

February 2022 Newsletter



Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Graduate Student Spotlight: Carissa Newsome

How did you hear about the WGSS MA program?

I had begun researching grad programs during my year off in between undergrad and grad school and came across UC's program. I applied to the program, and after getting in, I spoke with Dr. McGowan and fell even more in love with the program.

What has been your experience as a graduate assistant?

I am the GA in the Center for Diversity and Inclusion at Xavier University. This is the first time they have done a partnership with Xavier. I am really enjoying my time there, helping build curriculum for a D&I certificate program and also facilitating it, leading workshops for students, and planning events for MLK week. I am getting great experience in a higher ed office.

Who are your favorite theorists?

My favorite theorists are Teela Sanders, Judith Butler, and Kimberly Kay Hoang.

What excites you about the field of WGSS?

As someone who has always loved learning and feminism, I think that making a career out of the combination of these two is the ultimate goal in life. There is so much that is to be discovered in this field, and I'm so excited to continue to learn through my own research as well as others' work and teach others about all there is to know.

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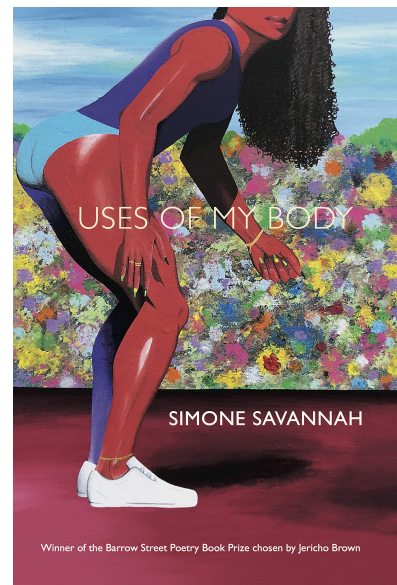
WGSS Affiliate Faculty: Dr. Simone Savannah



I am currently a Charles Phelps Taft Post-Doctoral Fellow. Before joining the UC community, I served as the Academic Service Coordinator for the McNair Scholars Program at the University of Kansas. The program's mission is to support and prepare low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented college students for doctoral studies through research and scholarly activities.

My writing centers the lived experiences of Black women, and my scholarship work broadly focuses

on women's poetry, performance poetry, and African American Women's Literature. I am interested in how Black women writers and women writers of color write about women's complex subjectivities and strategies against the oppression they face in their specific political and social realities. As a poet myself, I am also interested in extending women's and Black women's quest for autonomy, survival, and identity through my poems. In my full-length collection *Uses of My Body* (Barrow Street 2020), I consider the historical (racist, sexist) perceptions of Black womanhood, and construct a poetics that is deliberate in its quest for survival and autonomy as well as in its examination of racial and sexual politics. Reflecting on my mother's life and choices, my collection also explores themes of daughterhood and motherhood. My chapbook *Like Kansas* (Big Lucks 2018) articulates theories and concerns of Black feminist literature and explores experiences of pleasure in addition to experiences of erasure and sexual and racial violence. Poems from these collections have been published in journals and anthologies, including *Apogee*, *The Fem*, *Vinyl*, *Powder Keg*, and *The Breakbeat Poets* Vol. 2.



Currently, I am working on *Homage to Hip Thrusts*, a collection of poems, prose, and short stories that explores the body's relationships to movement, specifically how I demonstrate Black Feminism and Womanism through movement – specifically heavy lifting at the gym. I also curate the Instagram page, @i_beenawomen which features feminist and womanist poems and passages.

This semester, I am teaching a WGSS course, Black Women Writers, cross-listed with English and Africana Studies. My goal is to assist students in engaging feminist writing that explores black womanhood and the experiences of Black girls and women. Students aim to identify the African American women's literary tradition and to see these texts within a scholarly and feminist framework. Writers include Zora Neale Hurston, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ann Petry, Lucille Clifton, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison. We explore poems by twenty-first century Black women writers including Morgan Parker, Eve Ewing, and Roxane Gay. While we are only in the second week of the semester, (though expected) I am blown away by the brilliant contributions students make to class discussions and our readings of poems by Black women writers of the Harlem Renaissance. They are insightful about Black women's creative work and how conscious they are about Black women's lived experiences. I am looking forward to reading their examinations of our class texts!

I also enjoy teaching/facilitating poetry workshops – I had the opportunity to teach poetry courses at KU where I met some amazing poets and writers. Like my students here at UC, they brought a lively and passionate energy to our explorations of poetry by twentieth-century and contemporary writers.

Link to my book "Uses of My Body":

[Uses of My Body, Simone Savannah – Barrow Street](#)

Reviews of Uses of My Body:

<http://www.projecthbw.ku.edu/uncategorized/book-review-uses-of-my-body/>

[Truth-Telling - seveightfive magazine](#)

[The Poet's Nightstand with D. A. Powell \(poetrysociety.org\)](#)

Link to my website: www.simonesavannah.com