

FEMINIST INTERSECTIONAL SOLIDARITY GROUP (FIGS)

CWAG NAME CHANGE

“What’s in a name?” follow-up

In the February 2016 CWAG newsletter, Linda Peake wrote a piece called “What’s in a Name? CWAG and other Women’s Organizations in Geography”. Since then there have been ongoing discussions within CWAG regarding a potential name change for the Canadian Women and Geography Study Group (CWAG). In August 2018, at the CWAG Business Meeting in Quebec City a motion was carried to create a survey to seek a broad review of the issues concerning such a name change. The survey was conducted this past spring. The vote results were: 70.31% of respondents in favour of the change, and 29.69% did not want a name change.

Following discussions at the annual business meeting in Winnipeg, CWAG polled members to ratify the motion was to change from the Canadian Women and Geography (CWAG) Study group to Feminist Intersectional Solidarity Group (FIGS...although we know that really adds up to FISG but as Zoe pointed out in her email, who can resist FIGS?).

This name change is part of a new era with ongoing efforts to try and broaden our membership and mandate. So, if you are excited about FIGS, please let us know!



In addition to the name change, CWAG Chair Zoë Meletis has drawn a wonderful new logo to match!

The CWAG listserv has been renamed **FIGS listserv** (see last page for more information).

We are currently working on proposing some FIGS additions to the upcoming **2020 CAG Annual Meeting in Victoria**, so stay tuned! If you are interested in planning a FIGS-related session or event, please connect with us too

**CANADIAN WOMEN IN GEOGRAPHY STUDY GROUP CHANGES
NAME TO *FEMINIST INTERSECTIONAL SOLIDARITY GROUP***

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF FIGS REGARDING THE RECENT CAG PRESIDENTIAL RESPONSE & AWARDING PROCESS UPDATES

(September 2019)

Apologies for the long Chair's message but this is an issue of interest to many.

Reminder-- The awardees to date for the Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography are:

1997: James T. Lemon (he)*
1998: Dr. Wayne Robert Rouse (he)
1998: Dr. Paul Villeneuve (il/he)
1999: Dr. Roher Hayter (he)
2000: Dr. Terry McGee (he)
2000: Dr. Philip Howarth (he)
2002: Dr. Trevor Barnes (he)
2002: Dr. Jock Galloway (he)
2003: Dr. John N.H. Britton (he)
2003: Dr. Glen Norchliffe (he)
2004: Dr. Ted Relph (he)
2005: Dr. Brian Luckman (he)
2006: Dr. Geraldine Pratt (she)
2007: Dr. Barry Boots (he)
2007: Dr. Meric S. Gertler (he)
2008: Dr. André G. Roy (he)
2009: Dr. Grame Wynn (he)
2010: Dr. Barry Smit (he)
2011: Dr. Geoffrey Wall (he)
2012: Dr. Robin Davidson-Arnott (he)
2013: Dr. Richard Harris (he)
2014: Dr. George Lovell (he)
2015: Dr. Olav Slaymaker (he)
2016: Dr. Philip Dearden (he)
2017: Dr. Jing Chen (he)
2018: Dr. Daniel Scott (he)
2019: Dr. Maureen Reed (she)

* Indicates the pronouns used in the award nominations posted on the CAG website

Response

First, I want to acknowledge CAG President Dr. Sanjay Nepal's recently published response about the grossly

imbalanced history of Canadian Association of Geographers' Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography—a problem that the CAG Executive, FIGS/CWAG, and others have been discussing for months if not years. You can find both the Sept 2019 letter from the CAG President and updates about awards processes at the bottom of this page: <https://www.cag-acg.ca/awards-and-grants>.

Second, I want to express genuine thanks to Jen Silver, Nancy Worth, Matthew Farish, and others currently working to improve CAG awarding processes. I also want to thank Kathryn Lafférière at the CAG for helping to make the CAG available and responsive to Specialty Group Chair requests and questions.

I confess, however, that each time I have opened a response from Dr. Nepal (I was sent an earlier one this summer, as Chair of FIGS/CWAG), I have heard the lyrics below in my head:

Sorry
Is all that you can't say
Years gone by and still
Words don't come easily
Like sorry like sorry...

(lyrics from Tracy Chapman's 1998 song
'Baby Can I Hold You Tonight')

The poignant song Baby Can I Hold You Tonight, by Tracy Chapman has disturbingly timeless lyrics. Saying a true, deep, meaningful sorry is one of the hardest, bravest, and most vulnerable actions that a human being can take. This is often particularly the case when a person in a position of power has to say it to a person with less power or authority.

I want to point out that while Dr. Nepal's letter does say several things that many of us have been waiting to hear, it does not say sorry. There has been no sorry from the person at the helm of our professional organization.... No sorry from a leader who, by his own words, is keen to diversify, unify, and strengthen the CAG.... No sorry for

contemporary wrongs, and repeatedly discriminatory practices. Along with the key absence of an apology, the response implies that the biased awarding is largely a historic problem—a part of our past. And yet, for many I have discussed this with, a sorry from the top is key for moving the CAG forward...

Fighting for desired (and warranted!) responses has been quite tiring for several of us. It is hard to have to repeat clear positions and requests, and to still have CAG responses fall short. It is tough to see female scholars bearing the brunt of working to improve CAG awarding processes, and to recognize how late this work has come.

A response is a response, and I am thankful for the actions that are being taken. Further, I was granted a one-on-one meeting with Dr. Nepal at the CAG meeting in Winnipeg. I represented CWAG/FIGS concerns about awarding process and outcomes at the Annual General Meeting as well. I took up space, endeavoured to represent our feminist constituency, and challenged “business as usual” in the name of improving CAG culture. And yet, I’m feeling unsatisfied...

I want more immediate action to redress the shocking awarding imbalance (by my count, approximately 7% of awards have gone to women, and the % awarded to BIPOC members, for instance, would be much lower). I am confident that creative corrective solutions exist for more rapid and retroactively respectful actions, and for a more inclusive future. I also want careful institutional attention to awardee demographics (perhaps via acceptance email self-reporting) so that we have data to help us aim for fairer and more representative outcomes. I have also suggested that the annual number of awards should be expanded in the next five years or so in order to catch up and to celebrate overlooked accomplished scholars from the last 30+ years. We have the freedom and momentum to do so, and I think many would agree on funding such actions. And, I want encouragement from the top for a groundswell of effort to assemble compensatory (overdue!) and new applications so that our extreme awarding bias starts being corrected NOW by ALL OF US.

We should not be expected to wait for the next X years for numbers to catch up. Excellent scholars from

underrepresented groups should have been among the names to date, in far greater numbers, and they should join them STARTING NOW, not slowly over time. I want prominent geographers (yes! feminist white men—we are counting on you to take on some of this work!) to take time out of their busy schedules to nominate women and others in their midst. I want us to fund additional awardees every year for the next little while so that deserving scholars can stand where they should be, awards in hand, being celebrated at “CAG family” gatherings. I want to know that students and other scholars at our meetings can imagine themselves standing in those very spots thanks to the recognition that they witness.

As Chair of FIGS, I encourage all of you to read the changes being made to CAG awarding processes (see link at top of response), and to also share creative solutions for corrective measures NOW via your CAG Study Groups and direct submissions to the CAG. We can do MORE good work than is currently being done to rectify our biases, and to better celebrate the diverse members and achievements among us.

As a member of the CAG and as the Chair of FIGS, I sincerely apologize for the gross underrepresentation of our diverse community of scholars in our lists of awardees (and in other CAG venues as well). Our institutional culture has failed us and that is on us as members, whether we were present at the time or not. We all know people who should have been on this awardee list long ago. We can also imagine wonderful scholars who should end up there sometime soon. Let’s work together to make amends for our flawed (to say the least) awarding past, whether intentional or unintentional, and ensure that the next 27 awards and onward look quite different.

(Thank you to Linda Peake for her incredible work on this issue, and to all of those who helped me with this important response in various ways)

Zoë A. Meletis, Chair FIGS
University of Northern British Columbia

FIGS/CWAG STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION AWARDEES!

The Canadian Women and Geography Study Group (CWAG) – now FIGS! – holds an annual student paper award. This year, FIGS had two award categories: best undergraduate and best graduate. Paper entries must have been based on research related to intersectional feminist geographies. For the undergraduate paper award, students could submit any relevant paper written for a course during the 2018/2019 academic year. For graduate students, submissions papers must have met one of two criteria: (1) a paper presented at a geography meeting (regional or CAGS) or a feminist conference in 2018/2019; OR (2) a paper written for a graduate course during the 2018/2019 academic year.

This year, we have three award winners!

JULIE HAN

Undergraduate Awardee

Paper title: **Spatializations of online misogyny as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**

Born and raised in Vancouver, Julie Han is an undergraduate student at Simon Fraser University with a major in International Studies and minor in Geography. She hopes to pursue graduate studies in Geography, focusing on nationalism and environmentalism, investigating conflicts in sexual citizenship and environmental stewardship in Canada and the US. She is also writing a graphic novel about post-colonial landscapes set in British Columbia, called Encyclopedia of Incorrect Objects.



HANIEH HAJI MOLANA

Graduate Awardee

Paper title: **Silent Voices: Notes from a Young Muslim Woman on Acculturation in the United States**

Hanieh is a PhD candidate in Geography at Kent State University. Her research interest lies broadly in the area of feminist political and cultural geography. Primarily, it focuses on Muslim women's everyday bodily experiences, both within an academic and a broader social context.



ALEX PERNA

Graduate Awardee

Paper title: **Fat bodies: 'Fitting into' critical feminist geographies**

Alex is a graduate student at Brock University whose interests align with critical feminist geographies, socio-spatial exclusion of marginalized bodies, fatness, and digital spaces, supervised by FIGS' own Dr. Ebru Ustundag. Alex considers herself an activist for sexual violence prevention and education, working with groups around Brock's campus to organize responses and strategies to institutionalized rape culture. Alex is considering her PhD in the realm of critical feminist geographies at both Canadian and international institutions



CONGRATULATIONS!

CAGS 2019 WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

THE CAG 2019 AUTHOR EVENT WITH KATHERENA VERMETTE—AN EVENING STEEPED IN PEOPLE, PLACE, AND STORYTELLING

First, thanks must go to the two primary organizers of this event, Drs. Gail Fondahl and Catherine Nolin—Co-Chairs of the Indigenous Peoples’ Working Group (IPWG) of the CAG. As you know, the Feminist Intersectional Solidarity Group (formerly the Canadian Women and Geography study group or CWAG) contributed to promotion and social media, and were honoured to partner with the IPWG in applying for CAG special event funding (thank you!) and in hosting Vermette.

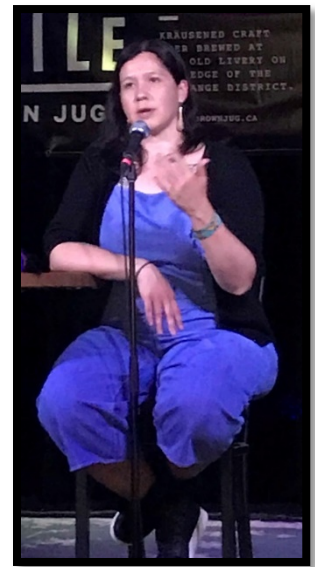
Second, if you were in the room at Winnipeg’s Goodwill Social Club that night, you know what a refreshing treat the event was. It was a memorable evening both thanks to Vermette’s generous reading and discussion in a cool local venue, and to skillful moderation by Dr. Nolin. The crowd included a nice array of geographers from various specializations, across several generations of scholarship, chatting with friends, and nibbling on tasty appetizers. The event was also open/public, so it was a pleasant way to share CAG resources with larger audiences.

Third, it was indeed powerful to hear the Métis poet and novelist read from her books such as 2017’s **The Break**, which won an Amazon First Novels award and was a contender on Canada Reads, and one of my favourites—her Governor General Award-winning book of poetry **North End Love Songs** (2013). Her poems and prose are rich with suggestions about identity, space, place, and belonging—a perfect fit for a room full of geographers. She crafts potent peoplescapes interwoven with skillful and poignant descriptions of trees, rivers, bridges, and neighbourhoods. She shared about story origins, her characters, her writing practice, negotiating multiple

identities in the city of Winnipeg, upcoming projects, and much more.

To those who joined us, thank you for making the time—we hope you enjoyed it as much as we did. To those who did not make it, we encourage you to envision an “out of the ordinary” event like this for an upcoming CAG—one that combines elements and themes that we love, with a creative venue, and an inspiring guest (with not a single PowerPoint slide!). Lastly, a heartfelt thanks to Katherena Vermette for warmly taking on an unconventional event and audience. Cheers!

Zoë A. Meletis, Chair FIGS



Gail Fondahl, Catherine Nolin, and Zoe Meletis

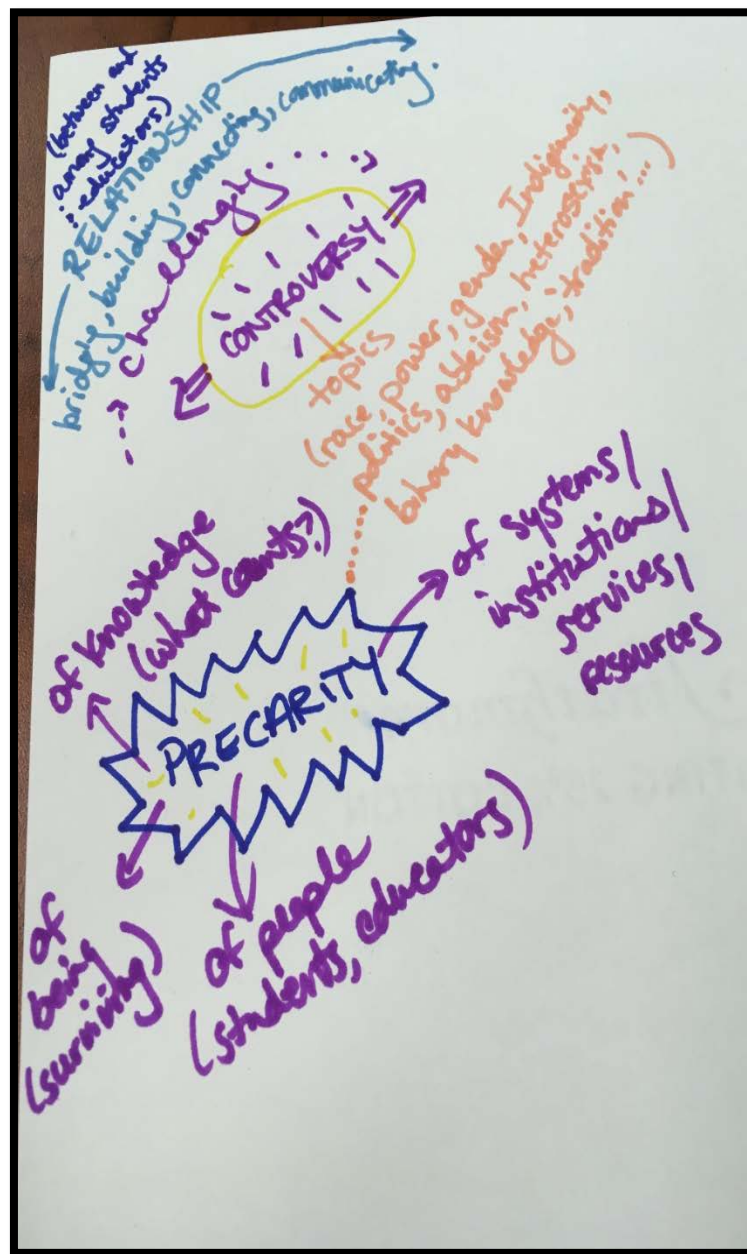
WORLD CAFÉ ON “PEDAGOGIES AS RESISTANCE: TEACHING IN TROUBLED TIMES”: A REPORT FROM THE 2019 CAG MEETING IN WINNIPEG, MB

On May 28th, 2019, Laura Shillington hosted a World Café as a capstone event for a compelling series of presentations she organized under the banner of “Pedagogies As Resistance” (sponsored by CWAG). The World Café format invites participants to discuss provided questions in small groups, and then switch groups to continue the conversation with a new group of people. Participants are invited to record the group’s insights through writings or drawings. According to the event description, “The aim of this World Café is to create a conversation between different generations of geographers – from retired faculty to new graduate students – on diverse aspects of teaching and pedagogy... [I]t is important to consider how we can better teach geography in ways that challenge current oppressive politics and thus address the struggles for social justice, rights, and reconciliation as well as ecological justice.”

In this report, I include a series of photographs from my own doodles that represent the responses of multiple participants to the questions quoted below.

“1. What are the most controversial and / or challenging aspects in the lecture hall / classroom / lab / etc.? And why?”

In our discussions, we described a number of controversial topics, many of which are at the heart of anti-oppressive educational efforts (e.g. racialization, gender, Indigeneity, ableism, heterosexism...). We also noted that one of the main challenges in contemporary classrooms is widespread precarity among instructors and students (many of whom are in survival mode), as well as the precarious nature of the systems, institutions, services, and resources that constitute institutions of higher education. We also noted that the very notions of what counts as knowledge are precarious in modern classrooms. Our conversations highlighted that relationship building between and among students



Doodle from question #1

and educators can help to bridge these challenges, and to create spaces that enable us to support one another in our journeys of learning, unlearning, and just getting by.

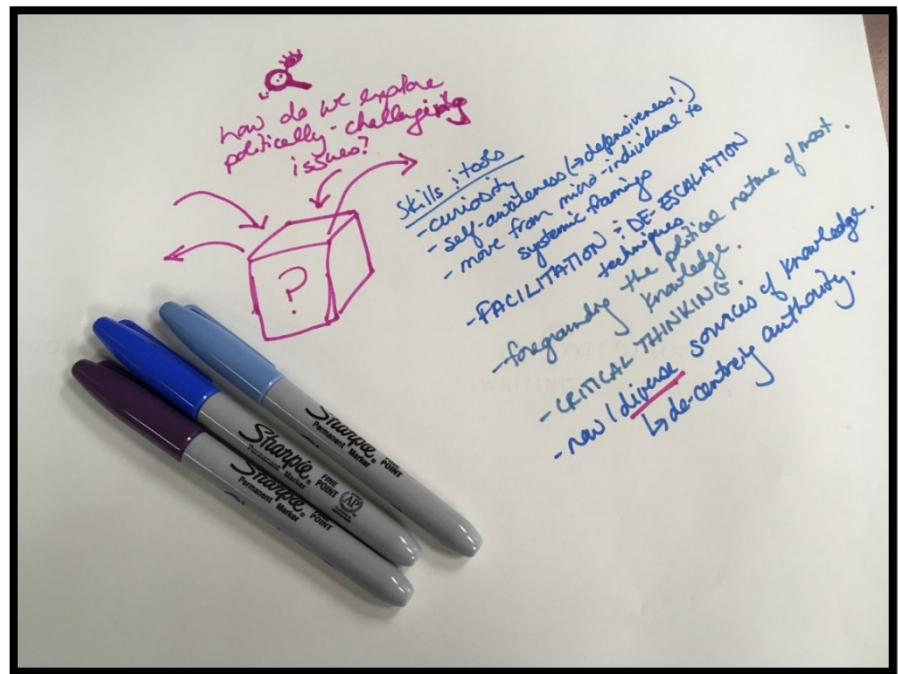
“2. What are some of the ways that you have been able to explore politically-charged issues (and all their complexity and nuance)?”

Our conversations about exploring politically-charged issues in the classroom focused on the development of skills, both within ourselves as instructors (e.g. facilitation skills, de-escalation techniques, foregrounding the political nature of knowledge as a teaching skill), and in our students (e.g. critical thinking, self-awareness of what makes us feel defensive and why). We discussed the importance of cultivating a sense of curiosity, and introducing new and diverse sources of knowledge into the classroom in order to de-centre hegemonic authorities.

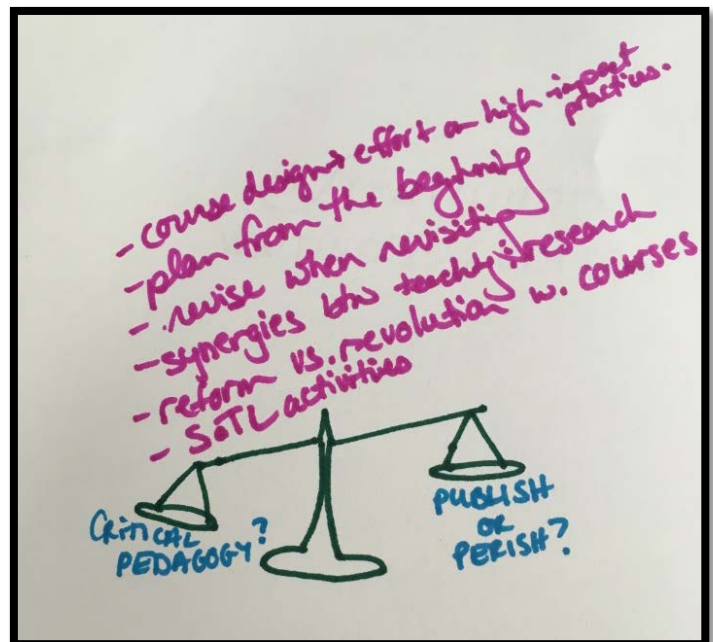
“3. How do we balance the desire to use the classroom and develop critical pedagogies to challenge current oppressive politics with the ‘publish or perish’ academic environment?”

Our conversations around balancing critical pedagogy with a ‘publish or perish’ mentality were the most strategic and applied conversations of the event. We discussed the need to plan course material in advance in order to front-load teaching work and create space for research, as well as to focus our efforts on high-impact teaching practices. We talked about resisting the urge to tinker with classes that were already under way (which can be a time-consuming temptation!), and to only revise our teaching plan when revisiting the course in its next offering. Some of us worked to find synergies between our research activities and our teaching responsibilities, including the cultivation of research projects based on our teaching practices in the tradition of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).

Overall, the World Café conversations were stimulating, community-building, and re-invigorating for those of us



Doodle from question #2



Doodle from question #3

returning to the classroom. Thanks to Laura Shillington for convening such a thoughtful series of conversations through the “Pedagogies As Resistance” sessions!

Kate Parizeau, Secretary FIGS
University of Guelph

FAVOURITE FEMINIST MEDIA

FIGS executive thought it would be interesting and informative to have a “Favourite Feminist Media” section, where we can share resources such as podcasts, e-books, blogs, etc. We are starting the new newsletter section with three recommendations.

Podcasts

Stuff Mom Never Told You. A feminist podcast (part of a greater How Stuff Works group of podcasts) that covers a variety of issues. It's not perfect, but the hosts Anney and Samantha do a pretty informed job of tackling topics of interest to many of us. Give it a try! (<https://www.stuffmomnevertoldyou.com/>)

The Hidden Brain episodes on gender. This National Public Radio-based podcast with charismatic host Shankar Vedantam has hosted a few relatively well-rounded discussions on gender in the past two years. These are useful for getting class discussions started, for instance. They also include experts from various fields and countries, as well as personal gender stories. (<https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510308/hidden-brain>)

Books

Leslie Kern's new book *Feminist City: A Field Guide* combines memoir, feminist theory, pop culture, and geography to expose what is hidden in plain sight: the social inequalities built right into our cities, homes, and neighbourhoods. (<https://btlbooks.com/book/feminist-city>)

FIGS LISTSERV INFORMATION

As you know CWAG is now FIGS, so the FIGS List for posting information has also been changed. There is no need for you to do anything. All subscriptions were transferred from CWAG to FIGS. You can send information to all of us by using the email address figs@lists.uvic.ca.

The web page for all users (subscribers) where you can subscribe, unsubscribe, and set up personal preferences is: <https://lists.uvic.ca/mailman/listinfo/figs>

If you have any questions, contact Paivi Abernethy pkaberne@uwaterloo.ca