Feminist Oral Histories of the University of Washington

Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies,

University of Washington

Seattle, WA

SASHA WELLAND

Interviewed by

Ananya Garg

30 October, 2017

GWSS Meeting Room, Padelford, University of Washington,

Seattle, Washington

Narrator

Sasha Welland

Professor Sasha Welland joined the University of Washington in 2004, and was given a joint appointment with the Department of Gender, Women, Sexuality Studies and the Department of Anthropology. She attended Stanford University for her undergraduate where she began an oral history project with her grandmother which would become *A Thousand Miles of Dreams*, her first book. She earned her PhD in Anthropology from University of California Santa Cruz. She teaches classes that combine Asia studies, China studies, and visual art with transnational and decolonial feminism. While she began with a joint

appointment through the Department of An130thropology and the Department of Gender, Women, Sexuality Studies, she now is 100% in the Department of Gender, Women, Sexuality Studies.

Interviewer

Ananya Garg

Ananya Garg is an undergraduate student in the department of Gender, Women, Sexuality Studies. She completed this oral history in Autumn Quarter 2017 of her third year of university under the mentorship of Dr. Priti Ramamurthy. Ananya has called GWSS home since her first year at UW, and is interested in many aspects of Feminist Studies, and plans to continue the work she began in her undergraduate career in graduate work.

INFO ABOUT CONTEXT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDINGS/ CLASS

Abstract

In this oral history, Dr. Sasha Welland speaks about her life and the events that led up to her joining the faculty of the department of Gender, Women, Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington. She speaks about growing up as a mixed race Asian American woman in Missouri, in the midst of the desegregation of schools. She also talks about moving to California to attend college at Stanford University, and the change in culture that was for her, which opened up doors to explore her identity and her family history. She continues to describe how she discovered the methodology of oral history and began a project interviewing her grandmother which turned into her first book. She entered the University of Washington with a joint appointment in both the departments of Anthropology and GWSS, eventually becoming full time in GWSS after receiving tenure. From there, she spoke about some of the intricacies of the university system and how they affected and continue to affect her position. She also spoke about the classes she teaches and taught in the past, and some of the aspects she loves about them.

Interview recorded by Ananya Garg using Sony CX580V VIDEO RECORDER and Olympus WS-331M AUDIO RECORDERNov

Transcript

Transcribed and proofread by Ananya Garg, November 2017.

[00:00:00 video clip 1]

GARG: Today is Monday, October 30th, it's about 12:10 in the afternoon, my name is Ananya Garg and I'm a third year student in the department of Gender, Women, Sexuality Studies we're here today with Dr. Sasha Welland. Thanks so much for being here.

WELLAND: Sure.

GARG: My first question falls under the category of personal history and education. What do you call yourself? What name do you go by?

WELLAND: I go by Sasha.

GARG: Cool, and what pronouns do you use?

WELLAND: I use she/her.

GARG: Perfect. And when were you born?

WELLAND: I was born in 1969.

GARG: Can you tell me about your family and your parents and what kind of work they do?

WELLAND: Yeah, I was born in Chicago but I mostly grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. My dad was Canadian, he's a math professor and he came...my parents have very different backgrounds, so my father was white, working class, had managed to get to the U.S., go to university. It was really hard to do my math homework because he never wanted me to do it the same way the teachers at school wanted me to do it, so that was one of my relationships with my dad. [laughing] My mom is second generation Chinese-American, maybe first, she was the first generation to be born in the U.S. and had a somewhat unusual upbringing because they were one of two Chinese families in Indianapolis growing up in the 40s and 50s. Her parents were both college and medical school educated, came to the United States for education.

[00:02:08 video clip 1]

GARG: Who was in your household when you growing up? And, tell me more about the area you were in.

WELLAND: I have one sister, so it was the four of us. We didn't really have any family near by, I think that was sort of one of the circumstances of being the kid, grandkid of immigrants of different kinds. So I never had that sense of extended family or community growing up. For the first half of my school years we lived Normandy, which is just south of Ferguson, which speaks to what is going on with Black Lives Matter that arose from that moment of protest in Ferguson. That was very much part of the black and white landscape that I grew up a part of. And trying to figure out what it meant to be mixed-race Asian American in the midst of when race was really clearly understood in terms of black and white racial dynamics and histories in St. Louis. Then I went to a different high school in a different school district that was the moment desegregation so there was a lot of firsthand experience and debate and discussion about how to desegregate schools. That was extended, I don't really know why I went into all of that, that wasn't who was growing up in my household, but that was sort of the landscape of our nuclear family amidst these larger things happening.

[00:03:52 video clip 1]

GARG: No, that's great, and it goes perfectly into my next question which is what were some of the big social issues during your teenage years?

WELLAND: I would say that was the big one, I mean really starting in middle school. But otherwise, it was the school district we moved into, St. Louis is really, it has a different, complicated history of racial dynamics and there's all these small cities--Ferguson is one of them. There's the city, and then there's the county. And a lot of it is how tax dollars flow and how to control who lives where, so that was a big project that was happening from my younger sister who was in elementary school, by the time we moved to the district that I was in as a middle schooler and high schooler and so that was one of the biggest things that was going on at the time. The program that I was in at my school was a voluntary desegregation project so families who lived in the city of St. Louis could choose to participate in this bussing, where they were then bussed to the county schools so my sister's elementary school, and I was in middle school and my high school, were both, in the language of my day, "bussed." It really changed over time, the dynamics of--you could just see as we got older in high school it sorta felt like more integrated

than middle school although the bussing program was smaller so there were fewer students and more students by the time I was in high school. There were the kids I had gone to school with for years that I was friends with and trying to figure all of that out, and it became more stark in high school, you could really see the lunchroom was pretty when you could choose who sat with. All the black students sat together and it was really pretty much just black and white and a few other folks in there. So that was a lot of it. There was some debate about religion it was the very beginning of trying to figure out where secular lines really stood in public school, so not singing Christmas carols and stuff like that. I think those were just some of the things just in my immediate political--I don't think I was a very political-like minded person in that time. But that was the thing that impacted me most that was apparent in everyday visceral friendship.

[00:06:39 video clip 1]

GARG: Moving forward, where and when did you do college?

WELLAND: I went to college right after I graduated high school and I moved from Missouri to California so I did my undergraduate at Stanford University, and it was a pretty fraught time on campus, it was the late 80s so there was a lot of debate about multicultural, in the language of that time, multicultural education. So, there was a Freshman core course that everyone was required to take, it was a three-quarter course, it was your first year and very tied into residential education. All of the people in my western culture, or western civ. class were in my dorm as well. Part of that was exciting because you were still coming back and talking--almost all students lived in the dorm at that point. Western civ was western civ so there was a lot of student debate and unrest over why are we for one whole year, dedicated to reading the canonical great works. I mean there were different tracks in western culture, I was in arts and literature, but there was a track called "great works" and we started with Plato and the Bible and by the very end got to Toni Morrison, but by and large, it was the great works of Europe. It was Western culture. So it was an amazing course in that we just spent a whole year reading in depth and thinking. I was in arts and literature, so it included visual arts as well as literary, philosophical, but yeah, a lot of student unrest at the time about how to decolonize. I don't know if that was quite the language being used

at the time but why is this centered as the most important foundational beginning of a college education and students were occupying the President's office, being arrested, and it did change by the time I finished, there's still a required freshman course but it's not called Western Culture anymore and the tracks are um, I should take a look actually to see what's happened with it. You know, it was also the time there was also a lot of student activism around trying to have--mostly around Ethnic Studies becoming a more institutionalized space on campus, so that really impacted me. And moving to California was a big deal for someone who was trying to figure out what it meant to be Asian-American, because I had no community, I had no immediate family, I had no community in Missouri, so that was a lot of my undergraduate identity politics for myself for trying to understand that history and why I thought what I thought about Asian-Americans, and then the mixed-race piece of it of going to stuff and feeling fake because I didn't fit in ways that for some members of that community really were home for them. Whether it was language, or food, or certain kinds of histories or community modes of belonging that were really familiar to them in growing up in their families, so trying to figure that space out was a lot of the work I was doing as an undergraduate.

[00:10:25 video clip 1]

GARG: Awesome. The next set of questions are sort of related feminism. So when did you first become involved with feminism and social justice activism?

WELLAND: I think I was sort of always aware of this sense of things not really being the way that I wanted them to be, but I did not grow up in this sort of--I eventually came to know of people who grew up in activist households, or early on in their lives became a part of activist communities. I think I came to it in a much more winding path. I actually left college for a little while because I couldn't figure out--I was a child and grandchild of scientists and mathematicians, and people like that so I was trying to--I could do it, but it wasn't really where I wanted to go. So anyway, I left for a little while and I think it was trying to figure out, this impulse, that I wanted to be doing something that was more aligned with the project of social justice. But I think the way I had internalized it at the time was that I was being taught all these things at school and there were all these voices and histories that I didn't see represented in that, and

so it was trying to figure out a way for myself to put all of those pieces together. When I went back, I designed my own major and I was really fortunate to find--I went to a lot of faculty members because you had to have three faculty members. I just designed my own course of study and the requirements and what was required to fulfill my major. I talked to maybe fifteen faculty members, most who told me I was kind of crazy and to just pick a major, and then I found a couple of anthropologists, I think that's how I ended up doing my graduate work as an anthropologist. One was Japanese-American Sylvia Yanagisako and Chicano, Renato Rosaldo. I had taken a lot of classes in Ethnic Studies, and that was sort of a nascent beginning of trying to learn. I think I was interested in listening and trying to documenting other versions of history through stories. I was really compelled by oral histories. That was the mode I was developing at the time, and I did a very long project with my grandmother that became my first book, which started as my undergraduate thesis.

[00:00:57 video clip 2]

GARG: Cool, I'm excited to hear more about that.

WELLAND: So it was kind of roundabout path to becoming a feminist, and I don't know if that was even the language that I was using at the time because I also didn't take any women's studies classes, I was mostly in Ethnic Studies, and different courses. When I look back, there was very little critical theory being taught in any of my courses. It was sort of, these are the great works. I think I came just before the '90s, when a lot of that poststructuralist, decolonial critical theory started entering into what was being taught to undergraduates. I always have to remember that when I'm trying to teach to undergraduates that I didn't have any of that an undergraduate. It was through things like tutoring, and working as an English as a Second Language instructor in Chinatown in San Fransisco that I think I came to thinking about more community activism, aligned with other ways of storytelling.

[00:02:22 video clip 2]

GARG: So you also went perfectly into this question, when did you first identify yourself as a feminist?

WELLAND: I have thought about that question, and I think in my gut, I knew it and like the one moment I was so mad as a kid was in shop class in middle school when all the boys had to do one project and all

the girls had to do one project, and the boys' project was so much cooler because it had moving parts, and the girls' project was to make a napkin holder. I just wanted to use the cooler power tools, and I hated that teacher. I can't even remember his name right now, but I remember what he looked like and I just fumed further, just that we had to take home ec and shop was, useful skills, but it was very gendered, all of it. I don't think I had the language for it, but I was very angry. My mom was the good immigrant daughter. My grandmother was kind of a feminist, she would even, in her own language, it was about women's right to education. She broke all these norms and conventions about what a girl in China in her youth was supposed to be doing. She got an education, she helped fellow students unbind their feet, she lied about her age to take this exam, she got a scholarship, she went by herself to the United States, and became a doctor, but then she turned into her own daughter into this assimilating, helping her ascend into white, middle-class, white respectability by having the perfect 1940s, 50s daughter that would take care of her and my grandfather because they had nobody else, except the brother who got to do something else. So my nascent sense of feminist indignation was that I knew my mom could do so much more, and yet she had been socialized by a lot of different social pressures of the time, the 50s, and her own family circumstances that she was really unhappy, and I kinda knew that, from childhood. But calling myself a feminist came much later, maybe in college. I don't actually know when I started using the language of it. I didn't take feminist studies or gender studies classes, but somewhere along the way. There wasn't a day when I woke up and decided, okay that's what I'm calling myself now.

[00:05:16 video clip 2]

GARG: You also kind of already got into this, but what were some of the issues that were most important to you when you first started having these conversations?

WELLAND: I think it was really the sense, it wasn't just around gender, it was also around, I think part of my own growing up, it was also a lot around race. What opportunities were available to whom, and just the unfairness of that and the socialization of depending on who you were, particular expectations about what you could or couldn't do. What was the question?

GARG: I can repeat it, what were the issues that were most important to you when you first discovered feminism and started having these conversations more largely?

WELLAND: It was that, it was just the sense of...maybe it was largely because I had the privilege of the kind of educational opportunities that were open to me, the sense of unfairness. All the people I knew or grew up with, that was not the path that was expected of them or open to them. I think, part of my family's history has always been striving to get education in these different ways. My dad's side of the family, his parents were really working class, and then part of it was also that project, I came to it from a personal history project way, the project I was doing with my grandmother. Something I had realized was that not only the opportunities that were so obvious for some people, and should have been obvious for other people and weren't, my own sense of how my imagination had been so shaped and stunted in a certain way by American representations of Asian-American women. I was really surprised when I finally got to know my grandmother, because I didn't really have a relationship with her growing up, it was because I ended up going to college in California. She and my grandfather had retired there, and my grandfather died when I was in college so she was really lonely so I spent a lot of time with her, and I was kind of shocked by who she was. I had grown up with all these media images of passive, meek, traditional, following what people told them to do Asian American, or Asian women, and she was so not that. For me, it's about opportunities, but also images and narratives. What are the stories that we hear and why? Oral history was really interesting to me because I spent a lot of time talking to her and recording her history and I was like 'Wow! These stories are so interesting how come I had no clue and I'm her granddaughter?"

[00:08:53 video clip 2]

GARG: Absolutely. And what's important to you most now as a feminist, and how has this changed over the years?

WELLAND: I think it wasn't until graduate school that I had the language of intersectionality, but I think at a gut level that's always what's made sense to me. If you were to think about social justice issues that always seemed so clear cut in certain ways and then it never worked. It's so hard, there's so much going

on to say what matters, there's so many different levels. I'm a parent of young children so that's one of the most immediate ways I think about it. Gosh, how was I raised, and all these things I pushed up against. How to convey things that I teach, or the things I talk to them about, the stories I tell, or really just the way I interact with them. I realized that's one of the most challenging jobs I have right now. Being a parent, and how to do that in a way that's open to all of the curiosities and sensibilities that you have when you're a young formative person trying to make sense of the world. I don't think that answered the question, what was the question?

GARG: Don't even worry about it, the question was what's most important to you now as a feminist, and how has this changed over the years?

WELLAND: I mean I think there's a sense…[in thought] I think I went through the journey of cross-cultural thing, I spent a long time in China after that period with my grandmother, and for me that was a kind of education in non-western history, and also struggles around gender and class in a different location than the United States and the whole history after my grandmother left, some socialist feminism, which things have really changed in China too, so I guess it's trying to figure out how to… I'm still not answering your question, what's your question again? What's most important to me now? Hmm, I think it's for my own children, and the students I teach, to try and figure out what are my own history of the different things I ran up against or the moments of confrontation all that making sense or how to do it better. Instead of feeling like I am a professor of Feminist Studies, I can tell you how to do this is to always understand that struggle. Maybe that also comes from my interest in people's stories and how to be attuned to those ways that these are both individual and collective struggles for all the different kinds of people that I'm in regular contact through teaching or parenting. How to be able to hear that, and realize it's different than my own circumstances were when I had some of those questions that might seem similar that might not be. I think it's always that question of, which I think feminists can be good at, but there have been moments when the movement has not done that well. Always be able to hear those kinds of differences and understand how to shift one's own understanding of what you thought you knew in relationship to those. And I think that's just a individual ethical sense of relating to people. But then also,

obviously there's so many things that are unbelievable that are happening politically right now, how to transform that into action. I think I've always been the more thinking, wanting to tell stories, to write, how to use writing as a form of action or teaching. But also, when is the moment that it has to take a form of more collective action. I think being attuned to that is something I hope as I get older to learn. How to be savvy in the moment, both how to relate to people, and also when does it have to outside of the classroom or outside of one's head or outside of the page.

[00:01:37 video clip 3]

GARG: So the next set of questions are related to the University of Washington. When did you come to the University of Washington?

WELLAND: I came in 2004, I was an adjunct lecturer for two years. Then my partner got a job, so I followed, and then I got a job somewhere else which enabled me to negotiate. I only mention all that because there's all this stuff about spousal hiring in universities which can be really tricky. And it was hard for me for a while to feel that. I mean I did have a job, I would have had to move to another country to take it, and the kind of compromises we both made to stay here, to stay together. That kind of stayed with me for a while. Did they really want me? Or did they just hire me because they wanted somebody else? Then I was really lucky because it was a time when they were still doing that before the budget really fell out. So I started a tenure track job as an assistant professor in 2006, and I had a joint appointment for 10 years. I was 50 percent, in the Department of Anthropology, sociocultural anthropology, I was in the sociocultural faculty in the Department of Anthropology, and 50 percent in what was then Women's Studies. My joint appointment was an artifact of also being a spousal hire. That was a way they could make a line for me.

[00:03:11 video clip 3]

GARG: How did you get involved with Women's Studies. In that how did the 50% thing work?

WELLAND: Well, so my graduate work, I did my PhD in Anthropology, and University of California Santa Cruz, and they had what was then called a parenthetical notation and I think it was still Women's Studies then, their department is now called Feminist Studies, later it became a designated emphasis. We

call it here a "graduate certificate in," so I had a sort of emphasis, which meant I took a certain number of courses in their department as a graduate student. Although I was getting my doctorate in Anthropology, I did coursework and I think all of the faculty who were on my dissertation committee were affiliated faculty with what's now the Feminist Studies program there. When I first moved here, when my partner was hired here, we were able negotiate that I would teach two classes a year as adjunct and they just looked at my CV, and they said well you could teach one in Women's Studies, and one in Anthropology and so that was how it started. This is sort of behind the scenes of academia, but I was on the job market for two years and I got a position at a peer institution, in the two weeks of kind of intense negotiation that was the only way they said, well if we were to make a position for you, we couldn't give you a full position in any department, so what about these two departments? So then I had to do interviews in both of those departments.

[00:05:14 video clip 3]

GARG: What were some of the important political and social issues of the time when you were entering the University of Washington?

WELLAND: Within the department, it was really there was a lot of debate, and there was a conference at the time on the relationship between what was then being called transnational feminism, and women of color, more U.S. based feminism. I think there was a real sense of urgency around that time, and I think it's been an ongoing discussion in the department that I no longer feel it's this tension, that it's something we have been very productively been able to think about the relationship between these important crossings, we can't just be focused on the United States, how do we do a feminist analysis and think about scholar activists in a transnational world. Our economies are shaped this way, we have so many different migrations over time, politics of immigration, without losing sight of the long hard struggles within various waves of US feminism of women of color from the very beginning that were always routinely pushed out by middle-class white feminists who took up a lot of the space. I think some of the fears of the time, it was also sort of the time that a lot of a queer and sexuality studies programs were taking shape, so I think there was a sense of women of color, third world women of color, sometimes the language was,

just as they had sort of gotten foothold in departments, and standing within scholarly circles, more women from transnational backgrounds were coming in, or white gay men. So it was are these forms of just once again pushing out or marginalizing voices of women of color? So that was what was really important and fraught at the time debate. I feel proud of our department, I feel that it was something that I kind of came in and I saw it was really being grappled with, and those two pieces, as well as queer and sexuality studies, as very core to the department now. It's not like one voice prevailed, it was more fruitful tension that led to discussion that enriched the ways all of us think about transnationalism not just cosmopolitan elites.

[00:08:35 video clip 3]

GARG: So what was going women's studies across the country at the time?

WELLAND: I don't know, because I was an Anthropologist. So I think cannot speak to that. Having a 50% appointment as a junior faculty in the department was like getting a second PhD for me, I really had to learn a whole new literature and ways of doing scholarship and debates that I knew about, but were not the central way that I was trained as a graduate student. I didn't even know what the national conference was. It kind of crept into my consciousness over time. I later learned that it was a time that a lot of programs were becoming departments, a lot of departments were debating about transnational feminism, U.S. based feminism, queer and trans movements, how do the tensions between all of these fit together, which led them to a lot of departments debating whether to change the name. I can say one of the very first faculty retreats, we were talking about whether or not to change the name, because we were one of the few departments that was "Womens Studies" without an apostrophe "s" and so a lot of places thought we just didn't know the proper punctuation whereas that had been a really purposeful, it wasn't possessive, women posses this study, it was centering women against previous traditions of androcentrism where it was male bodies, and bodies of scholarship were just presumed to be central. It's sort of hazy for me I can't really speak to it except for knowing what was going on in the department at the time.

[00:10:42 video clip 3]

GARG: What was it like entering the department coming from Anthropology?

WELLAND: Hmm, I think over time, it took a while because it was… they tend not to put people in joint appointments as junior faculty because it's a little schizophrenic because you're going to two sets of meetings, and there's two debates, and you have graduate students, and undergraduates kind of being trained in somewhat different paradigms and you have curricular debates that are sort of different and basic epistemological ideas about how you come to the knowledge that you have. But over time, because I'm 100% now in Gender, Women, Sexuality Studies, which I requested that I move over, my whole line be here after I got tenure. Of course, in Anthropology there were debates about this too, but it was never taken for granted that you were just studying for knowledge sake in GWSS. It was always the sense that knowledge is always shaped and is persuasive in different ways and is always tied to a different way--there was this phrase. I took a graduate class with Donna Haraway and she talked about the "scandal of the status quo that shouldn't be." So the idea that knowledge was always about change. It was either that the knowledge that was was incomplete politically motivated to create power and privilege for certain people that you knew about. So over time, that's what really made sense to being here. That's never taken for granted why what we're doing it's not just that we--it's important to make knowledge. Why are we trying to produce knowledge, and how are you doing it is in line with the larger political vision for social change and justice.

[00:00:19 video clip 4]

GARG: What led you to the path of becoming a professor or pursuing graduate work?

WELLAND: [laughing] That's a good question, I ask myself everyday. After undergrad, I lived in China for a few years and even before that, I was living in San Francisco, I was doing a lot of tutoring in Chinatown, mostly children of immigrant families, newcomers, helping them with English. And when I was in China for those years, was in part me wanting to learn Chinese, which I didn't grow up learning, and trying to understand stuff about my family history and larger histories. But I was also a teacher during those two years of English as a second language, I taught at North China University of Technology. And I liked teaching, so I think that was part of it, but I also wanted to be an artist, so I was painting. I applied to

graduate school to get a MFA in painting or a PhD in Anthropology, and I got into a few programs, and for my first several years of my doctoral program I was like "why didn't I go get the MFA in painting because this is really hard!" [laughing] I think painting probably, or whatever I might have done as an artist would have been equally as hard, just in different ways. So I ended up, I mean I'm an ethnographer of visual culture, and I work with artists still, and I'm teaching my big lecture course which is Global Feminist Art, so I still get to think that way. So I think it was not entirely planned, it was a set of sort of things I was interested in, and either was good at, or liked doing, or wanted to be better at, so I'm not like a natural teacher in that I love standing up there, I still get nervous [laughing] when I have to get up there in front of 100 people and say something, but I do like-- I learn a lot from my students, both undergraduate and graduates. That's what keeps me on the days where I'm like why did I do this? [laughing] it's never boring, I'm just always thinking and having my understand of the world challenged in ways that are still really hard and take a lot of time to think through, that seems important way to be in the world.

[00:03:19 video clip 4]

GARG: That's awesome. And it's awesome to hear that, as an undergraduate student going through classes, that it's always rewarding for you as a professor. I'm really glad that you brought up Global Feminist Art, I think that's one of the classes that I hear about most when I hear about you as a professor. But, what were some of the classes that you came into the department teaching, and what are some of the classes that you're teaching now?

WELLAND: Because I had that joint appointment, it's a little challenging to fit what you do into the curricular planning of two departments, so I have a lot of cross-listed classes. I did have some classes that I taught just on the Anthro side, and some that were just on the GWSS side, but a lot of them are cross-listed. I teach Global Feminist Art… when I first came into the department, there was this course, I don't think it's been taught for many years now that was called "Feminism in an International Context." I think parts of that are still…I try to teach that women's movements have not just happened in Western United States, which is just one basic decolonizing move, and a lot of a my work has been on women's

movements and debates about gender and sexuality in China, so I still try to do some of that in the Global Feminist Art class, it's a little bit more covert. I think even the Feminism in International Context seemed like a course that had been designed in an earlier time period because I was really challenged when I had to step into teaching that. Like, am I supposed to teach like, five countries? These international, different contexts in a nation based sense, or is it more transnational feminism and global commodity chains or transnational activist formations, so I think I did something in between. But that was kind of that challenge of that language of international which I think was our earlier way of approaching that topic than I think is the primary paradigm now. I've always taught, not ever year, but I've taught it very regularly, and I started teaching it from the very beginning, the graduate core courses in Feminist Methodology. I've taught for many years a course called Global Asia, that's cross-listed with the Jackson School, Asian Studies, Anthropology, and GWSS that is thinking about precisely those questions of colonization, globalization, through the specifics of ethnographies and East Asia but ethnographies that are always, whether it's through family, or through work, or through political ideology around feminisms dealing with gender in some way. This is more recent, I've also started teaching, maybe five years ago, Gender and Sexuality in China course. I've only taught it once, I had a graduate course on Oral History, I forgot what it was called, something about lives, sort of in between oral history and biographical, autobiographical writing around gender, histories of gender. I think there's more stuff in there, but that's what I can remember for right now.

[00:07:07 video clip 4]

GARG: Awesome, and how has your feminist pedagogy and practice developed over the years?

WELLAND: I think that there's been more pressure to teach large classes with budget shifts in this activity-based budgeting era in which student credit hours count a lot. It's very important to the department for our own financial viability and argument to the administration that we do teach a lot of students and we do something really important at the university, so we've made a really clear and concerted effort to make sure we're all teaching large and small courses, so that we numerically have evidence to the administration, look we teach all these, our student credit hour numbers are here. And also

just, I can't remember who said it first, maybe it was Priti Ramamurthy, once the the diversity requirement was passed, every student at UW should take a GWSS class at one point in their career. So that was kind of one our missions, and this is a sort of roundabout way to get to the question of pedagogy, so I think it's been a challenge. Starting as a teacher before coming to teach in Gender, Women, Sexuality Studies, I was an English as a second language instructor and that you can only do that in a smaller classroom. I think some of my shifts around pedagogy have been to try to keep that sense. You can't, it's hard in a large lecture, but how do you have some sense of actually listening to what students are saying, and trying to get as many different voices as a part of the conversation. Not just to be heard for the sake of being heard, but I think something that's really important to how we teach is learning across difference and about these issues and power, and hierarchy, in which we're all positioned differently at different times by who we are and how we come to the university. How to foster that conversation at all of the different sized classrooms that we have to-- do teach that. Have to in part because it's our mission being part of the university and also the budget pressures of the university how do you keep yourself viable to the larger institution. So it's always about how you can design a classroom space in which you can have as much of that as possible. Large lectures in which students know that they can raise their hand but it's not always the same person in the front row raising their hand asking the question. How to design different kinds of assignments that build real skills; writing, and analytical thinking, but also don't push aside all of one's individual experiences and what you bring. That's not a very clear answer but I can say all of the different things I've done in classrooms from blogs, to tools, keyword assignments, mapping things… one of my favorite assignments that kind of speaks to how I've tried to do things in a large lecture style class is in the Global Feminist Art class, and it's one that I think students really, a project, they've got papers, and midterms, but one of the culmination of the class is they do a group project which is design their own dream feminist exhibit which it to think about not only the artists they would put in it, but how feminists artists challenged the ways institutions define artistic value in ways that are gendered and raced and hierarchical and often have done protest activities that are really different ways of understanding what an exhibit would look like. So students have come up with really innovative exhibits

and then they have to do a PechaKucha talk, which is one of those, I think it's like 20 in 7 minutes, no text on any of the slides, so you have to rehearse, it's like a pitch to somebody, this is what I'd like to put on. So even a large class that the students are generating knowledge in some way. It's exciting because in our field there's still so much to be done, so I feel like the students do, even though it's a 200-level class, do real research to get them excited. It's not just that you're learning stuff and digesting it, memorizing, but you're actually producing knowledge that wasn't there before. You're putting artists together in new ways. In an earlier version of the class I had a student who was working on a Pakistani artist, there had just been very little written about her, and then she wrote this amazing blog essay, which then when that artist was picked up for an international Biennale exhibit, I forget in which country, there was nothing published on her, so they linked to my student's article. So these examples, these are like you're doing something in the world that makes a difference. Some of the pedagogy that in addition to you really need to learn these concepts and learn how to use them and adopt them into your own vocabulary, sort of understanding how you would see your talk interact with the world is kind these other assignments where they're learning with each other, or against each other across the differences they might bring. But also see the real skills and building knowledge they have to contribute to the world. I always try and include some assignment like that.

[00:00:54 video clip 5]

GARG: That's awesome. How have you observed UW students changing over time?

WELLAND: I mean I'm a little sad to say that in the bigger classes, it's a little harder to assess when the TAs who work with them in section have more of those in depth interactions with them. We have many more out-of-state and international students. In the classes that I teach on Asia or on China, the population of students who come to those classes is really different. I've only taught that Gender and Sexuality in China course three times, but probably every other year, so over the last six years, just in that time the demographics of that class, and that class was a 90 student class the last time I taught it, is different than what I would compare maybe the Global Asia class. There's a lot more students from Asia, and Asian-Americans. The graduate courses I teach, I think it's the students we attract also, I don't think it's

reflective of the larger UW student body, there are more students of color in the graduate courses I teach now so that they're the majority of the population in those classes. Overall, maybe this is just my sort of uneasiness with the changes in Seattle, the larger ecosystem the UW is part of, I feel like there's a really a sense of STEM, and computer engineering those are the viable places. That's that you need to study to start a business, to get a job, and I don't know whether that's fair or not, but you just hear that, and there's a lot that's happening in the ways that universities organize that feels like it's going that way. So for somebody where art and humanities, storytelling, I like it's sad that I have to argue for the importance of humanities, as a mode of critical thought that's really important to our survival as people. That's a more, I don't know if that's how students are changing, but that's more the ethos of the environment that we're in, the political, economic times that we're in. That feels really important to me, to argue for the importance of the arts and humanities, even though I'm a social scientist, I'm trained as an Anthropologist, but that leaves me angry and sad. Maybe, that's also what I see my kids go through K-12, they're just in elementary school, but that's seen as extra, not the core of what you need to do. I don't think you can do any social justice work without having that sense of creativity and facility with language or ability to critically aware of the images that are so much a part of our everyday lives. And to tell stories and create worlds in other ways. If you don't have that, all the code in the world is not going to save us. That's just a kind of a sense of unease with the way education is often thought about these days.

[00:04:55 video clip 5]

GARG: How have changes at UW affected your job?

WELLAND: I think I maybe sort of talked about a lot of it. There's a sense of, it's been on the ballot but we still don't have a state income tax, the semi-privatization of public education. You feel the impact of that, who gets to be a student here, what it costs, I mean we used to have a lot, it was mandated by the state legislature, there used to be a certain quota for in-state students. There's pros and cons to the argument of having international students, and students from other states, that is important, but I think the baseline for a lot of that decision making was just money. How to keep the university afloat. What are the "money-making" departments when in fact, well I'm going to to go off on a soapbox now, because the

budget of the university, a lot of it goes to departments that seem more economically viable, but they don't actually generate more money for the university, it's the teaching. I mean we produce the university dollars, but the money doesn't go back into the departments that are doing the motherload of teaching. The question was what are the changes at UW? So it's teaching more students, within GWSS to stay viable, and I think it's important to have big lecture courses and reach a greater student body, I'm not opposed to that, but it's also sort of survival, to prove, look, we're growing, and we're important. There's lots of times where we've been seen as possibly...we're not engineering or med school. We're saving lives but not as apparent of a way as the doctors or the public health people. So yeah, the push that we need to always be teaching bigger classes. I've pushed back, I'm not opposed to having more international students, I think that can really enrich education, but for those students who are international students who are paying more money than anyone else, for many years they didn't have the student services to help them be able to really do well here and get a good education. I work with a lot of Chinese students and they are international students who are writing and studying in their second, or third, or fourth language. It's not the same, so they just didn't have a lot of student support, mental health, language, writing, it feels slowly some one these things are being put in place but they're catching up. So that's impacted how I approach helping students with writing. I think we don't have nearly enoguh students of color, so trying to think about how to continually diversify the faculty and not just recruit but keep students who struggle to find their place here. So that hasn't been a change.

[00:09:10 video clip 5

GARG: My next question is fun. Could you share some joyful or proud moments for the department or yourself, favorite moments or successes?

WELLAND: [thinking] For me, sometimes it's the small things like it really joyful when you hear from a student four or five years later who come back to say hi because your class really made a difference in their lives or they're still thinking about it in someway. Sometimes it's just to come back to say hi, sometimes they want a rec letter, and then it's just really interesting to see where they've gone. That's the small things that's probably most rewarding. In graduate students, we have much longer relationships

with, to see where they started and where they're going and how their research took shape over time, and getting to be a little piece of that, that feels like a privilege. Like I said before, I learn a lot from my students. There's bigger things like conferences that have happened, and those are exciting, but I think it's the smaller moments that are really joyful. And some of my classes that have these final projects that you know, that last week of class in the Global Feminist Art class when the students are all doing their exhibit proposals, it's just nonstop for the two hour sessions, and sometimes they just have really awesome ideas. I've always found and researched artists I've never heard of before and I'm kind of blown away by the ways their thinking about them. I think those joyful moments are the smaller moments rather than big splashy ones.

GARG: I want to be respectful of your time, so I won't ask you any more questions. But I might be following up later just for a shorter follow up interview, but I'm get back to you on that. I just wanted to say, thank you so so much for doing this oral history with me. I'm really happy with my choice of choosing you as a professor, I think specifically with my own identities, as an Asian-American woman, and grappling with intersecting identities. So I just want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart.