

# Many Voices

Spring 2024

University of St. Thomas

## LUANN DUMMER CENTER FOR WOMEN JOYOUS JOURNEYS: FEMINISM AND A GLOBAL PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS



A magazine of the University of St. Thomas Luann Dummer Center for Women, University Advocates for Women and Equity, and the Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Program

# EDITOR'S NOTE

This semester was certainly one of Joyous Journeys at the LDCW, most notably journeys of the past, present, and future.

In celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Luann Dummer Center for Women, we had the opportunity to dig into the Center's history. What perfect timing, as this year's LDCW director Dr. Shaherzad Ahmadi is a historian. Through interviews with friends of Luann's and others who were essential to laying the LDCW's foundation, an oral history archive was created, allowing constituents a peek into the early days of the Center.



**Christine Balsley**  
Editor, *Many Voices*  
Program Manager, LDCW

I didn't have the privilege of knowing Luann, but from what I've pieced together from former students and colleagues popping into the Center throughout the years--usually first out of curiosity and then, inevitably, to share an antidote about Luann--she seems like the kind of person that you can't help but share a story or two about. The anniversary events brought together so many voices, with so many stories, that wove together to reflect a dynamic, strong, and focused woman for whom a legacy like the Women's Center's seems entirely fitting.

Programs throughout the fall aligned with that legacy. Supporting and bolstering communities both at St. Thomas and the greater Twin Cities, they ranged from small acts of kindness, like the student-led group FemCom creating and planting uplifting notes throughout campus, to funded and time-intensive projects, such as grant recipient Susan Anderson-Benson crocheting weighted blankets to ease student anxiety. Our fall kick-off "Taste the World" featured international cuisine from multiple women-owned restaurants located throughout the Twin Cities, while FemCom extended a helping hand beyond campus with a fall clean-up day and donation drive for Women's Advocates (a refuge for women experiencing domestic abuse).



This spring, we invite you as our celebration continues with excellent programs, including the return of our Women's History Month Speaker! This year, world-renown cartoonist Alison Bechdel will grace our campus on March 4th (I, seriously, cannot wait!). Please join us as the legacy of Dr. Luann Dummer continues and find your place in the LDCW story.





**Dr. Shaherzad Ahmadi**

LDCW Director

Associate Professor of History

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

It has been a privilege to direct the Luann Dummer Center for Women and benefit from the tremendous guidance of those who built the Center over the decades. I was especially fortunate to organize and moderate the 30-Year Anniversary Event, which invigorated our community as students, faculty, staff, alumni and faculty emeriti reconnected post-COVID. In fact, our Center conceived of the event as an opportunity to contribute to our broader annual theme:

**Feminism and a Global Pursuit of Happiness.**

Our theme's objective, to interrogate the modern concept of joy while offering tools to build community, has generated a meaningful framework for our programming. Due to a variety of factors, including the pandemic and modern technology, our society has suffered from increasing isolation. This year, we challenge the systems that insist on narrowly prescribed personal and professional trajectories to achieve happiness while exploring activities, communities, and disciplines that expand our intellectual horizons and meet our needs.

I am also proud to say that our Center is open everyday and has become a space where students, staff, and faculty spend substantive time discussing women's issues. This has fostered intergenerational learning as well as lasting connections among many who would not necessarily cross paths outside of our Center.

Finally, I am honored to work with our Advisory Board, now full, which keeps our Center informed of activities on and off campus that relate to women's issues while also engaging deeply with our partnerships across campus, which have notably expanded. Thus, not only have we offered programming that attracts a wide audience, we have also increased our profile thanks to the support of our robust Board.

We look forward to Professor of English Elizabeth Wilkinson's transition in to the role of Director in the Summer of 2024 following her return from an especially productive sabbatical.



# MAKING WAVES FALL 2023

## SEPTEMBER

### TASTE THE WORLD: CELEBRATING WOMEN IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY



The LDCW kicked off the 2023-24 academic year in celebration--and recognition!--of local restaurants owned and operated by international women. While enjoying delicacies from Christina Nguyen's HaiHai (Vietnamese), Persian pastries from Luminous Cafe, and platters of Ethiopian goodies from Bolé Express, students learned from Bolé-owner Rekik the unique challenges of maintaining a successful restaurant as an Ethiopian woman.

## NOVEMBER WITH SUSAN ANDERSON-BENSON WEIGHT TO LIFT THE WEIGHT



2023 LDCW Staff Fellow Susan Anderson-Benson presented her research on the inequity of sleep and anxiety experienced by women college students. This research informed her grant project, where she purchased yarn of a particular weight and color to crochet weighted blankets to aid students facing anxiety. These blankets were given to the Center for Well-Being.



# MAKING WAVES SPRING 2024

**FEBRUARY** WITH ANN KENNE

## FINDING ST. THOMAS'S HIDDEN WOMEN



**Ann Kenne**

Head of Special Collections Department  
University Archivist

University Archivist, Ann Kenne, will share her research on some of the often overlooked women who played integral roles in St. Thomas's history. Through her exploration of this topic, she aims to amplify the stories of these women and bring their contributions to the forefront of our understanding of the university's history.



**Dia Yang**

Educational Leadership & Learning  
LDCW Graduate Fellow, 2023

## **MAY** WITH DIA YANG **FROM A DUTIFUL DAUGHTER TO BEING CALLED POJ LAIB: UNDERSTANDING THE FEMINIST IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF POJ LAIB HMONG WOMEN**

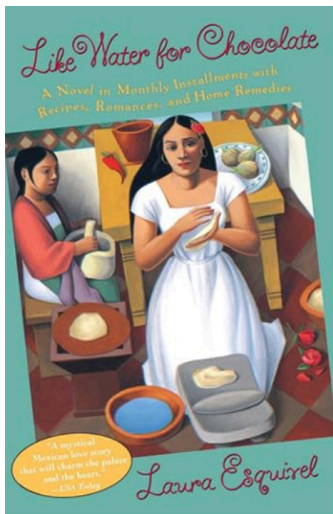
The Hmong word "poj laib" translates to female villain. This word is often used to describe Hmong women who are disobedient and/or not maintaining the image of a good daughter/in-law. Traditional gender roles still resonate with Hmong community today. How

do Hmong women feel about the word "poj laib" and make meaning of it as they navigate their life toward success? Join us as we learn about this study that focuses on how cultural language can perpetuate patriarchal values, and how Hmong women liberate themselves from these expectations.



# LDCW 2023-2024 BOOK CIRCLE

## "JOYOUS JOURNEYS"

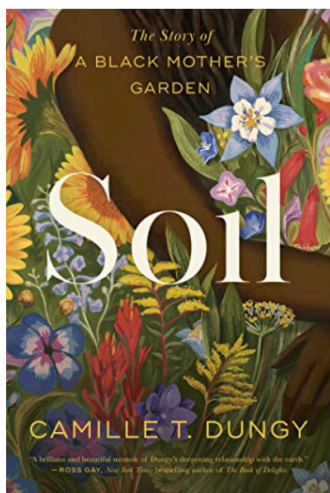


### SEPTEMBER

#### **Like Water for Chocolate: A Novel in Monthly Installments with Recipes, Romance, and Home Remedies**

by Laura Esquirel

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, Drs. Olga Herrera of English and Juli Kroll of Modern & Classical Languages led a discussion on this international sensation! This event was paired with a screening of the 1992 film.

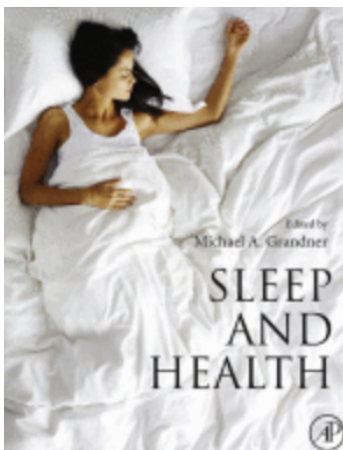


### OCTOBER

#### **Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden**

by Camille T. Dungy

In *Soil*, visiting poet and scholar Camille Dungy recounts the seven-year odyssey to diversify her garden in the predominately white community of Fort Collins, Colorado. Led by Catherine Grant from the St. Thomas Greenhouses and Medicinal Gardens project, this lively discussion included insights both literary and environmental.



### NOVEMBER

#### **"Queer College Students Cannot Sleep"**

Research with Sophia Becker and Dr. Roxanne Prichard

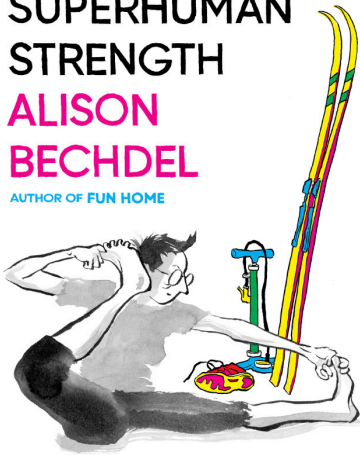
LDCW undergrad grant recipient Sophia Becker and her advisor Dr. Roxanne Prichard discussed their findings on sleep disparities among LGBTQ+ college students.



THE  
SECRET TO  
SUPERHUMAN  
STRENGTH

ALISON  
BECHDEL

AUTHOR OF FUN HOME



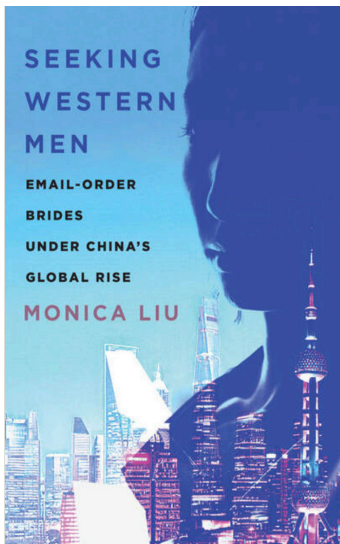
**FEBRUARY**  
**The Secret to Superhuman Strength**  
by 2024 Women's History Month Speaker  
**Alison Bechdel**

Comics and cultural superstar Alison Bechdel delivers a deeply layered story of her fascination, from childhood to adulthood, with every fitness craze to come down the pike. Discussion will be led by former LDCW director and English professor Dr. Emily James and her Women's Literature class.

**MARCH**

**Seeking Western Men: Email-Order Brides Under China's Global Rise**

by Monica Liu

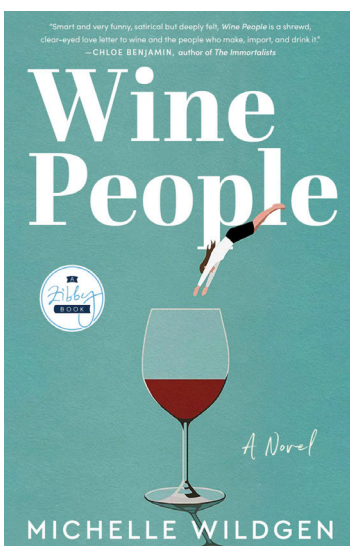


From St. Thomas Sociology professor Dr. Monica Liu, this evocative work turns the stereotype 'mail-order' brides on its head. Her study of China's email-order bride industry offers stories of Chinese women, primarily middle-aged, divorced, and proactively seeking spouses to fulfill their material and sexual needs. What they seek in their Western partners is tied to what they believe they've lost in the shifting global economy around them.

**MAY**

**Wine People**

by Michelle Wildgen



What happens when two ambitious and completely opposite young women join forces in the competitive male-dominated industry of boutique wine imports? Find out, as visiting writer Michelle Wildgen takes readers from France, Germany, and Italy to the Midwest and Sonoma in this mouth-watering and utterly entertaining page-turner that explores how close friends can both misjudge and uplift each other.

# LUANN DUMMER CENTER FOR WOMEN CELEBRATES 30 YEARS!

In October, the LDCW recognized 30 years of Dr. Luann Dummer's legacy with Open House & Gallery Exhibits, as well as a 30-Year Celebration!

## Open House | Gallery Exhibitions

Throughout the month of October, the LDCW hosted multiple open house exhibitions in the Women's Center space. With food, guided tours of the Women's Center, as well as a visual art and oral history archive, community members learned about the Center's rich history. Access to the oral history archive can be found here: [LDCW Oral History Collection](#)



Members also learned from one another, as the exhibitions brought visitors with various ties to the Center and to Luann throughout the years, many of whom shared their stories and fondness for the Center.



Inspiration III by Catherine DeMars, LDCW Art Gallery



Friends of the LDCW gather in the OEC Atrium to catch up and enjoy refreshments before the panel presentation.



# LDCW 30-Year Celebration!

On October 25th, friends of Luann's; LDCW staff, directors, and Board members from past and present; as well as faculty, students, and community members gathered in the O'Shaughnessy Educational Center to celebrate!

President Rob Vischer gave the opening remarks for the program. Current LDCW director Dr. Shaherzad Ahmadi (History) moderated a lively conversation with panelists Debra Petersen, LDCW Director from (2000-06) and Professor of Communication Studies, and Nancy Zingale, former assistant to the president, ex-officio of the LDCW Advisory Board, and friend of Luann. Debra and Nancy shared stories from the early years of the Center, of Luann's passion for cooking and sports cars, her love for her friends, travel, and teaching. They discussed the growth of the Center, hosting such revelatory groups as arts activists Guerrilla Girls and speakers of notoriety such as Nina Totenberg, Lynsey Addario, Tarana Burke, and Roxane Gay. Conversation spilled into the audience, where former director Dr. Young-ok An reflected on the Women's March of 2017 and how the LDCW organized buses for students to DC and community members to St. Paul.



It was a night of sharing, laughter, learning, and reflection. It was also a night for gathering fortitude and perspective, optimism and joy, as well as a sense of pride to tackle the work that lies ahead.



President Rob Vischer gives the opening remarks at the 30th Anniversary Celebration of the LDCW.



Former LDCW Director Dr. Debra Petersen discusses bringing the Guerrilla Girls to campus.



# FEMINIST COMMUNITY (FEMCOM)



**Maddie Schutte**

English, Professional Writing & WGSS

Fem Com (Feminist Community) at St. Thomas is an intersectional feminist club run by a group of undergraduate students looking to promote gender equity and inclusivity on the St. Thomas campus and abroad. We consist of about five co-facilitators who plan and host meetings

in the LDCW and some other spaces on campus, as well as a constantly growing group of St. Thomas students who attend our events. We have been continuing to grow in size since many Fem Com plans were halted by the pandemic, and are so excited for all of the opportunities to come.



**FemCom helps with fall clean-up at Women's Advocates**

After a fall semester full of bonding and volunteering with Fem Com members, we are so excited to look out into this spring for more plans. We spent a chunk of first semester volunteering with Women's Advocates, a shelter for victims and families affected by domestic violence. We first visited them by cleaning up their outdoor facilities in preparation for the winter. We had a blast getting to know the facilities workers as well as some of the women staying at

the shelter. Kindly, we were given some food to try from the volunteer kitchen staff, as well as a thorough tour of their facilities, showing us all they do. By the end of the semester, we completed a winter supply

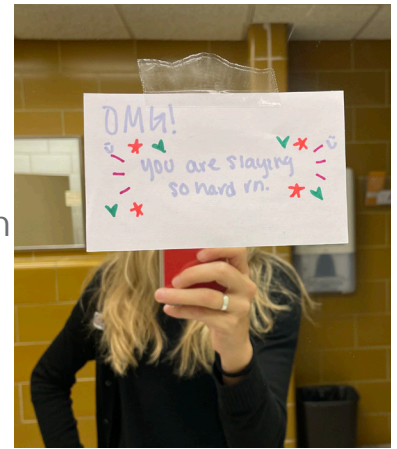


**FemCom & Yarn Tamers join forces to crochet a blanket**





drive for the guests staying at Women’s Advocates. We donated a whole car full of blankets, coats, hats, gloves, toothbrushes, sanitary care items, and more. Through our connection to the Yarn Tamers through the LDCW, many Fem Com members collaborated with them to knit a beautiful blanket to donate to the shelter.



The rest of our semester consisted of self-love activities, vision board making, a field trip, and for our last event of the year - a *Barbie* watch party! Fem Com has been carefully building out a group of supportive students that attend meetings and foster a loving community.

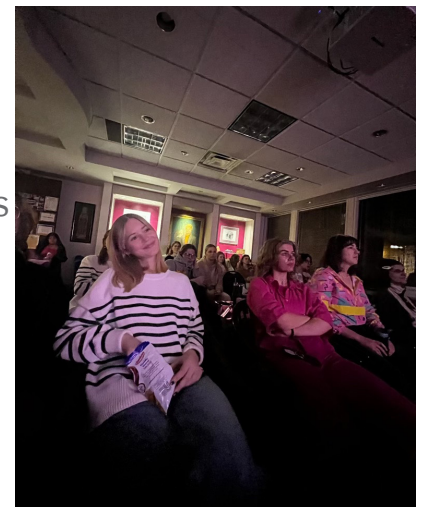
**Getting ready for Barbie screening with WGSS!**

One of my favorite events from the semester was making positive affirming post-it notes to put on the mirrors in different campus bathrooms. We heard from many different people on campus that the positive notes on the mirror made their days. Fem Com hopes to continue spreading smiles and positivity this spring.

As we prepare for spring semester, Fem Com is excited to celebrate Women’s History in March, falling at the center of our plans. That month, Fem Com will be representing students at many of the LDCW events, as well as our own. We are planning for both educational and connective events to come soon. Similar



to last year, Fem Com will start out the month of March with a meeting to write letters to important and inspiring women in our lives. In April, we plan to honor “Take Back the Night” alongside other colleges and universities in the area.



**Interested in joining FemCom?  
Find us on [Tommielink!](#)**



# WOMEN, GENDER, & SEXUALITY STUDIES

## OUR GRATITUDE & A FOND FAREWELL

This past fall, Dr. Paola Ehrmantraut completed her tenure as director of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. During her time as director, Paola made huge strides for the newly re-named Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program (formerly Women's Studies), ensuring the focus on gender and sexuality by adding such classes as "Making and Unmaking Masculinities" to the regular curriculum as well as bringing in speakers such as Felix R. Martinez-Paz of Esperanza United; analyst of gender in video games April Salchert; and political scientist and advising member of Argentina's National Ministry for Women, Genders and Diversity Joaquín Coronel. Encouraging student participation with the annual Lavender Languages Institute also brought gender and linguistics to the forefront of campus conversation.

Partnering with Seth Quam from the Center for Well-Being, Paola extended conversations of healthy masculinity beyond the classroom. Recognizing environmental issues as gender-equity issues, she aligned WGSS activities with more sustainable practices, most notably with the partnership formed with Women's Environmental Initiative, an organic, women-run farm in North Branch, MN. This partnership brought students off campus, enriching and stretching their education as well as community through volunteer work at the farm.



Dr. Paola Ehrmantraut (second to left) with volunteers at Women's Environmental Institute in North Branch, Minnesota in Fall 2020



Paola's advice, vision and enthusiasm largely broadened the scope of LDCW programs. Sharing WGSS programs with the LDCW community, as well as leading such programs as Making Waves and Book Circle on topics like women's health in Argentina, Paola brought essential and enlightening conversations that the community very likely would not have experienced without her.

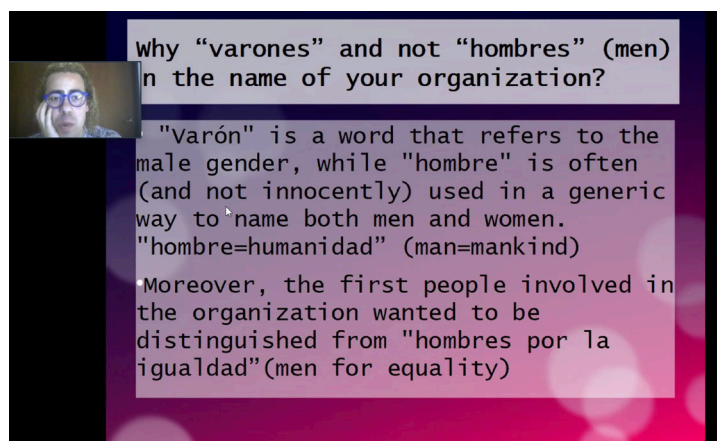
## Students get ready for screening of *Barbie*, December 2023



When taking the WGSS helm in 2019, Paola stated a goal for students "to meet more often, talk to each other and support our passion for gender justice." Paola did just that, not only through the creative opportunities previously mentioned but by simply being present, listening to what students needed to talk about, and coming up with fun ways to address concerns. A great example of this was her final event as WGSS director: combining her "Making and Unmaking Masculinities" course with the student-led team FemCom to host

a screening of *Barbie*. Decorating the LDCW in movie-themed pink and providing movie snacks, Paola, with her usual drive to ensure each activity gives rise to rigorous academic thought and societal critique, led a post-film discussion on the themes of masculinity, feminism, and traditional gender roles seen throughout the film. The LDCW was full; conversation was lively and informed; and Paola's tenure ended aptly, with a room full of students joined together by the promise of thoughtful conversation, and, well, fun.

With Paola's departure brings an exciting new arrival: Dr. Dalma Martinovic of Biology begins her tenure as WGSS director this spring! We welcome Dalma and are excited for all that her expertise, enthusiasm, and vision promise to bring to the WGSS program!



Joaquín Coronel zooms in from Argentina to address WGSS course

# CENTER FOR WELL-BEING: HEALTH PROMOTION, RESILIENCE AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The Center for Well-Being has developed a new interactive activity designed to prevent sexual violence. In this activity students read a true story of someone who has experienced sexual violence on a college campus, and then step into their shoes and make choices about what to do next. They may decide to report to Title IX or tell a friend what happened. Based on that choice, they are directed to a different part of the room and get a card that explains what happened next and then gives another choice.

The activity is designed to:

- Reinforce knowledge of consent and boundary violations
- Discuss the dynamics of sexual assault on college campuses
- Learn about and interact with the resources available to student survivors both on and off campus.

The Center for Well-Being has already done this activity with more than 200 St. Thomas students, including at Dougherty Family College. It is available for any group of students (or staff).



**Seth Quam, MSW, MPH**  
Health Promotion  
& Violence Prevention  
Program Manager

You can **request a presentation on the CWB webpage on OneStThomas** or attend one of our upcoming workshops in the Center for Well-Being!



## SEXUAL VIOLENCE Prevention

WEDNESDAYS: **2/21, 3/20, 4/17**

**CWB 229** (Center for Well-Being) | 4:30-5:30pm

An interactive workshop designed to:

- Reinforce knowledge of consent
- Discuss the dynamics of sexual assault on college campuses
- Develop tools to prevent sexual violence

Center for Well-Being |  St.Thomas.



# LUANN DUMMER CENTER FOR WOMEN 2024 WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH SPEAKER

## ALISON BECHDEL

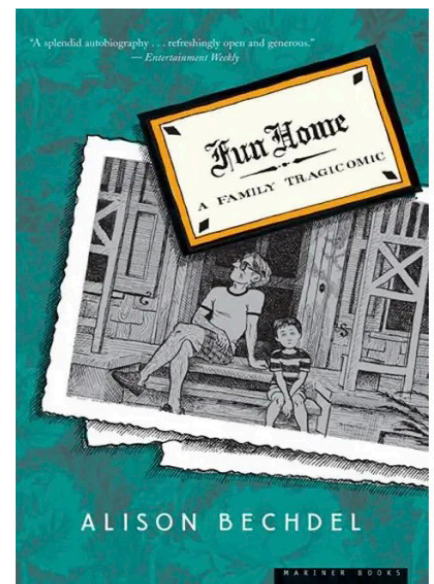
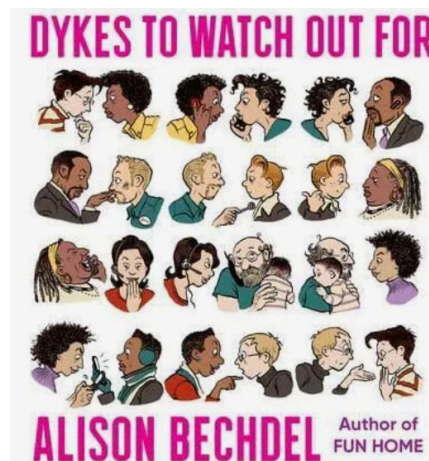
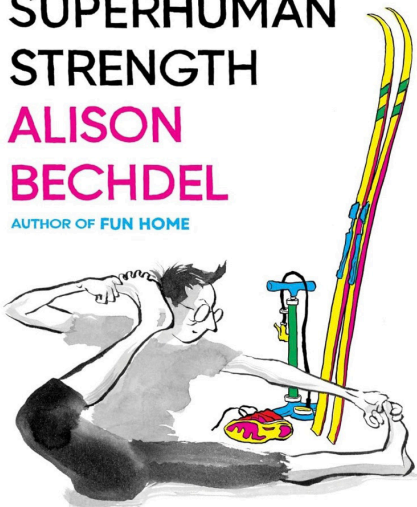
MARCH 4, 2024 | 7:30 PM | OEC AUDITORIUM



### Alison Bechdel

is an internationally beloved cartoonist whose darkly humorous graphic memoirs, astute writing, and evocative drawing have forged an unlikely intimacy with a wide and disparate range of readers. Bechdel's comic strip "Dykes to Watch Out For" gave rise to the now famous "Bechdel Test," which measures gender bias in film. Bechdel's *Fun Home* was adapted into an award-winning Broadway musical.

THE  
SECRET TO  
SUPERHUMAN  
STRENGTH  
ALISON  
BECHDEL  
AUTHOR OF FUN HOME



# THE LANGUAGE OF EVERYTHING



**Sofia Miranda**

Digital Media Arts - Production  
Class of 2026

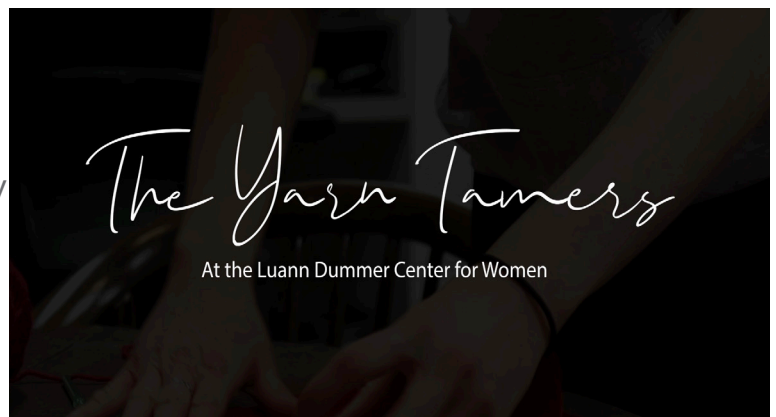
Reading knit stitch patterns might as well be like trying to understand a foreign language. For me at least, I cannot effortlessly balance two needles, dancing the yarn in seamless waves and miraculously result with a finished piece. I cannot weave yarn in the subconscious way I saw some people do. Am I even using the correct terminology?

I do, though, make videos.

One could try to navigate the complexities of editing programs. Adobe Premiere Pro's overwhelming interface can leave beginners perplexed and sheerly frustrated. I sit for hours. Not

because I don't know how to string an edit, but because I love the way I can effortlessly balance a story, placing clips like their dancing in seamless waves and miraculously result with a finished piece. Perhaps, for some, it's like trying to understand a foreign language. For me, the process is mesmerizing, it's art.

Everything has its language: people, the piano, the ocean, helping, building, knitting, singing, advocating, editing. I believe it's all akin—the eloquence of communication, the artistry of expression, they all intertwine seamlessly. I saw this at play while I was working with the Yarn Tamers. I don't understand their art, and they might not understand mine, but knitting and crafting is powerful for them. Creating visual stories is powerful for me. Everyone has their powerful language; it's complex to observers, but boiled down, it's all the same. I joyfully collaborated with the Yarn Tamers, and I hope you enjoy my video as much as I enjoyed making it. Moreover, I hope you find a connection with my art, seeing it as a reflection of your own creative existence.





# THE IRISH WOMAN'S JOURNEY TO THE UNITED STATES: 1845 - 1922

In her October presentation, St. Thomas alumna (2023) Erin Gable argued that both cumulative migration and institutional migration theories explain the outflow of female Irish emigration to the United States between 1845 and 1911.



Irish women began to reject Catholicism's gender-normative impositions through high levels' emigration to the United States. While the Potato Famine of 1845 was the economic catalyst for Irish migration, Catholic institutions played an essential role in Irish emigration to the US while shaping the experiences of female immigrants. Her presentation explored the determinants for female Irish emigration to the U.S., induced by the Catholic church's response to the Great Hunger that shaped Irish institutions and limited the scope of female independence, inspiring cumulative female Irish emigration.

Women in Ireland were limited to becoming a nun or a dutiful housewife, but more opportunities were available across the Atlantic, where the Catholic church served as a place of recovery and refuge that favored Irish women and children. By the 1870's, word spread across continents about women's upward mobility in the U.S., resulting in a greater return rate of men than women to Ireland until the Great War. Irish diaspora in the United States remains informed by the growth of Catholicism in the U.S.



Erin Gable presents to the LDCW community, October 2023

# 2023-2024 LDCW FELLOWSHIPS

## Enabling Climate Justice Through Ecofeminist Solutions



### Isabell Geiger

Environmental Studies, Business Administration-Entrepreneurship  
2023 Undergraduate Fellow

I am so incredibly grateful to the LDCW for supporting my research through an Undergraduate Fellowship. For this project, I read articles and books with themes surrounding ecofeminism during the month of June and created summaries of my findings. Then in July, I interviewed five different university professors, artists, and speakers about the topic of ecofeminism and more broadly, gender and climate issues. Finally, I took the month of August to record a mini podcast series combining what I'd learned from the readings with audio clips from the interviews. To help promote the series, I also created a zine and website with various resources.

The purpose of the study was to explore how ecofeminism can be used to help solve the climate crisis and contribute to climate justice. The research addressed key themes including the evolution of ecofeminism, gender and climate issues in the Global South, and ecofeminist solutions—all of which were relevant to understanding how ecofeminism can be used in the current state of the climate.

The research also disseminated the findings broadly by providing an approachable podcast format for non-academic audiences. Hopefully it will be part of a larger movement to bridge the gap between academic research and its use in non-academic spaces to inspire social change.

Through this research, I've learned that using terminology like the word ecofeminism is not always necessary to get the message across. It can be useful, but it shouldn't limit the potential for discussions to explore new ideas! Also, the intersections between gender and climate remain largely unexplored, so it could be an exciting place for additional research.

Those working in environmental spaces should more seriously consider gender as a relevant lens to view climate issues. It's also important for



everyone to consider that exclusively technological solutions are not enough to propel us to an ideal future. We will need many forms of art, cultural discussion, and accessible forms of media to inspire us!

You can find one of the zines I made related to the research in the Luann Dummer Center for Women (OEC 103), and check out my podcast here:



## Check out the LDCW's grant opportunities!

Did you know the LDCW awards up to \$4,000 in fellowships for undergraduate and graduate summer research, as well as offering financial support for staff and faculty projects?

**Applications for Summer 2024 are due March 15, 2024.** Visit our [website](#) for more details!

# 2023-2024 LDCW FELLOWSHIPS

## Altered Ego: Complex Identity in the Work of Mary Sibande



### Michaela Peine

Master's in Art History  
Certificate in Museum Studies  
2023 Graduate Fellow

In the fall of 2022, as a first-year graduate student pursuing an MA in art history and a certificate in museum studies, I found myself confronting the complex relationship between women and art. Depictions of women have long been the focus of the male artist's craft, while the work of female artists comprises only a small fraction of art displayed in contemporary museums. The concept of the female "muse" often simply disguises the objectification of women, the reduction of an individual into an item of beauty. I wanted to research the women who pushed back on these assumptions, the artists who force

their viewers to subjectify rather than objectify their complex identities, especially within the context of the gallery space.

As a grateful recipient of the 2023 Graduate Fellowship, I was able to explore this relationship through the work of the South African artist Mary Sibande. With Dr. Amy Nygaard, my faculty advisor, I flew across the globe to Cape Town, where we spent two weeks understanding the unique artistic and political environment into which Sibande creates her art.

Mary Sibande, born into apartheid South Africa, grew up challenged by questions of inequality, oppression, racism, and sexism. Grappling with the reality of post-apartheid South Africa, Sibande combines fashion de-



*The Reign* by Mary Sibande  
Iziko South African National Gallery



sign, sculpture, and photography to confront the questions of created and modified identity. During my time in South Africa, I was able to immerse myself in the local artistic and museum cultures, gaining context and understanding about Sibande's work and visiting her pieces in person. In her sculptures, Sibande uses her own self-portrait—created by making a body cast of herself—to encapsulate many seemingly contradictory identities. Sibande dresses these self-portraits in blue and white, colors synonymous with the uniform worn by black South African workers; however, Sibande encapsulates many seemingly contradictory identities. While she wears the colors of a domestic worker, the designs of the gowns are lavish and mirror the clothing of the white women who would employ black domestic workers. Sibande explores the tension between these two complex identities, as well as the different women implicated in apartheid's racial structures. Mary Sibande uses her own self-portrait to encapsulate the contradictory identities of her history and give voice to the generations of women before her.

Combining these ideas and the LDCW's art collection, I will be curating an exhibit that explores themes of identity, oppression, and subjectification. Through this exhibit, I hope to use Mary Sibande's artwork to illuminate the LDCW art collection, inviting the St. Thomas community to question their own relationships to art and identity.

**Join us!**  
**February 9th | 2:30 pm**  
**LDCW (OEC 103)**

**"Layered Surfaces:  
Portraiture in Conversation  
with Mary Sibande"**

**Art Exhibit and  
Community Art Project  
with Michaela Peine!**



**Michaela Peine & Dr. Amy Nygaard in front of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town, South Africa**

# 2023-2024 LDCW FELLOWSHIPS

## Weight to Lift the Weight



**Susan Anderson-Benson**  
Program Manager  
Selim Center for Learning  
2023 Staff Fellow

I was honored to receive an LDCW Staff Fellowship grant for my project “Weight to Lift the Weight”. As a long-time fiber artist who had made countless prayer shawls and grief-support afghans and scarves, I was interested in finding a way that fiber could serve as an assistive device for those experiencing stress, especially college-age students. I was especially interested in the impact stress had on female college-age students, since my own experience, plus that of young women I know, was that it was more challenging than that of our male counterparts.

My grant project, in addition to doing research and background on the role of weighted blankets in reducing stress for college-age students, included a deep dive in the literature about gender differences in anxiety and stress among college students and its impact on sleep. That literature study found that nearly

80% of college-age students experience moderate or high levels of stress, and that female students were more vulnerable than males, not only to stress and anxiety, but also negative impact on sleep, which in turn, had the probability of impacting their academic performance. My research also included experimentation with a variety of yarn weights to find something that I could crochet that would provide the weight, but with the added plus of providing comfort not only from the weight, but also the tactile benefit fiber provides (like a virtual hug).

In addition, I wanted to create something that was user-friendly, so it was easy to care for and machine



**Susan delivers blankets to GiGi Giordano of the Center for Well-Being**



washable and dryable. My research revealed that many commercial weighted blankets can't be washed and dried due to their materials, making their cleaning and care a potential added source of stress. My project presentation provided participants the opportunity to experience the tactile differences of fibers, and a sample of the finished blanket fiber, plus insights into the scholarly research on weighted blankets as an assistive device to college-age students.

To keep the blankets clean, each of the six completed project blankets were placed in storage bags that included care instructions. The blankets were donated to the Center for Well-Being for use in their services to students.



Each blanket weighs roughly 5 pounds and, due to the thickness of the yarn, required a size S (19mm) crochet hook to create.



Susan presents her research project to the LDCW community



# YARN TAMERS TUESDAYS | NOON - 1 PM

**Everyone is welcome!**

Yarn Tamers is an open group and a wonderful opportunity for students, staff, faculty, and community members to spend a relaxing hour working on yarn projects and meeting new friends!

Interested in learning? Come learn from experienced knitters!



If you would like to receive weekly reminders and updates for Yarn Tamers, email **Christine** and she'll add you to the list!





# SPRING 2024 EVENTS

*Unless otherwise noted, all events take place in the Luann Dummer Center for Women (OEC 103)*

**Yarn Tamers: Tuesdays from 12-1 pm**

**February 9th** Michaela Peine, "Layered Surfaces" Art Exhibit, 2:30 pm

**February 15th** Making Waves with Ann Kenne, "The Hidden Women of St. Thomas," Noon- 1:00 pm

**February 29th** February Book Circle, *The Secret to Superhuman Strength* by Alison Bechdel, 3:30-4:30 pm, LIB 108

**March 4th Women's History Month Lecture with**

**ALISON BECHDEL, 7:30 pm, OEC Auditorium**

**March 8th International Women's Day Celebration,**

Panel & Reception with OISS, 2:00 - 3:30 pm, OEC Atrium & Auditorium

**March 15th** March Book Circle | Author Reading, *Seeking Western Men: Email-Order Brides under China's Global Rise* by Dr. Monica Liu, 12-1pm

**March 21st** "Women's Social Entrepreneur Panel," with Opus School of Business, 12-1pm, Location TBD

**April 4th** Steven McMichael, Research on Mary Magdalene, 12 -1 pm

**May 2nd** Making Waves with Dia Yang, "From a Dutiful Daughter to Being Called Poj Laib," Noon - 1 pm

**May 15th** May Book Circle, *Wine People* by Michelle Wildgren, 12- 1 pm



**2024 WOMEN'S HISTORY  
MONTH SPEAKER**

**ALISON BECHDEL!**

**MARCH 4, 2024 | 7:30 PM**

**OEC AUDITORIUM**



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For more information on LDCW programs and opportunities, join our mailing list at [www.stthomas.edu/lcw](http://www.stthomas.edu/lcw)