



Defending Humanity Conference Program

Contents

Thursday, March 9	2
Keynote panel: Learning from feminist scholar-activists around the world	2
Friday, March 10	3
Panel 1: Resistance to violence, authoritarianism and militarism	3
Panel 2: Self-determination and reproductive justice	5
Panel 3: Caring for the world: feminist/ queer visions of sustainable economies and ecologies.....	6
Instead of closing remarks: Building a network.....	8
Speaker Biographies	9

Thursday, March 9

Welcome and Introductions

4-4:30pm

Keynote panel: Learning from feminist scholar-activists around the world

4:30-6pm

Moderators: **Vrushali Patil**, Associate Professor of Sociology, FIU, and **Susanne Zwingel**, Associate Professor of Politics and International Relations, FIU

Lucia Cavallero: *The feminist movement in Argentina: transversality alliances for transformation*

In this presentation I will share the main characteristics of the feminist movement in Argentina, its composition, its organizational forms, and its ways of making alliances against sexist, racist, state, political and economic violence. My narrative will focus on the organization of international strikes but also on the latest conflicts around the criminalization of social protest in the context of an advance of austerity plans demanded by international lending agencies.

Sarai Aharoni:

Natalia de Souza Santos: *The feminist movement in Brazil*

This talk will discuss the transformation of feminist activism in Brazil in the past decade, in light of the authoritarianism, conservatism and de-democratization processes we've been living through. It will also reflect on gender politics in higher education and how authoritarianism and de-democratization has affected Brazilian universities.

6:00-8:00 pm: Dinner reception

Friday, March 10

8:30-9:00 am: Coffee, tea, registration, mingling

Panel 1: Resistance to violence, authoritarianism and militarism

9:00-10:30 am

Chair: **Michaela Moura-Kocoglu**, Associate Teaching Professor, Center for Women's and Gender Studies, FIU

Juliana Restrepo Sanín: Demanding state recognition, transforming political rights: women's activism to end violence against women in politics

In the last twenty years, activists in Latin America have raised awareness about the problem of violence against women in politics (VAWIP). This form of gender-based violence targets women exercising their political rights -not just as candidates or voters, but also as activists and human rights defenders, members of political parties and unions, and so on. Women's activism to end VAWIP has transformed the legal landscape in the region, raising awareness and creating legislation and other measures to address VAWIP. In this paper, I map the emergence of activist-led state initiatives to address different expressions of VAWIP. Using interviews and content analysis of archival materials, I show that even though the discussion of VAWIP is somewhat recent, there is evidence of legal changes even before the regional discussion. However, the regional discussion of VAWIP that started in Bolivia in the late 1990s, has significantly impacted the recognition of women's political rights, alongside the criminalization of VAWIP. The paper also reflects on the implications of the legal recognition of VAWIP and some of its manifestations, especially in countries where the states' legal apparatus has an uneven reach.

Deborah McFee: Trading Insecurities: Feminist Activism, Masculinity, and Simple Notions of Crime and Violence Beyond the Borderlines

Gun violence is most often wedded to complex socio-economic and socio-cultural insecurities. For many territories in the Anglophone Caribbean, shifting economic fortunes in the global economy, the geopolitics of occupying the archipelago that connects North and South America and the movement of guns and drugs through the region has contributed to the region hosting one of the highest homicide rate globally. Trinidad & Tobago is one such country. These high levels of homicide is

frequently constructed as a by-product of male dominated gangs and gang warfare within urban communities in the east of the capital city of Port of Spain.

This essay looks at the work of the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD), and its research and community activism on the impact of guns on the lives of women in Trinidad & Tobago. Since 1999 WINAD's work has challenged the limiting narrative on crime and violence as a male-dominated space within these communities. Also, it seeks to make sense of the ways in which national crime strategies premised on the homicide of the male victim and male perpetrator, the expression of borderlines have been identified as a highly contentious issue. These lines, having transcended the cultural significance of the steelpan, brings to the fore the complex ways in which the movement of guns through small countries like Trinidad & Tobago is a critical determinant in the quality of life for wide cross-sections of populations in many urban communities. WINAD's Research over the years has provided incremental insight into the significance of borderlines as human rights influencers in these communities.

Canan Balkir: *Reflection of the Democratic Backsliding coupled with the European Union's Democracy Promotion Decline on the Gender Policy in Turkey*

This paper addresses the reflection of Turkey's democratic backsliding coupled with the European Union's democracy promotion decline on the gender policy in Turkey, a candidate country. Although it depends on the women in Turkey as well as their NGOs to face the challenges and struggle for the empowerment of women, the process of accession to the EU has been the driving force for many steps taken in the 2000s. Public opinion research showed that women were more supportive of Turkey's membership to the EU. The expectations of women ranged from combating violence against women, strengthening women's position in the economy to promoting women in decision-making at all levels. In sum, the anticipation was the implementation of the 'Acquis Communautaire' on gender equality.

However, following the consolidation of its power through four victorious general elections between 2011 and 2018 and its positive impact on the promotion of the country's economic growth, governing Justice and Development Party started paying less attention to the erosion of checks and balances as well as the restrictions on freedom of media and expression. The concept of gender equality was traded with gender complementarity through the traditional Muslim family's reinstatement as the foundation of the society. The country's societal polarization

along conservative-religious and secular-progressive lines, made it difficult to defend shared democratic values. Although in the Progress Reports and Commission Communications, gender-based violence, and respect for the rights of LGBTQ+ became the major areas of concern, the EU funding to civil society focused on less controversial issues, and not on much needed rights-based issues. This ongoing democratic backsliding, narrowing of the civic space in the country and systematic steps against equality did not stop the mobilization of women in all regions of Turkey to continue their ongoing struggle and their resistance to authoritarianism.

10:30-11:00 am: Tea and coffee break

Panel 2: Self-determination and reproductive justice

11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Chair: **Alexandra Cornelius**, Director of the Center for Women's and Gender Studies/ Department of History, FIU

Brenna Munro: *Transnational Transphobia: Globalized Currents and Conflicts in Contemporary Feminism*

While forms of feminism that reject transgender identity have existed in the US for several decades, the recent rise of “gender critical feminism” has had its primary home in the UK. This ideology has been shaped by its national location, but as a set of ideas, rhetorical tropes, and structures of feeling, it is globally mobile, creating new forms of political conflict over transgender identity elsewhere—for example, within globalized Nigerian public discourse, through Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s much-contested support of J.K. Rowling, and in the US, where some of its claims have been uncritically taken up by centrist commentators, and gleefully deployed by far-right, white supremacist anti-trans movements, but where it has had trouble translating to contemporary feminists. Understanding how this political formation is unfolding across borders might help us to envision a coherent and transnational response.

Okezi Otovo: *The Black Mothers Care Plan and the 'Physicality of Black Feminism.'*

This paper explores Black feminism and Birth Justice as fundamental guides that root the work of the Black Mothers Care Plan (BMCP), a community-research partnership based in the FIU Center for Women’s and Gender Studies that seeks to improve the quality of maternal care for Black women and birthing persons in South Florida and to amplify the knowledge, expertise, and care systems of Black doulas and midwives. Drawing upon the varied insights of Black Feminism, our approach is intersectional and community-led because the barriers Black women and birthing persons face to health, safety, and wellness are systemic, structural, and historical. These insights call us to manifest intellectualism into material action and corporeal impact for the health and healing of Black women and gender-expansive people. To paraphrase the words of Dr. Crystal Moten, the physicality of Black Feminism “manifests when we're living in a truly just world.”

Laurie Shrage: *Rebuilding the Movement for Reproductive Rights and Justice*

This talk will critically assess the goals and strategies of the “pro-choice” movement of the past 60 years. I will propose that the movement for abortion access should reposition itself into a broader movement for the reproductive autonomy of all persons, regardless of their sex, gender, age, disability, fertility, or marital status. A broader movement can refocus public debate on the larger question of the state’s role in deciding who will be a parent, biologically or legally. I will explore Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s inclusive approach to legal gender equality to frame a post-Roe approach to reproductive rights and justice.

12:30-2:00 pm: Lunch

Panel 3: Caring for the world: feminist/ queer visions of sustainable economies and ecologies

2:00-3:30 pm

Chair: Mihaela Pintea, Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Economics, FIU

Wendy Harcourt: *Feminist Political Ecology: Towards the repair of our life-worlds*

Inspired by the collective knowledge of feminist political ecology (FPE), I argue we can challenge the current dispossession and the devaluing of life that has led to such unsustainable and fearful worlds. FPE explores deep engagements with narratives of restorative and transformative justice with the aim of living and being 'otherwise': fostering reciprocity, community and care. Building on the narratives set out in the edited book *Contours of Feminist Political Ecology* (Harcourt et al 2023), I argue we can recover our capacity of relations through new imaginaries based on radical hope for our future. FPE seeks to create the intellectual and political space for alternative and pluriversal possibilities of 'being in relation'. Understanding how relations of care constitute the material and physical processes that sustain ecosystems and human and more-than-human living worlds as the book shows, FPE undertakes research that builds ethical relations with more-than-human species and the natural world as part of our life-worlds that work towards repair, amplifying solidarity rather than reproducing mastery.

Whitney Bauman: *Religion, Nature and Queer Theory*

The connections between sexuality, queer studies, religion and nature may not be immediately obvious. However, when we take into account the co-construction of concepts such as sex, gender, sexuality and nature, the connections begin to come into focus. As many feminists and other critical theorists have argued, the hetero-patriarchal structure that privileges male, white, able-bodied, wealthy bodies over others, and which tends to privilege western ways of knowing over others, is also the same structure that places humans above the rest of the natural world. In other words, the descending hierarchy of value, or "great chain of being," that moves from ultimate reality/god, to some males, to some females, to other males and females (poor and of color), then to animals and the earth is also tied to a heterosexual gender/sex binary: cis-male and cis-female. There is, within this hierarchical ordering, an assumed "compulsory heterosexuality." As Greta Gaard and others have pointed out, the discourses that maintain this hetero-patriarchal structure are contradictory. On the one hand those individuals thought to be "deviant" are more "like animals" that give into their "base desires." This implies that being less like animals and more reasonable and/or godly is somehow better. On the other hand, proponents of this hetero-patriarchal structure argue that being "queer" is "un-natural," suggesting that being more "like nature" is better. Both religious discourses and discourses about

“nature,” are tied up in maintaining white, heterosexual-patriarchy. This presentation will argue that queering discourses about both “religion” and “nature” help to destabilize foundational/essential and hierarchical understanding of the human and open us up to understandings of fluid and emergent identities.

Elisabeth Prügl: *“This is the land where I was born”: Resistance to land grabs as a politics of survival*

This paper frames contemporary struggles over land as a politics of survival, drawing on social reproduction theory, post-humanism, and feminist international political economy. I first provide an overview of the violence of land grabbing in a context of increasing competition over scarce commodities in the capitalocene. Second, I elaborate on changes in processes of social reproduction in the aftermath of land commercialization, highlighting shifts in survival strategies and household governance on the one hand, and material environments on the other, from the destruction of soils and forests to changing diets. Finally, I review proliferating instances of women resisting land grabbing, sometimes violently, and the arguments they put forward concerning both social and environmental sustainability. I conclude with an attempt to redefine social reproduction as entailing not only a particular form of labor, but also survival in the midst of various forms of structural and ecological violences. To substantiate my arguments I draw on secondary literature and on insights from the Gender and Conflict project, and the DEMETER project on Land Commercialization, Gendered Agrarian Transformation and the Right to Food.

3:30-4:00 pm: Tea and coffee break

Instead of closing remarks: [Building a network](#)

4:00-5:00 pm

Collectively led by Susanne Zwingel (FIU), Alexandra Cornelius (FIU), Aida Hozic (UF), Juliana Restrepo Sanin (UF), Luisa Turbino Torres (FAU), and colleagues from other Florida universities.

Speaker Biographies

Lucía Cavallero is a PhD in Social Science and researcher at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, and member of the feminist collective Ni Una Menos. Her research focuses on debt and gender. She teaches in the gender studies M.A. program at the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero. She is the co-author of *Una lectura feminista de la deuda* (A Feminist Reading of Debt), published in Argentina by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (2019), in Brazil by Criação Humana Editora (2019), in Italy by Ombre Corte (forthcoming), and in English by Pluto Press (2021).

Natália Maria Félix de Souza is Assistant Professor of International Relations at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), where she currently works as Advisor for International and Institutional Affairs. She is the coordinator of Tibira – Center for International Studies on Gender and Sexuality at PUC-SP. She is currently a co-editor-in-chief of the International Feminist Journal of Politics (IFJP) for the period 2022-2025. Natália holds a PhD in International Relations from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (IRI/PUC-Rio). Her research focuses mainly on critical approaches to subjectivity and subject formation, including feminist, post-structural, post-colonial and decolonial theories; studies on gender violence and feminist resistance in Latin America; and the agenda on decolonizing knowledge production in international relations theory. She has been actively involved in promoting the agenda on Feminism, Gender, and Sexuality in Brazilian IR, including the creation of the group MulherIs and the homonymous Thematic Area at the Brazilian International Relations Association.

Juliana Restrepo Sanín is an Assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Florida. Her research explores the relationship between democratization efforts and the emergence of violence against women in politics, how this manifestation of gender-based violence undermines women's political participation, and how feminists and women's rights activists have organized to raise awareness and demand state action to end the problem in Latin America.

Deborah McFee (PhD) is the Outreach and Research Officer at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies St Augustine campus, Trinidad & Tobago. She also serves as the Chair of the Board of the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD). Her areas of expertise include Women, Gender and Public Policy in Trinidad & Tobago and the wider Anglophone Caribbean, Gender and Human Security, the Impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons on Women and Girls in Select Communities in Trinidad, and Gender and Climate Change. She has operated as a public policy practitioner and has worked on the development of three regional National Gender Policies. In 2017, she co-edited with Prof Michelle Rowley the Special Issue of the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* (CRGS) entitled "Tool or Weapon? The Politics of Policy Making, Gender Justice and Social Change in the Caribbean". Her peer-reviewed publications include research on the Politics of Gender Policy-Making in the Caribbean, Rethinking Gender mainstreaming in the Caribbean, and the National Gender Policy in post-genocide Rwanda. In 2011, she was Visiting Researcher at the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), conducting research in the areas of gender and human security, and rape as a crime against humanity.

Canan Balkir is a professor of economics, adjunct faculty at the Department of Economics Florida International University. Previously she acted as Jean Monnet Chair in European Economic Integration and coordinator of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir, Turkey. She received her PhD from Aegean University and continued her academic studies in UK with British Council scholarship and USA with Fulbright scholarship. She was the Vice-president of Kyrenia American University in Cyprus. She lectured in European and US Universities. Her research spans European Studies, focusing on economic integration, the economics of EU–Turkey relations, EU retirement migration to Turkey and Europeanization. Her recent publications include *Europeanisation of Public Policy in Southern Europe* (co-edited with Tolga Bolukbasi and Ebru Ertugal, Routledge, 2014); 'Europeanisation and Dynamics of Continuity and Change: Domestic Political Economies in the "Southern Periphery" in South European

Society and Politics (2013) and book chapters "Shifting Logics: The Discourses of Turkish Political Elites on EU Accession", (in coll. S. Eylemer), in *Turkey: De-Europeanising? Encounters with Europe in a Candidate Country*, ed. A. Kaliber & S.A. Düzgit, Routledge, London 2017 and "Different Trajectories yet the Same Substance: Croatia and Turkey" (in coll. Müge Aknur), in *The Substance of Democracy Promotion*, ed. A. Wetzel and J. Orbie, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. For other publications see <https://fiu.academia.edu/CananBALKIR>. Balkir worked as an advisor to the Minister of Economics between 1984-88, was a consultant to Chambers of Commerce for many years, and later became one of the founders of a political movement, New Democracy Movement, which became a political party in 1994, working for -cultural rights to Kurds, and respect for minority rights. She actively worked in many women NGOs and still on Advisory Board one of the biggest women NGO in Turkey.

Brenna Munro is Associate Professor in the English department at the University of Miami. She also teaches in UM's Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, serves on the Program's Steering Committee, and is a co-convenor of UM's Queer Studies Research Group. Dr. Munro works on the intersection of African literature and queer and trans studies. She is the author of *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012), which was nominated for a Lambda Literary Award in LGBT Studies. She co-edited a special issue of *Scholar & Feminist Online* on "Thinking Queer Activism Transnationally" (2017), and is currently at work on her second book, *Queer Writing in Digital Times: The Mobile Nigerian Present*.

Okezi Otovo is Associate Professor of History and African and African Diaspora Studies and Affiliate Faculty of the Center for Women's and Gender Studies and of the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center and at Florida International University (FIU). She is author of *Progressive Mothers, Better Babies: Race, Public Health, and the State in Brazil, 1850-1945* (University of Texas Press, 2016); a study that connects the history of cultural and medical ideas to the experiences of poor black families in institutions devoted to public health and social welfare within the context of abolition and state-building. Her current

research investigates Black maternity, racial disparities in health, and women's life experiences in 20th century Miami. A researcher and Black maternal health advocate, Dr. Otovo leads "The Black Mothers Care Plan of South Florida" (BMCP). Its mission is to collaborate with community organizations, Black doulas and midwives, and clinical providers to improve the quality of maternal care for Black women and birthing persons in South Florida. Beyond the university, Dr. Otovo is a member of the Consortium for a Healthier Miami-Dade's Healthy Baby Taskforce and the Florida Perinatal Quality Collaborative's Social Determinants of Health Advisory Committee.

Laurie J. Shrage is Professor Emeritus in Philosophy at Florida International University with research interests in social and political philosophy, feminist theory, and gender and sexuality studies. Her books include *Philosophizing about Sex* (co-authored with Scott Stewart, (2015)), *Abortion and Social Responsibility: Depolarizing the Debate* (2003), *Moral Dilemmas of Feminism: Prostitution, Adultery, and Abortion* (1994), and the edited volume *You've Changed: Sex Reassignment and Personal Identity* (2009). Shrage has had fellowships at the Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University and Princeton University's Center for Human Values, and she is a past editor of the journal *Hypatia*.

Wendy Harcourt was appointed full Professor and Westerdijk Professor together with an endowed Chair of Gender, Diversity and Sustainable Development at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam in October 2017. She joined ISS November 2011 after 23 years as editor and director of programmes at the Society for International Development in Rome, Italy. She has published over 100 articles in critical development theory, gender and diversity and feminist political ecology. Her book *Body Politics in Development* won the 2010 FWSA (Feminist and Women's Studies Association UK & Ireland) book prize. She is series editor of the Palgrave Gender, Development and Social Change and the ISS-Routledge Series on Gender, Development and Sexuality.

Whitney Bauman is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami, FL. He is also co-founder and co-director of *Counterpoint: Navigating Knowledge*, a non-profit based in Berlin, Germany that holds public discussions over social and ecological issues related to globalization and climate change. His areas of research interest fall under the theme of “religion, science, and globalization.” He is the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship and a Humboldt Fellowship, and in 2022 won an award from FIU for Excellence in Research and Creative Activities. His publications include: *Religion and Ecology: Developing a Planetary Ethic* (Columbia University Press 2014), and co-authored with Kevin O’Brien, *Environmental Ethics and Uncertainty: Tackling Wicked Problems* (Routledge 2019). The 3rd edition of *Grounding Religion: A Fieldguide to the Study of Religion and Ecology*, co-edited with Kevin O’Brien and Richard Bohannon, is due out with Routledge in 2023. His next monograph is entitled, *A Critical Planetary Romanticism: Literary and Scientific Origins of New Materialism* (Columbia University Press, Forthcoming 2023).

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