks with one of my old colleagues who was, at the time, doing a practicum with Butterfly, the Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Project. In light of the horrific events in Atlanta on March 16th, we wanted to create an event bringing awareness to anti-Asian violence while highlighting the amazing work that Butterfly does for Asian and migrant sex worker communities. The SDSSU is definitely planning that event for sometime in March of 2022, which is something I'm passionate about seeing to fruition.

What is something that you're looking forward to with the SDSSU this year?

As I've only been President during COVID times (and I'll be graduating soon!), everything being virtual has felt both normal and abnormal in that I'm really grateful for the community we've been able to build and/or sustain, but conscious of the potential for in-person events to be even more engaging. So, I'm looking forward to finding more creative ways to virtually engage folks in the amazingness that is the SDS program, and collaborating with other student groups to make space for sexual and gender diversity wherever able!

Faculty Spotlight



Dr. Naveen Minai:

Dr. Naveen Minai is an assistant professor and the Undergraduate Coordinator with Sexual Diversity Studies. We had the chance to speak with Dr. Minai about the second year of online classes and the courses she teaches!

Can you tell us a little bit about the courses you're teaching this year?

Dr. Minai: For 2021-2022, I am teaching a range of courses at different levels, including Sexuality at the Intersections, Queer Pop Culture, Introduction to Queer of Color Critique. The first two include students from different programs and stages of their undergraduate career, while the third is more focused on students who already have some background in critical sexuality studies and critical race studies. Teaching a range of courses with students from different backgrounds is exciting! Each student brings a fresh and differing perspective, both from their disciplinary training and their positionality and lived experiences. We are then able to explore concepts, arguments, histories, and methods in multiple dimensions, and across a range of social, economic, geographic, and political contexts.

How has teaching online impacted the way that you teach?

Teaching online has impacted how I think about assessment and schedule. For example, I incorporate digital annotation software in my courses, and I provide staggered deadlines. The first means that we do not compromise on the practice of close reading and text-based analysis, while the second supports students through the exacerbated and new difficult circumstances many of them are dealing with due to the global pandemic – including being in different time zones! I also count the use of the chat function in Zoom towards class participation, which means that students who are in domestic spaces or shared spaces, students who are shy or students who are up late in different time zones, can participate fully in class.

Announcing the Queer and Trans Research Lab (QTRL)!



The Queer and Trans Research Lab is a brand new collaborative research project based at The Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, University of Toronto, focusing on methods in queer and trans studies across the disciplines as well as across creative, activist, and scholarly research practices. Our aim is to bring innovative approaches and solutions to entrenched and emerging social and political problems affecting 2SLGBTQ+ and BIPOC lives and communities. For more information, and to meet the 2021-22 cohort, check out our website: <https://sds.utoronto.ca/queer-and-trans-research-lab/>

Upcoming Events



February:

February 10th: 4:30pm-6:00pm
EST: Martha LA McCain Post-Doctoral Fellowship Lecture by Elif Sari

February 28th 1pm EST: The Sexual Representation Collection Presents: "Sex in the Archives" with Ariane Cruz ("Carbon Cosby: Pornmimicries of Race, Sexuality, and Gender") and Nguyen Tan Hoang ("Sticky Pages: Gaysian Scholar Raids Sex Archive")

March:

Queer Directions 2022: Queer Care and Radical Hospitality

March 17th: 3pm-5pm EST: Experimental Classroom

March 18th: 4:30pm-6pm EST: Queer Care and Radical Hospitality panel, with guests Dean Spade, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Hil Malatino, and Savannah Shange

March 25th: Research Colloquium

June:

June 18th: Time TBD: Artist in Residence Teiya Kasahara 笠原 貞野 performance "Little Mis(s)gender"

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