Committee Membership, 2018-19

Anastasia Salter, Co-Chair (cycled off July 2018)
Teresa Mangum, Co-Chair
Susan Z. Andrade
Carol Anne Costabile-Heming
Deanna Koretsky
Lee Skinner
Barbara Spackman (cycled off July 2018)
Juliette Stapanian-Apkarian
Erika Suffer (Liaison)
Julie Wade (Liaison)

Charge: The Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession (CSWP) was founded to act as an advocate for women’s interests and as a catalyst for promoting the status of women in the profession. In its ongoing work, the committee strives to promote gender equity and inclusivity. The committee will

- gather and review information and sponsor publications about the status of women in the profession, giving special attention to conditions of employment throughout the academic labor system and emphasizing gender inequities and inclusivity, part-time employments, differential salary levels, and patterns of professional advancement, as well as intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, age, and disability;
- gather and review information regarding the professional status of women and promote advocacy efforts for gender equity and inclusivity at all levels in the fields of languages and literatures;
- build coalitions with MLA committees and allied organizations that share the CSWP’s interests;
- make available to the profession the results of the CSWP’s studies; and
- organize programs for the MLA Annual Convention.

Meetings: In 2018-19, the CSWP built on its previous work addressing discourse around race, gender, and power disparities through significant discussions of recent events publicized in The Chronicle and issues regarding MLA leadership.
We had multiple meets in the fall as we worked through the logistics of switching to a new platform and away from the dedicated in-person meetings each fall. Our first meeting included introductions and campus updates (including member’s research and reporting of issues particularly relevant to the committee’s charge). Many of our fall conversations centered on whether or not the CSWP would draft a formal and public response to concerns regarding leadership and power disparities; ultimately, a consensus was not reached. Our extensive conversations, however, did lead to the formation of a panel focused on these concerns at MLA 2020 (see below session description).

Fall meetings also included preparations for our 2019 sessions in Chicago. We organized the following sessions, which were well attended. Perhaps more importantly, our panelists were a more diverse cross-section of MLA membership than in prior years. Panels included a range of scholars from well-established full professors to graduate students, with representation from public R1 institutions and community colleges, and scholars from English, French, Women’s and Gender Studies, and Education.

**2019 MLA Convention:** In addition to hosting the 2019 sessions below, we had an in-person meeting at the Convention to discuss potential ideas for moving the committee forward in the new virtual format. We had an opportunity to discuss some of the logistical and technological issues we had experienced, and we were able to share some of those concerns and difficulties with MLA Executive Director Paula Krebs. Paula also encouraged us (along with other committees, forums, and interest groups) to submit resolutions and motions that focus on professional issues—these are the kinds of issues the MLA is uniquely well-positioned to address. We discussed needing feminist approaches to collaborating equitably despite the differences in tech knowledge and comfort, especially since that difference can also translate into different speeds of working and bump up against competing preferences.
This discussion raised a number of questions about the role and purpose of our committee. What does the feminist perspective say about how the MLA organization is run? How would a feminist critique of the ways we use technology serve the organization? Who is excluded by the move to virtual meetings? What assumptions are we making about the type of service work that is required of the person on the committee who is most skilled at technology and ends up helping others? How does our labor become less visible when we shift from an intentional day of meetings to a series of short meetings over time by phone or individual asynchronous “meetings”? What might shifting our meeting time to a pre-conference time slot achieve? How can we take on questions of feminist collaboration and technological design?

Teresa Mangum was elected as co-chair for 2019-21. We also discussed nominations for new committee members; in particular, we discussed nominations for 2019-20 that would diversify the committee in multiple ways.

2019 Convention Sessions

**What Is the Status of Women in the Profession?**
(Anniversary Panel including histories of the CSWP)
[https://mla19.org/event/member/522543](https://mla19.org/event/member/522543)
Friday, Jan 4, 5:15-6:30 PM, Roosevelt 3, Hyatt Regency
Organizer: Barbara Spackman

**Supporting the Vulnerable: Responsibility and Academic Freedom**
(Anniversary Panel including histories of the CSW)
[https://mla19.org/event/member/522507](https://mla19.org/event/member/522507)
Thursday, Jan 3, 12:00-1:15 PM, New Orleans Room, Hyatt Regency
Organizer: Stacey Amo

**Vulnerable Positions? Feminism and Contingent Labor**
[https://mla19.org/event/member/523004](https://mla19.org/event/member/523004)
Sunday, Jan 6, 8:30-9:45 AM
Organizer: Anastasia, in collaboration with MLA Committee on Contingent Labor

All sessions were well attended, and we were very pleased with the level of engagement from audience members.
**Looking Forward:** The CSWP has planned exciting sessions for MLA 2020. Teresa Mangum proposed a session that would take advantage of MLA’s new flexibility with session format. This session, listed below, will involve brief pitches, small group discussion, and a collaborative, interactive of next steps. Our goal is to gain a sense of the pressing issues our constitutes would like to see us work on as a committee. As the first- and second-year committee members are charged with deciding the next project the committee will undertake, we hope there will be significant overlap in committee members’ and constituents’ interests. We also have an in-person committee meeting scheduled on Thursday from 10am-12pm at the 2020 Convention.

**2020 Convention Sessions**

73. **Crowdsourcing the Future Work of the CSWP**  
1:45-3pm, 201, WSCC  
Presiding: Stacey Amo (Teresa couldn’t be listed in the program a third time but she will also be a presider).  
Speakers: Theresa Delgadillo, Ohio State U, Columbus; Sally Kitch, Arizona State U; Elizabeth Mathews Losh, C of William and Mary; Margaret A. Noodin, U of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Patricia Okker, U of Missouri, Columbia; Ariana Ruiz, U of Iowa.  
The challenges women face fuel the work of the CSWP. What future barriers and openings lie ahead? Help us decide where the CSWP can have the greatest impact. Speakers will pitch topics—violence against women, issues faced by Indigenous peoples and POC, intersectionality, citation practices (and absences), data feminism, feminist leadership. In small group caucuses, we want you to help us set our course for the future.

327. **Institutional Contexts and the Shaping and Reshaping of Power**  
1:45-3pm, Willow B, Sheraton  
Presider: Juliette Stapanian-Apkarian  
Consultant: Deanna Koretsky  
Speakers: Diana Arterian, U of Southern California; Sonja Rae Fritzsche, Michigan State U; Katherine Gilbert, Drury U; Carly Houston Overfelt, Gustavus Adolphous C; Nicole McCleese, Michigan State U; Tony McGowan, United States Military Acad.; Dara Rossman Regaigon, New York U; Kay Sohini Kumar, Stony Brook U, State U of New York.

Can institutions (universities, scholarly fields, or organizations like the MLA) be mobilized toward meaningful structural change and more equitable futures? As new structures are implemented to redress long-standing power imbalances, Sara Ahmed reminds us, “Even if you are appointed … to transform the institution, it does not mean
the institution is willing to be transformed.” Participations at all stages of the profession discuss challenges and possibilities.