Dear Students,

Welcome to the Social Progress, Social Change Freshman Interest Group! Let me congratulate you first on your high school graduation, then your choice of the University of Oregon, and finally, your excellent decision to participate in this FIG. It contains three classes: Women’s and Gender Studies 101, Ethnic Studies 101, and College Connections, a one-credit course with Professor Hames-Garcia and me. In this third class we will help you conceptualize the connections between WGS and ES, and to acclimate to your new life in college.

At this point in your life, a whole lot of new things are happening. You are entering adulthood, you are beginning the privilege of a higher education in which you are in charge of your own studies, and you are paving your own way for your lifelong occupation. Many of you are also living away from your family for the first time, with varying degrees of independence. The unique added experience that you will have through this FIG is that you will become experts on gender and race relations that directly affect all of us but are seldom discussed in mainstream society, especially before college. By being uninformed about gender and race politics, we are not left neutral or apolitical as people tend to think; instead, we absorb myths that favor the majority, through media, humor, language, and other parts of our daily lives. Our FIG will bust all of these for you. You may find it empowering and self-affirming to learn about. You may find yourself reevaluating everything you thought you knew, or reevaluating yourself. And at times, you may find the content uncomfortable. All of this will mean that you are learning and growing and becoming a better world citizen.

Professor Hames-Garcia is an Ethnic Studies Professor who grew up in Milwaukie, Oregon. He was head of the Ethnic Studies department for five years. He has written on literature by African Americans and Latinos in the US and also teaches classes about the criminal justice system in the US. He is knowledgeable about gender studies and queer studies as well, so he is very well suited for our FIG. Professor Hames-Garcia enjoys running and reading science fiction. He loves watching movies of all kinds. He has an evil cat that he doesn’t really like to talk about. My name is Rina Sundahl, and I will be your FIG Assistant (FA). I am a third-year Family and Human Services major. My occupation is running around campus with my hair on fire doing various feminist and multicultural activities. I mostly think of my life in terms of my family, delicious food, and social justice. In that order. Well, ok, food and social justice might be tied. That’s why after I graduate I plan to go back to my native country to spend quality time with my relatives, eat good food, and work a human service job.
Trust Professor Hames-Garcia and me to help you understand race and gender in your life. We will have exciting activities for this purpose! For example, you will have a chance to visit sites in Eugene that have historical significance of race and gender struggles. Not only will you investigate specific power struggles this way, but you will also get to learn the public transportation in your new home! We will also do discussions in class based on activities such as Gender Gumby and Ethnic Gumby, which reveal the infinite ways in which people's gender and ethnicity can be unique. Other activities will include Signs of Identity, which will allow us to explore the implications of our own identities. We will have great fun together!

Our first meeting will be during the Week of Welcome on **Friday, September 21st at 11am in Columbia 150**. Please be sure to be punctual, as we will be changing locations soon after gathering. Bring your Student Handbook to school with you, too, because it will come in very handy. We will also be attending University Convocation as a group on **Sunday, September 23rd**, to hear Dr. Richard Lariviere, the UO President, give his annual speech.

**Before we meet you, we would like you to have read this play** that won a Pulitzer Prize for drama in 2011 and has been nominated for a Tony award:

_Clybourne Park_ by Bruce Norris

You can find it at your local library or if not, [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) sells it for $10.88 and the Kindle edition is $9.99. This play is about gentrification, which you will be learning about in Ethnic Studies 101.

Please be sure to send us your email addresses as well! Say hi, tell us about yourself and why you chose this FIG! It’ll make us super happy.

We look forward to seeing you!

Sincerely

Rina Sundahl and Professor Hames-Garcia

Professor Hames-Garcia’s email is **mhamesg@uoregon.edu**

Rina’s email is **rms@uoregon.edu**