September 2020 Volume 1, Issue 2

# Welcome back WESTies!!

Dr. Stepany Rose



We have missed you, but hope each of you had a restful summer. While things will not be traditional as we continue to navigate a global pandemic, we are still tremendously excited for what is in store this academic year.

I hope you have had the opportunity to meet our new faculty members—Dr. 'Ilaheva Tua'one and Dr. Julie Torres. Both Dr. Tua'one and Dr. Torres bring refreshing and critical value to our program with their much-needed areas of expertise and fresh approaches to Women's and Ethnic Studies.

From practical activism to addressing contemporary social justice concerns to intersectional applied theoretical analyses, their presence marks a growing vision for WEST. Read more about them in this issue, sign up for their courses, and welcome them into our campus and community.

While we are all adjusting to new routines and understandings of what is "normal," please know that we are mindful of still providing the most robust academic opportunities for you. Several new models for course offerings are available—HyFlex, remote synchronous, remote asynchronous, and traditional online. The variety of modalities have been developed to protect the health and well-being of students, faculty and staff. While this may not seem ideal, know that we are all adjusting. The more clearly you communicate your needs to us, the better we can assist you in being successful. Please visit office hours and reach out sooner rather than later to address any concerns.

We want to make sure that even in the absence of physically gathering in person, we want our community to thrive. Tune into online social events, MATRIX Center-sponsored lectures, and share your stories throughout the year with the newsletter. We are grateful for each of you and look forward to aiding in your success!

#### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

- 2-4 Words from our Faculty
- 5 EDI Corner & Matrix Center
- 6 Interviews: Dean Vidler & Jane Muller
- 6 Queer Lives Matter
- 7 Disclosure & Advocacy
- 8 Scholarships & Local Creators
- 8 WEST Certificates

#### **NEWSLETTER EDITORS**

DR. TRE WENTLING

IRINA AMOUZOU ('22)



XANDER BEEM ('21)



# Take Two: New WEST Faculty

By: Dr. Tre Wentling

We are incredibly grateful and excited to announce more growth for the Women's and Ethnic Studies Program at UCCS. Our newest faculty to join the tenure track is Dr. 'llaheva Tua'one. Her training in English Literature with a focus on Transpacific Literature, which spans the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of British and American literature, and her reading with a queer ethnic studies lens fills a WEST gap.

Dr. Tua'one is poised to coordinate WEST's Native American and Indigenous Studies Undergraduate Certificate.

Native American and Indigenous Studies explores the concept of Indigenous knowledge worldwide, with special emphasis on Indian Nations within the United States, First Nations in Canada, and Pacific Islanders—in addition to attention on American Indian subject matters. WEST students just might experience Dr. Tua'one's quick wit and storytelling in her signature course, "South Sea Tales: Global and Transnational Literature." We already know that students are going to love her courses.

Dr. Tua'one's experience teaching "Feminist Theories" is instantly expanding WEST's core course offerings. Be on the look-out next spring semester for WAP. Yes, yes, you read that right: Women and Protests! In the meantime, and if you are not already enrolled in one of the two Introduction to Social Justice (WEST 1010) courses she is teaching this fall, please send Dr. Tua'one an email to invite her to a socially distanced meeting and share your own tales of being a WEST fan and follower.

Dr. Abby Ferber

Dr. Stephen Suh



Dr. Julie Torres

# Dr. Abby Ferber

The increased visibility of Black Lives Matter since the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and so many others is also shining a light on the exploitation, abuse and murders of African-Americans throughout our history. It has been deplorable that this has been erased or whitewashed for so long, and outrageous how many students don't know this history when they enter college, and many still don't by the time they leave.

In WEST we take accountability and try to make up for some of this lost ground. We have the capacity to reach so many more students and depend upon WEST students to spread the word. Along with COVID-19's inequitable devastation of many Black, brown and low-income white communities, as well as its disproportionate impact on women

of every race, the extent of inequality has deepened, and made extreme U.S. structural racism and inequality more visible. This is a moment we must seize.

This has been an incredibly emotional year and I am redirecting my energies into the urgent work needed. I am revising my WEST/SOC Privilege and Power course to focus centrally on the intersections of privilege, with a strong emphasis on structural racism and the powerful role of the BLM social movement which is taking action and providing some hope for real social change. I have been furiously working with my co-authors to revise our textbook, The Matrix of Race: Social Construction, Intersectionality and Inequality (Sage, 2018), and working on two new books about white privilege.

# Dr. Stephen Suh

The anti-racist philosophy at the heart of Black Lives Matter is also central to my personal and scholarly identities. As a person of color, BLM forces me to reckon with and work to counter the interwoven legacies of white supremacy and settler colonialism in the U.S., systems that have and continue to violently subjugate Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC). As a scholar, BLM motivates me to produce research that explicitly and critically engages with the topic of race and its association with structures of power and discursive meaning-making.

Case in point, Alex Manning (Hamilton College), Kyle Green (SUNY Brockport), and I are co-authoring an essay about how NBA players directly engage with conceptions

of race, racism, and racial justice in their own writing. NBA and WNBA players have become increasingly vocal about supporting BLM and speaking out against racial injustice in recent years. We unpack the significance of these trends in relation to the NBA's own legacy of racism as well as ongoing racial justice activism elsewhere in sports. You can listen to a sneak peak of the essay in our recent conversation with artist Abigail Smithson on her "Dear Adam Silver" podcast.

But remember, BLM as both a statement and a movement is just the beginning. It is up to us to take the slogan and add to it in ways that furthers its imaginative and material possibilities.

# Dr. Julie Torres

I am excited to finally be in Colorado Springs and to be a part of UCCS and WEST! I look forward to meeting many of you in the coming months and hope you will join me in a new course titled, "iSi Se Puede!": Latinx Social Movements." This online course will explore the role of collective action, such as the immigrant rights and youth movements of the 21st century, as agents for social change.

Teaching this course during the current historical moment is both deeply painful and invigorating. The recent uprisings following the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Elijah McClain, De'Von Bailey and countless others, has laid bare once again, not only the pervasiveness of anti-Black violence, but also

the need to confront the anti-Black racism implicit in the project of Latinidad, which effectively erases Blackness from Latinx identity.

As a Puerto Rican woman and scholar whose research focuses on the everyday experiences and activism of Latinxs in the United States, I am committed to critically examining how white supremacy operates in my own community and the diaspora which I study. But this moment also signals the existence of potentiality – the idea that change is possible, if only though an intimate reckoning with the systems of privilege and oppression that continue to value some lives over others. And that, to me, is what social movements are all about.

# Dr. 'Ilaheva Tua'one

Hello WEST!

I am so honored and blessed to be the newest hire in this incredible department as the Assistant Professor of Native American and Indigenous Studies.

I hail from the far-west Kingdom of Tonga in the Pacific Islands, and recently from the near-west at the University of Utah.

In the fall, I will be teaching Introduction to Social Justice Studies with a heavy focus on indigeneity and decoloniality. My research decolonizes the archive, and I cannot wait to dive deep into the archives in Colorado to find muted indigenous voices from the many nations, including Ute, who lived in the shadow of the Sun Mountain, Tavakieb, now known as Pike's Peak.

Decoloniality seeks to actively challenge views handed down through generations that claims only certain people matter, only certain voices should be heard, and only certain knowledge is true. Decolonizing takes many forms, including the Black Lives Matter movement, which seeks to dismantle the systemic, colonial mindset that created the imbalanced, unjust, illogical valuation of whose human lives count and whose do not.

Black Lives Matter is decolonization in action, theory turned praxis—an exciting time to be alive, to watch the dismantling of a capitalist-colonial past that has kept all of us in chains.

I'm excited to be here and meet you soon!



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# Dr. Tre Wentling

It is no secret that this year has been like none other. Yet, elements are much of the same given that colonization, anti-Black racism, and patriarchy have been the foundation of the U.S.

What is different is that #BlackLivesMatter may be the <u>largest movement</u> in U.S. history. BLM founders, <u>Alicia Garza</u>, <u>Patrisse Cullors</u>, <u>and Opal Tometi</u>, acted in 2013 after the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman. Still today, I believe everyone must act in their spheres of influence to agitate in every way imaginable against state-sanctioned violence and to dismantle white supremacy.

I remain committed in my focus on the particularized violence that Black women experience. The fact that Jonathan Mattingly, Brett Hankinson, and Myles Cosgrove, the three Louisville Metro police officers who murdered Breonna Taylor, have not been arrested but instead are being protected is one of too many examples as witnessed over the days, weeks, months, decades, and centuries in the U.S.

We must also better understand Black trans women's experiences. Between June 25th and July 3rd, six Black trans women were found dead -- during LGBTQ+ pride month. Brayla Stone. Merci Mack. Shaki Peters. Draya McCary. Tatiana Hall. Bree Black. Rest in Power.

Sociologists for Trans Justice, a committee for advancing trans, non-binary, and intersex scholarship, prepared the #BlackTransLivesMatter Reader. Students in the courses that I teach can continue to count on reading select works from this rich resource.



Dr. Tre Wentling

Linda Smith

Molly Cotner

# Linda Smith, M.A.

Greetings WEST family,

It's been almost three months since we witnessed the horrifying death of George Floyd.

What has changed? Where are you in terms of social consciousness and social justice concerning the deaths of George Floyd, Brianna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the countless others? How do you view social, political, and economic inequalities in communities of color? What about folks who were struggling financially before and during COVID-19—and the many people who will continue to struggle after the pandemic? How is all of this interconnected?

These important questions must be considered as our nation continues to reconcile with racism and related structural inequalities. Societal systems and institutions have allowed these inequalities to go unchallenged far too long. Marginalized communities have been overwhelmed, and many for all of their lives.

This semester I will teach two sections of "WEST 1010: Intro to Social Justice Studies" online. WEST 1010 will examine

contemporary instances of inequality within a historical context. We will also dialogue about Black Lives Matter and its relevance to creating tangible structural change within our social systems and institutions.

Black Lives Matter is relevant as everyday black and brown people wake-up and are considered armed and dangerous simply because of the color of their skin; some do not return home at the end of day. We must become actively engaged in social change. We all have an important role in dismantling structural racism. What will you do to challenge racism, economic inequality, and other systems of oppression that have plagued our country for centuries?

# BLACK LIVES MATTER

# Molly Cotner, M.A.

How can I put into words the significance Black Lives Matter has had on my life? How can something so monumental and important be simply stated?

Black Lives Matter--the movement, the belief, the work, the change--it exists in all that I do: from being an educator, to an activist, to a mother. This movement, and what it stands for, feeds my soul and gives me purpose. It has invigorated me and humbled me, often in the same breath. It has brought me a community of people who share in my passion and has left me leaving others behind. It has made me laugh, cry, and brought to anger. It has been a light!

I have learned that I have a whole lot more to learn, and that to be human is to fight fiercely for other humans. BLM has taught me that I will never understand, but that idle spectatorship is a tool of the oppressor. It has taught me that we have a long way to go, but one step forward is another one in the right direction. It has made me believe in goodness, kindness, and hope!

I suppose that in these words I do not offer resources nor pedagogy, but I do hope that I offer insight into how this movement has been life changing in one individual's life!

# Belonging, Inclusion, Advocacy and Support Team

Associate Vice Chancellor of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, <u>Dr. Andrea Herrera</u>, is collaborating with the <u>Student Diversity Assembly</u>, the <u>Dean of Students</u>, the <u>Office of Institutional Equity</u>, <u>MOSAIC</u>, the <u>Wellness Center</u>, <u>University Counsel</u>, <u>Campus Police and the Office of Communication and Social Media</u> to create a team that aims to increase belonging, inclusion, advocacy and support for students, staff and faculty. Through clear and open communication, the team will foster a culture of respect, dignity, care, and validation for all campus stakeholders. Among its roles and functions, it may:

- Serve as an advocate and resource to bolster reporting through existing channels;
- Receive regular updates from committee members on observed patterns and trends in their respective areas to identify systemic concerns, and recommend campus level response strategies to address identified concerns;
- 3. Serve as a training and education resource to

- the campus community about current and historical issues regarding bias;
- Serve as an advisory group to provide feedback during policy and procedures reviews.

Upon referral and as requested from the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE), the team may:

- Provide support and care to UCCS community members impacted by bias incidents that occur on and off campus as a part of OIE support measures;
- Provide education about current and historical issues regarding bias to the person(s) who caused harm to the campus community;
- Recommend campus level response strategies for significant incidents that occur on and off campus. This may include communications reiterating community values and campus resources, or development of educational resources or events.



Top left to right: Claire Ami & Dr. Herrera Bottom left to right: Anthony Cordova & Dr. Herrera

# DAZZLE Mätrix

Top left to right: Josh Roggie, Shayana Dabney, Xander Bottom left to right: Loran "Trey" Smith, Jasmine Hammond and Abby Ferber (moderator)



Top left to right: Dr. Robert Atwell, Norma Johnson (moderator), Arthur McFarlane II Bottom left to right: Lotte Lieb Dula, David Alley

# The Matrix Center for the Advancement of Social Equity and Inclusion

We have had the opportunity to organize and sponsor a series of seven dialogues/performance with <u>Dazzle Presents</u>. Hundreds of people from around the world joined in virtually, and thousands more have viewed the videos since. Check them out on the <u>Matrix Center's Facebook page</u> and share with others.

One panel dialogue included <u>students from UCCS and Colorado College</u>. The most recent panel provided a deep and compelling exploration of the need for <u>reparations for African-Americans</u> and grass roots non-profits in Colorado already leading the way, nationally, for white people (and any others) to contribute directly to reparations rather than waiting for government action.

Future dialogues are in the works (including examinations "reparations" for Native Americans and Japanese internees and their families). Volunteers to help organize these and our other projects are welcome! Visit the Dazzle Presents website for updates. We also encourage anyone (including students!) to submit contributions to the <u>Understanding and Dismantling Privilege journal</u>—the first and only journal to specifically focus on privilege.

We are partnering with AVC of Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion, Andrea Herrera, to provide ongoing workshops and consultation for numerous Universities and non-profits, and are beginning to facilitate workshops for UCCS leadership, beginning with the Chancellors cabinet.

# A Conversation with Dean Vidler

## By: Xander Beem ('21)

Dean Lynn Vidler is the new Dean of the College of Letters Arts & Sciences (LAS), and because of this LAS students are excited about the future of the college. I am no exception. It was easy for me to say yes to an opportunity to virtually meet with Doc V, as they were affectionately known in previous positions. Fellow WESTie, Irina Amouzou, and I spoke about plans to return to UCCS, their vision for LAS and WEST, and building both community and diversity around campus, especially in the time of Black Lives Matter.

Doc V's passion for their staff and students was easy to notice. For example, they have participated on Latinx panels, taught salsa dancing, and attended drag shows



at University of South Dakota. Although the pandemic has made it difficult to join UCCS' community in-person, they have been active in town hall meetings and other videos on YouTube.

As somebody with a non-binary and Latinx identity, Doctor V is aware of different issues administration, faculty, and students can face. For example, at the administrative and faculty levels, recruitment and

retention of students and faculty of color, as well as adversities in promotions and job searches are major challenges. For both faculty and students of color, enduring emotional labor in conversations—both in and out of classrooms—is a problem.

Doc V also shared experiences related to their marginalized identities. We discussed the tokenization of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC folks, which leads to a pressure to succeed. As somebody who is one of the first nonbinary individuals to hold a leadership position in upper college administration, Doc V is aware of the importance of both visibility and the need for diverse leaders around campus. They expressed their full support for the MOSAIC petition that was started this summer by students and applauded students' efforts in organizing protests and documenting those experiences in campus communications. Doc V hopes to see WEST think creatively about the program and how WEST engages in marketing and social media to bring in different students and expand the program.

If you would like to reach out to our new Dean; whether it be for an event invite or just to say hi, they can be reached at <a href="mailto:lvidler@uccs.edu">lvidler@uccs.edu</a>.

## Queer Lives Matter by Ashley Cornelius (Psychology & Communication '13) @accpoetrynow

When you say, Black Lives Matter Remember, you are speaking into existence

The labor and dedication of black queer women Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi

Who planted and watered the roots of this movement

When you recite, "I have a Dream"
Know you are channeling the work and
linguists of a black gay man
Bayard Rustin, advisor to Dr. Martin Luther

The same man who was jailed and threatened for his sexual orientation Forced to remain behind the limelight next to Dr. King

King Jr

When you attend pride
Acknowledge, you are standing on the
bricks and mortar of a black trans woman
Marsha "Pay it no mind" Johnson, who was
instrumental in the Stonewall riot
All while providing support to homeless
queer youth and sex workers in
Manhattan

When you call for this movement to be intersectional

Remember, you are honoring the work of a black queer woman

Audre Lorde, self-identified "black, lesbian, feminist, mother, poet, warrior." Paving the way for women to reclaim their eroticism, their bodies, and their voices When you demand, "No justice, no peace"

Recognize, this is a prayer for all the black trans women who are missing and murdered

When you raise your fist
It is in solidarity with the black queer folks beaten and bloodied
Exiled by their family, bullied by their peers, and shamed for their lifestyles
When you yell, ACAB
Make sure you understand you are fighting against the panic defense
Justifying the assault and murder of queer folks based on their identities
When you protest in the streets Know

this movement is queer
Is nonbinary

Is trans Is black

# Great Good Karma

#### By: Dr. Tre Wentling

Jane Muller uses the pronouns she, her, hers. Born in August, she is a Leo under the old astrological chart, and by the publication of newsletter, she will have celebrated another revolution around the sun. This fall marks her 17th year as an integral member of WEST. "When I was called for the position, I was so excited because it was right up my alley," she paused, "I felt like the universe was blessing me and it was my great good karma."

When WEST was in Columbine Hall, "Students would come into my office and sit and chat. It felt like I was the den mother," Jane laughed with nostalgia. "I liked that. You know, one of my beliefs is that if you don't share what you have in your heart with others, you're going to lose it. We're all here to help each other anyways."

As we talked about how UCCS has changed, Jane turned her head slightly, leaned forward, and as she recentered into her chair, she slid-on rose colored glasses. She smiled cheek-to-cheek and we laughed.

Regarding the new virtual norm, "I try to wear these when I have teams meetings just to shake it up a little bit. If I really need to be serious about it, like, this [the meeting] is really intense," she took off her glasses and donned a second pair. "Darker shade! Purple." We laughed again.

"I am inspired by all of you faculty. Your passion, commitment to the students, and the students just – I mean we've got some amazing students. They are some bright, special, and really unique people. WEST goes far beyond a job and



to be a part of social justice, equity, and diversity—we go to another level."

# On Disclosure

By: Irina Amouzou ('22)

"You have hope on one side and fear on the other." -- Zackary Druker

Netflix's *Disclosure* made its debut on the platform this summer amid the world falling apart, to put it lightly. Yet, during my first viewing, and over the span of 107 minutes, the world was coming together.

Disclosure is an original documentary helmed by actress Laverne Cox and directed by Sam Feder. Disclosure explores the depiction of transgender life in the media, specifically in film and television from the 1900s to present day. Viewers get to see how limited and problematic antitrans tropes have been in their little over 100 years of on-screen representation.

Despite its breadth, I felt like I had already watched almost all the referential trans media that the documentary named—Boys Don't Cry, The L-Word, Euphoria, and Orange is the New Black. It is upsetting that there was so little that one person could recognize almost all of it.

My point of joy, however, was the inclusion of multiple Black trans voices, including transfeminine and transmasculine voices. There were performers and artists such as Zackary Drucker, Jamie Clayton, and Alexandra Billings that I recognized and other such as Sandra Caldwell, Elliot Fletcher, and Candice Cayne that I was being (re)introduced to.

Disclosure also brought up questions that are nerve-racking like is it too much to be Black and trans? Is it too much to exist in these intersections of identities when being one thing or another might be more palatable for people? The answer is simply, no.

Race and gender are inextricably linked as both realities affect life in every way. *Paris is Burning* and *Pose* have been at the forefront of such critical representation, and I hope *Disclosure* extends the message that Black Lives Matter, Black Trans Lives Matter, and that All Black Lives Matter.



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# Advocacy in Action

By: Jessi Asuquo (Biomedical Science, Pre-Medicine '20)

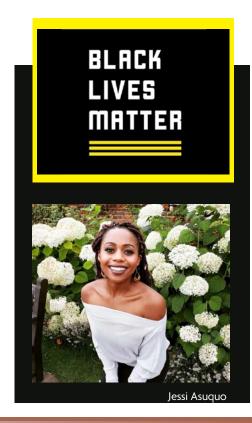
When Trayvon Martin lost his life to George Zimmerman, a man who had no right to pursue a teenage boy walking home after buying skittles, my life changed. Zimmerman was found not guilty of all counts by a six-person jury. If this does not make sense to you, welcome to the start of my journey.

Numerous cases contain obvious situations where Black and Indigenous People (BIP) are killed by citizens, police officers, and former police officers. Often, they walk away with minimal to no criminal convictions even though life was lost. The common factor: the life lost means less to society. They are labeled as criminals, dangerous, loose women, people who need to be made an example of and who come from bad families. These are all labels and stories used to identify, demean, devalue, and dehumanize BIP.

I advocate and work towards human rights for BIP, and not just because I am a Black

Woman, but because it is the right thing to do. This is where my advocacy lives and thrives. I started a Humanitarian Club in high school and joined several student of color clubs during college. I participated in Asian Pacific Islander Student Union and Mi Gente. Emily Nguyen and I organized the Peaceful March for Social Justice, which allowed people of color to share experiences of racial discrimination, police brutality and profiling. As a graduate student, I currently serve on the Student Diversity Board. My passion and continued advocacy for BIP rights starts in my morality and rationality.

During COVID-19, I have increased my utilization of social media platforms as a means of connection and visualization. Meetings once held in-person are now zoom meetings or shared video links. Fortunately, in our tech-dependent world, this may be an even more effective method of advocating for equal rights and police reform.



# Memorial Scholarships

# WEST 3620 Zines

## Daryl Leigh Miller

The Daryl Leigh Miller Endowed Memorial Scholarship Fund was established to provide graduate scholarship awards, which may include research-related expenses, for eligible students enrolled in the College's Leadership or Counseling and Human Services departments at the University. Recipients will prioritize culturally responsive care as part of their career goals and fieldwork.

#### Dr. Janice Gould

The Fund will provide undergraduate scholarship awards for students enrolled in the College of Letters, Arts at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. Students in WEST, VAPA and English major are encouraged to apply. Native Americans, global indigenous students and women are also particularly encouraged to apply for this scholarship however, student's race, ethnicity or gender will not be considered in the selection process.

**Donate here** 

**Donate here** 

# **LOCAL BLACK CREATORS & ORGANIZATIONS**

**Big Bang Jewelry** collection of unique items from Black Lives Matter earrings, to angel wings & the word NO, find something for any occasion. Instagram @ bigbangjewelry.

**Pops Blog and Shop** Black Lives Matter shirts, hats, stickers, & news! popsblog.net.

**Sipho Photography** portraits & landscapes! Facebook at Sipho Photography

**Black Man Craft Man** earrings, pronoun bracelets, multicolored heartshape stones, coaster trays, more! Instagram @ blackmancraftman.

#### The Empowerment Solidarity Network

committed to implementing and sustaining Educational & Leadership practices within our communities in order to develop strong thriving livelihoods for families of color in the community, increase their access/obtainment to resources and effectively address the roots of societal inequities.

#### **Chinook Center:**

#### Community for Research & Social Change

progressive, mission driven community space that empowers & connects people & grassroots organizations working for social, economic and environmental justice in Pikes Peak region.

#### Miss Vanessa

Colorado Springs based Piano teacher and founder of Lil Miss Story Hour (kidsbased literacy themed entertainment). Instagram @missvanessapianostudio and @ lilmissstoryhour.

#### Poetry719

provides platforms for several Colorado Springs groups and events: Denim Day Open Mic, Black Women's Week, Nonbinary Open Mic & Showcase, Disability Open Mic, and much more. Facebook at Poetry 719 & Instagram @poetry719cos.

# **UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATES**

#### Latino/a Studies

Latino/a Studies is designed to highlight the diverse experiences of Latino/a communities in the U.S. and abroad.

# Native American & Indigenous Studies

Native American & Indigenous Studies investigates American Indian issues and concepts of Indigenous knowledge worldwide; emphasis on Indian Nations within the United States, First Nations in Canada, and Pacific Islanders.



Dr. Stephen Suh

West women's + ethnic studies

#### **Gender & Sexualities Studies**

Gender and Sexualities Studies examines sexuality as a social phenomenon, social process, social construct, formation of identity, role, and performance.

#### **Global Studies**

WEST approaches the study of global social phenomena as a complex and dynamic product of multiple regional, ethnic, and institutional identities from a transnational perspective.