**2019 WGS Graduation Ceremony – Remarks by Ashlee Atchinson**(excerpt from Ashlee’s WGS Capstone Reflections)

I came to college with no idea of what I wanted to study or focus on except one thought that never seemed to go away: women’s identities. I’m understand now my interest was not just “women” but women, gender, and sexuality as a whole, and am grateful to the WGS department and professors who helped me broaden my scope. With being a WGS student came clarity not only in my academic life but in my personal wellbeing; I now felt purpose in my interests, having learned the various classes, careers, life paths that come with a WGS background.

The value of my education and what I’ve learned through WGS is incalculable. Classes have taught me to unlearn what I thought I knew, expanded my feminism and made it better, shown me how to self critique without feeling punished. Beyond this WGS programming and events have offered me a way to see my in class education practiced in action and a way to become familiar with an inclusive feminist crowd. And this to me, is where WGS has benefited me the most.

My peers studying WGS in any capacity have changed my life totally. These folks have taught me lessons that don’t come with lectures or seminars; vulnerability and opening up to my personal weaknesses, how to stand in solidarity but also take space for myself when necessary, how to love openly and shamelessly, to care deeply. I’ve learned more from experiencing life and activism with my feminist peers than I have learned in any classroom, and I am endlessly grateful to know and love them.