



2023-24 GSFS and Chellis House Highlights



The Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies and the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House concluded another successful year, albeit marked by tragedy. At the beginning of the school year, we lost one of our majors, Evelyn Sorensen, a brilliant young scholar who will forever be missed.

We focused on several large-scale initiatives, from the feminist conflict transformation student showcase in November to the Period Forum in February (led by the Chellis House workers in cooperation with SPECS and the Climate Action Program) and the Gensler Symposium.

In the summer of 2023, Laurie Essig, with the help of Patricia Saldarriaga, and Catharine Wright started working on a podcast series, "Feminism, Fascism, and the Future" that provided the central theme of this year's Gensler Symposium.

The Gensler Family Symposium on Feminism in the Global Context brought together some of the world's leading scholars on the anti-gender movement from Europe and North and South America to explain how this movement is working in their local context as well as how it fits into the larger neo-fascistic political movements that are using "gender" as a stand-in for all that is wrong in the world.

Chellis House worker and GSFS minor Mei Dwyer-Frattalone single-handedly led an initiative to secure a dedicated fitness hour for women of color and queer POC. This initiative was launched with workshops by StrongHER girls founder and former WOC president Sal Nakhlawi '19 in November 2023. The fitness center now has arranged for WOC and queer POC to have a fitness hour on Saturday from 7:45 to 9 am.

We distinguished Mei Dwyer-Frattalone '24 with the Feminist of the Year Award, along with GSFS major Luci Bryson '25 (who had advocated for increased mental health care for POC students at Middlebury), Climate Action Coordinator Andrés Oyaga, and Black Studies Professor Khyree Davis.

GSFS major Lu Mila '24 won this year's Fraker Prize for her creative writing project, "I Wish I Had a Dick." Lu will continue her graduate studies in GSFS at the University of Minnesota in the fall.

This spring two performers also graced us with their presence. With the help of various campus collaborators, Catharine Wright brought performance artist Sol and dancer and choreographer Maree ReMalia to campus. In their workshops, they explored the roles dissent and nonconformity play in achieving self-actualization (Sol) and political progress and opening our bodies to creativity and a sense of connection (Maree), two goals that encapsulate the mission of GSFS and Chellis House.



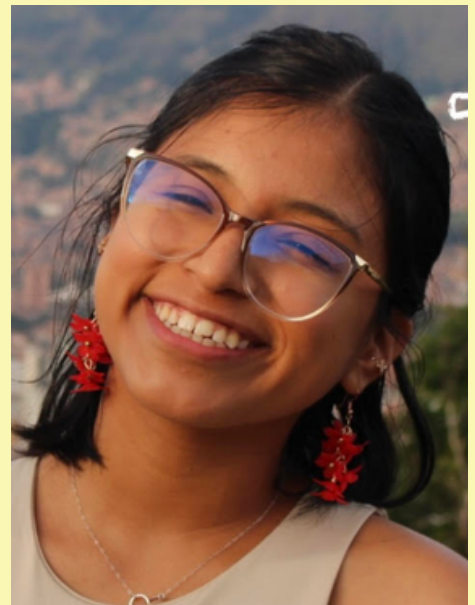
Meet the Chellis Workers!



Mei

**Math Major with Minors in
Psychology & GSFS**

"Working at Chellis House has helped
me build the community I enjoy being a
part of on this campus."



Maria

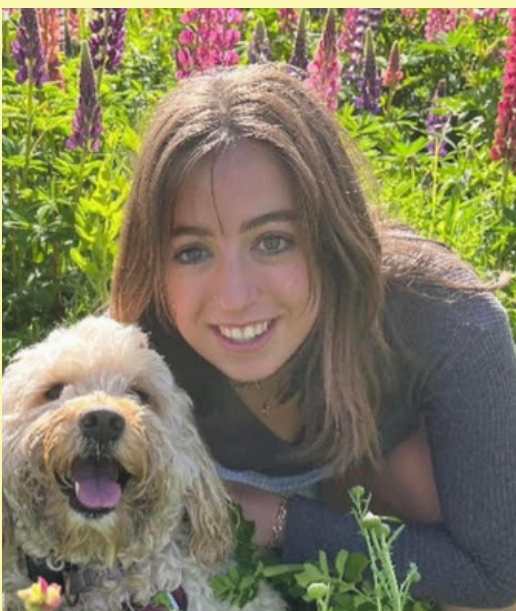
Economics & Statistics Double Major

"I am glad I get to work on social
issues that I am passionate about such
as menstrual justice, while being able
to meet awesome people."

Daisy

GSFS and Creative Writing Double Major

"I love helping people form connections and
communities around feminist and queer-
informed opportunities."





Andrea

**Environmental Architecture
Joint Major**

"I love being involved in all sorts of GSFS events on campus, and working together with the other workers!"

Detiny

**International Politics & Economics
Double Major**

"As a Dominican woman, I love to bring up issues regarding gender from my country to campus, while working with a group of passionate and exceptional people."



Alicia

Art History & Studio Art Double Major

"I like the educational opportunities such as workshops and guest speakers. They are always enriching and create community."



Transforming Feminist and Queer Conflicts Symposium

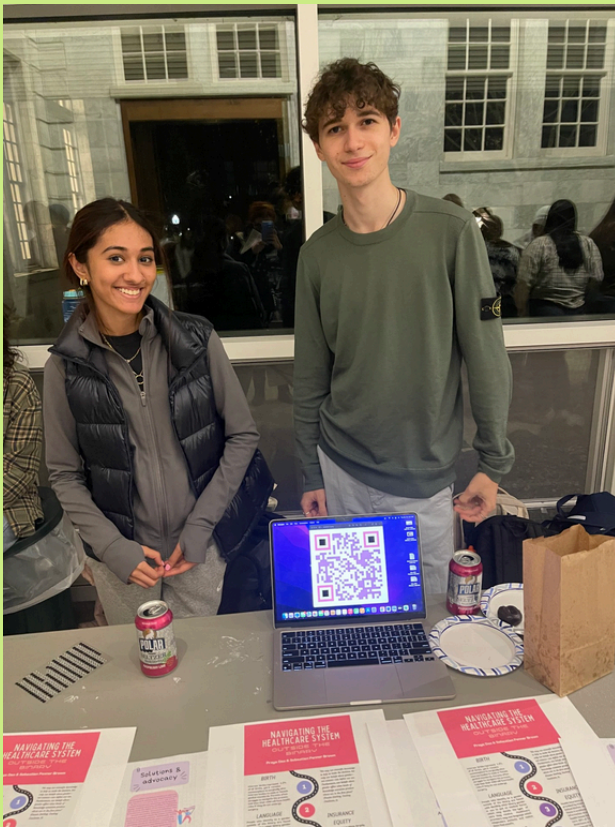
By: Mei Dwyer-Frattalone and Daisy Kulina

On November 30th, five Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies classes presented their projects exploring feminist and queer conflicts. Students from Gender & the Body, Feminist Foundations, Making Feminist Media, Introduction to Queer Critique, and Feminist Engaged Research gathered on the first floor of Axinn to present a wide variety of projects, from zines to multimedia endeavors and board games. Sponsored by a Conflict Transformation grant, the event ended with a drag performance and a raffle.

The goal of the symposium wasn't just to let the Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies program make its mark on campus, but to make feminist and queer theory accessible to a larger audience. In many of the GSFS classes we have taken during our time at Middlebury, professors have reiterated the importance of recognizing queer and feminist thinking as interdisciplinary. How is this possible if our non-GSFS peers are foreign to the content of our classes?

Thanks to the work of Dr. Essig, Dr. Thomsen, Dr. Wright, the Chellis House staff, and our peers who took part in GSFS classes last semester, we were able to extend feminist, queer, and trans thinking to the Middlebury community. Upon sharing podcasts, board games, zines, and more, we had the opportunity to unpack common misconceptions about gender, sex, and the body and share knowledge from experts in the GSFS field.

As a whole, the event was well-staged and attended. To be able to participate in the raffle, students had to stop by at least 10 projects and receive a sticker from the presenter(s). Even though the presenters quickly ran out of stickers, it became clear that students had moved beyond the raffle incentive and were instead genuinely interested in the projects. Upon sharing food and conversation with peers, students had fun reevaluating their preconceived notions about gender, sex, and the body as they relate to our everyday lives



Nuances of Care: A Non-binary Healthcare Odyssey

Presented by Sebastian Penner Brown and Preya Das

We created a roadmap pamphlet that helps folks navigate the non-binary healthcare system in the U.S. We looked at inclusive language policies in the healthcare system, insurance policies that cover gender-affirming treatments and surgeries, and patient advocacy programs.

B.B.L. (Beauty Beyond Limitations)

Presented by Melody Lopez, MJ Gonzales, and Sharom Yallico Mendoza

What is the body positivity movement? How is it impacted by social media? Does the movement include everyone? Through a collection of posters, we challenge and analyze the body positivity movement beyond its superficial message. Each poster is accompanied by a series of pamphlets that provide further context, information, and resources.



Gender on the Body

Presented by Teresa Kinney-Bastedo, Ani Hamm, Wren Christy, Kate Lawson, Claire Young, and Amelia Castillo Recio

This podcast and visual representation investigates Middlebury students' and professors' views on gender and sex. Through a series of interviews, we collected data on the best methods to talk about gender theory on campus.





Voices Unveiled: Exploring Feminism through Intersectional Zines

Presented by Talia Chang, Kassie Olaleye, and Kamryn You Mak

A collection of zines explored the complexities of intersectionality in both academia and personal life.



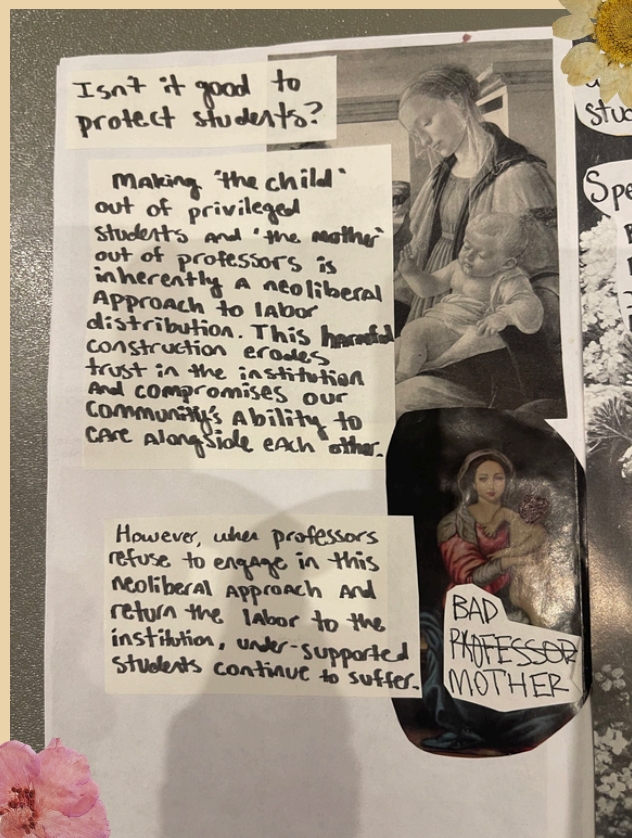
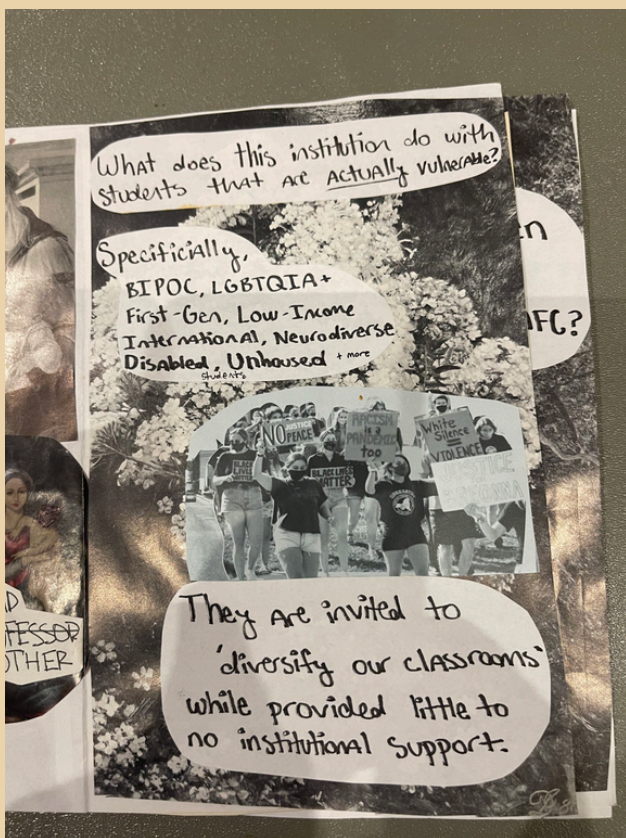
Identity Incognito -- A Zine

Presented by Katherine Lantzy, Gabbie O'Toole, and Stephanie Mayer

This modern take on early 2000s teen magazines both shows the limits of patriarchal constructions of gender and moves beyond them.

Using Victorian Constructions to Understand Our Institution Today -- A Zine

Zine presented by Annie Lee, Elio Farley, and Roxy Alvarado
Who is protected by the institution? Who is left behind? This zine looks at Victorian constructions of the lady and the child in relation to Middlebury College. It covers trigger warnings, mental health on campus, and the emotional labor performed by professors.



The Period Forum

By: Maria Gutierrez Delgado



On February 13, 2024, the workers at the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House organized "The Period Forum" for the second consecutive year. The workers brought the campus community together to discuss menstrual justice, educate on menstrual health, and democratize access to sustainable menstrual products.

This year, we intentionally focused on the intersection of menstrual justice and environmental justice. Our partnership with one of our co-sponsors, the Middlebury Climate Action Program, improved our initiative. After conversations with the CAP workers, we linked the environmental impacts of traditional menstrual products and the benefits of sustainable alternatives. We also received support from the International Students Organization and the Anderson Freeman Center. These organizations are key partners since their work on campus also promotes the empowerment and inclusion of historically marginalized communities, such as BIPOC and international students.

We teamed up with SPECS to host a community-wide Kahoot in Wilson Hall, where students tested their knowledge on various topics about menstruation. These included the maintenance and use of menstrual cups and period underwear, the sustainability of menstrual products, gender diversity in menstrual health, common misconceptions about menstruation, global access to menstrual products, and the relationship between sex and menstruation. We aimed to cover a broad spectrum of menstruation-related topics, emphasizing environmental sustainability and sexual and gender diversity. The Kahoot session served as an interactive way for participants to learn and engage with the material.

The community's attendance increased from last year, with around 80 students this year. We distributed menstrual cups and period underwear to registered participants, who could choose one or both products. Feedback from previous participants highlighted the event's positive impact, especially in introducing diverse menstrual management options and providing access to products that many could not afford otherwise. For many, this event marked the first time they had received comprehensive information about menstrual health and the various sustainable options available.

This year, we strengthened our partnership with our previous product supplier and created new ones. *AllMatters*, a Danish menstrual cup company, offered social project discounts, while the nonprofit *Period* provided heavily discounted period underwear. Thanks to our partners' financial support, we distributed around 150 menstrual products. These collaborations made our project possible and reaffirmed the importance of supporting menstrual equity and environmental sustainability initiatives.

We aim to replicate this event annually at Middlebury, continuing to democratize access to sustainable menstrual products and raise awareness on menstrual education. The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing gratitude for the resources and information provided. This encourages us, the workers at Chellis House, to expand our efforts to continue the project at Middlebury.

We also acknowledge the ongoing partnership with SPECS, whose expertise in organizing similar events such as *Sexy Bingo* significantly contributed to the success of our collective event. Their experience and support were important in ensuring that the event ran smoothly and was well-received by attendees. We are excited to continue strengthening this partnership in the future and continue bringing these opportunities to our community.



Sal's Fitness Workshop



By: Maria Gutierrez Delgado

Sal Nakhlawi '19, a distinguished Middlebury College alumna, returned to campus to conduct two impactful workshops as part of the initiatives we organize to empower women on campus. These workshops provided a unique space for women of color on campus to explore new ways of exercising and tap into their own power.

Sal Nakhlawi, the Founder of StrongHER Girls, shared her inspiring journey as a sports and fitness coach, emphasizing her commitment to sustainable, long-term results and the empowerment of women through strength training. As a certified USA Weightlifting Level 2 Advanced Weightlifting Coach, Certified Functional Strength Coach, and DV8 Kettlebell Teacher, Sal brought a wealth of expertise to the workshops.

During the workshops, Sal not only demonstrated various exercise techniques but also shared her personal transformation through lifting and strength training. She spoke about changing her mindset from "I can't" to "I'll try," highlighting the mental and physical growth that occurred as a result. Sal's story resonated strongly with the participants, inspiring them to embrace their strength both "inside and outside" of the gym.



The significance of these workshops cannot be overstated in the context of Middlebury's historical landscape. Traditionally, white men have dominated the fitness scene on campus, leaving limited spaces for women of color to explore and own their physical power. The workshops led by StrongHer not only provided an opportunity for physical exploration but also served as a catalyst for breaking down these historical barriers.

Many of the participants expressed gratitude for the inclusive environment created by the workshops. Others shared how transformative it was to have a space specifically designed for women of color to engage in fitness activities, fostering a sense of community and empowerment that extended beyond the workshops.





Sol and Maree ReMalia: Exploring our Bodies and Our Selves in Communion



Sol's workshop "Deviant and Defiant Love" critically examined the societal norms that inform our perceptions of acceptable thoughts and behavior. Upon identifying various modes of socialization, students explored the roles of dissent and nonconformity in achieving self-actualization and political progress. We concluded with participants discussing methods for effectively expressing their divergent viewpoints within both institutional and interpersonal contexts. The students were thoughtful, collaborative, and courageous throughout the workshop. Their enthusiasm for the topic was made evident by their choice to continue our discussion in the informal dinner that followed.



Performer Maree ReMalia shared her journey through life and across mediums from dance to writing to vocalization, singing, and boxing through her in-process solo performance. This solo aimed to be a balm for the heart and a container for grief, an opening for joy, all while welcoming desire, acknowledging rage, and insisting on love. Attendees at Chellis House experienced excerpts from the solo through live performance, video, and reading. They caught a glimpse of the creative process and how a solo can become a gathering, a chorus, and a communal remembrance and ways Maree is surprising herself as she accesses novel modes of expression — an inspiration for all attendees to be bold and inventive.



From Hook-up Culture to Consent Culture: A Workshop with Elissa Asch

By: Daisy Kulina



Elissa Asch '19.5 founded Consent Wise after graduating from Middlebury. On March 8, International Women's Day, she brought her consent workshop to campus. Consent Wise believes that "all young people should have access to inclusive, non-judgmental, and trauma-informed consent education that speaks to their real-life sexual experiences."



In her workshop, Elissa brought forth conversations about the nightlife and sexual experiences of students and young adults today. Asch helped students deconstruct the rules and pressures of hookup culture and dove into each component of consent. First, she helped participants investigate social pressures and norms of hookup culture by examining its typical stages: pregame, initiating physical contact, engaging in the casual sexual encounter, and reinforcing its "meaninglessness" afterward. Next, Asch engaged participants in discussions to explore how these stages can impede effective consent practices.

The workshop went in-depth to frame successful consent under the following qualifications: freely given, informed, specific, affirmative, enthusiastic, ongoing, and reversible. Students left the workshop with specific and realistic phrases and behaviors for successful consent practices. We hope that Elissa can return to Middlebury to engage first-year students in the workshop as a part of their Middlebury orientation.





Gensler Symposium 2024

Feminism, Fascism, and the Future

Agnieszka Graff

“Anti-gender politics: traditionalism, illiberalism, or neo-fascism?”

Laurie Essig, Patricia Saldarriaga, and Catharine Wright (with the help of Harper Nichols '24.5) shared their new podcast entitled “Feminism, Fascism, and the Future.”

Siobhan Guerrero McManus

“Discursive and political convergences between the New Right and Trans-exclusionary Feminism”



Karina Barena Barajas

“Anti-gender movements in Latin America: a genealogy between neoconservatism and post-facism”

Nicole Morse

“Desantis vs Gender Studies: Fascism in the Freest State in the Nation”

Julianna Neuhouser

“The Strange Marriage of Right-Wing Anti-Gender Ideology Activists and Trans-exclusionary Feminists”



Feminist Rage Room

By: Daisy Kulina, Mei
Dwyer-Frattalone, and Pearl
Benjamin



As a final project for Prof. Catharine Wright's *Feminist Joy* class, Pearl Benjamin, Daisy Kulina, and Mei Dwyer-Frattalone created a "Feminist Rage Room" for their peers to partake in. In creating this project, they aimed to position feminist anger as the *bringer* of joy. The Feminist Rage Room was designed to be an afternoon-long event on May 10th inviting feminists from all over Middlebury Campus to convene on Battell Beach to let their fury fly. By channeling their anger into embodied practices like hitting tomatoes with tennis rackets, stomping on bubble wrap, and throwing eggs at inanimate objects, they hoped to bring feminists together in a fun-filled and humorous way.

The Feminist Rage Room was guided by Brittney Cooper's powerful wish: "May your rage be a force for good". Thus, they hoped to channel their anger in a constructive way that served them as individuals and as feminists. As busy activists who often focus on serving others, they decided that they must center themselves for once and design a rage room!!





Women of Color (WOC) Updates:



Hosted a black pearl ball with cake, a photo booth, and empanadas

Offered a space during the encampment to raise support and build a stronger community

Held a senior celebration with pizza and flowers!



Feminist Action at Midd (FAM) Updates:



Got an emergency contraceptive vending machine project approved by the health center

Launched the first annual El Tendedero de Middlebury -- a project to uplift marginalized experiences on campus

Continued working with Planned Parenthood's GenAction in Burlington



Lu Mila '24 wins the Fraker Prize!



**Lu Mila '24 wins
the Fraker prize
for her
nonfiction piece
entitled "I Wish I
Had a Dick"**



Excerpt from "I Wish I Had a Dick"

"My body is only a dampened, gargantuan mound of flesh. Steam rolls out of the bathroom and into my room as I slide open the door and successfully avoid slipping. I wince as I get to my room and am greeted by lines of grout scraping against the bottom of my feet like a horribly made pumice stone. My scabs reopen from when my attempt to close-shave with a razor behind my knee, the ball of my ankle, and the skin, surprisingly taut, in front of my tibia. White tiles are now stained with blood—crimson tendrils, temerous in their blight upon my floor. I watch as my legs are engulfed in a panic of sweat, itchiness, a coolness from their hairlessness, ablaze from the abominable combination of razor blades and Nair cream. I regret everything and wrap the towel around my legs and dive onto my bed."

Feminists of the Year



Mei Dwyer-Frattalone - (Math/GSFS)

Mei was distinguished for her efforts to get a dedicated exercise session for Women of Color and queer POC at the gym

Professor Khyree Davis - Black Studies

Professor Davis has been very helpful in the GSFS job search.



Luci Bryson - GSFS

Luci Bryson was named for her work to increase mental health services for POC.

Andrés Oyaga - Climate Action coordinator

Andrés Oyaga's work in the Climate Action Program is deeply informed by the ways gender, sex, sexuality, race, class, ability, geography, socioeconomic status, citizenship/immigration status, education level, institutional positionality, and language impact our work and sense of selves.

GSFS Graduates of 2023.5 & 2024

Akari Tsurumaki '23.5



Lu Mila '24



Arthur Romero da Veiga Martins '23.5



**Elio Farley '24.5
Mishka Banuri '24
Harper Nichols '24.5**