

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

Newsletter **Fall 2020**

Edited by Caroline Daniels, MALS GA



Dr. Marie Tedesco Retires



Dr. Marie Tedesco, longtime director of the MALS program, retired in August after 35 years as a faculty member at ETSU.

I had the opportunity to interview her recently about her time at ETSU and her plans for the future. She and I chatted for about an hour, and she had so much to say about her time in MALS and her previous work in the Archives of Appalachia. Here's a snippet of our full interview.

Dr. Tedesco: I moved up here in 1985 from Atlanta, where I'd gone to graduate school at Georgia State University. I got a Masters and a Doctorate in History - US History and Women's history - and then taught for 5 years, first at Texas Tech in Lubbock and then at North Dakota State in Fargo, North Dakota, which I very much liked even though it was very cold. And then I was unemployed. So [I] moved back to Atlanta and took some courses in archives and got some experience working in the National Archives branch in Atlanta, and that really introduced me to archives and to archival work. So the history degree plus the experience in archives enabled me to get a position at ETSU in the Archives of Appalachia. Not only did I learn so much there about archiving and being a professional archivist, but I learned a lot about the history of [the] region. It was a really good experience, I wouldn't trade it for anything. So then I came here [the MALS program] and stayed until now. I'm mostly retired, I'm still working with a few students, mostly archives students, so that's sort of the thumbnail I guess. That's a lot of years to put into a few minutes.

Caroline: Do you have any favorite things you really enjoy doing?

T: Aside from taking care of my cats, I like to read in different fields and one of my goals in retirement is to get back to two research projects in working class history that I've just

procrastinated on. I do want to do some volunteer work at Second Harvest. I'll continue running. All my races have been cancelled this year. I've run some marathons, and a couple of ultras. Running becomes part of your identity and it's an important part of my identity. So those are the things I pretty much do. There is life outside of the university, although in terms of identity, I've been in academe for my whole professional career. So the most difficult part of retiring is that you're losing part of your identity.

C: Are you researching anything in particular at the moment?

T: When I was in the archives, one of my colleagues there suggested that I look into the factories. At that time the factories were still going. There were two factories in Elizabethton that made rayon, and for a long, long time these factories were the main source of income and employment in Elizabethton, Carter County, even nearby Roan Mountain. There were some significant strikes in 1929, so I researched a bit and wrote on that, and my intent was to complete a book, and that's what I procrastinated on. I've got eight chapters written, needs to be revised, but I want to finish that. I have another project I started on about cotton textile mills, the one on the Dam River up in southwest Virginia.

C: What books are you reading right now?

T: Right now I'm reading a book by a historian named Anne Applebaum. She's written a book called *The Twilight of Democracy* focusing on the appeal of authoritarians in Europe and in the US, and England. I'm also reading a book on the Neanderthals. That's been one of my interests since graduate school, human evolution. And other things on my list: one book called *Caste*, on race in the US. Another called *Tacit Racism*. One book called *Spirit Run*.

Courses of Interest for Spring 2020

MALS 5000 - Foundations of Liberal Studies
MALS 5100 - Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies
MALS 5300 - Gender, Diversity, & Social Justice
MALS 5400 - Seminar in Interdisciplinary Research

SOCI 5110 Contemporary Social Theory
SOCI 5444 Data Analysis
SOCI 5830 Program Evaluation
SOCI 5640 Survey Research Design
SOCI 5500 Topical Seminar: Work & Occupations

APST 5957 Special Topics: Health and Environment in Appalachia



Recent Student Research

During fall 2019, MALS students in Dr. LeRoy-Frazier's Research Methods course presented a symposium on stigma at the Women on Wednesdays series, which is sponsored by the ETSU Women's Studies Program. The participants were (back row) Lia Bevins, Kolade Olaiya, (front row) Fisayo Ogundoro, Dr. LeRoy-Frazier, and Tobi Oloyede. Not pictured: Thomas Townsend. Here is a link to the video recording: <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/litlang/wsp/wow.php>.

Recent graduate profiles

Esosa Frances Mohammed

I graduated in December 2018 with a concentration in gender and diversity. As an international student, it took me some time to get used to the style of teaching and writing. I was lucky to have two amazing professors – Dr. Marie Tedesco & Dr. Jill LeRoy-Frazier – who have been extremely supportive. I developed an interest in studying resiliency in marginalized groups and my thesis sought to investigate how developing resilience serves as a means not only to empower individuals and groups, but also to help them adapt and draw strength to cope.



Two years after graduating from ETSU, I am back again, pursuing a masters degree in social work. My interest in social work can be summarized by Earl Nightingale when he says, “we are at our very best and we are happiest when we are fully engaged in work we enjoy on the journey toward the goal we have established for ourselves.”

My goal within the field of social work is to acquire enough formal education and training that will enable me to provide much-needed support to vulnerable individuals and families, and enhance their psychosocial conditions. Also, personal experience has shown that with the right support and skill set, individuals and groups can learn ways to improve their lives and cope effectively.

Some advice I have for new or prospective ETSU students is to find a balance between your academic and social life. Study hard because it pays, but also find time to do YOU. My favorite thing to do is hit the submit button on a paper that I have worked on for more than two days! I enjoy trolling tasty for spicy food recipes and then trying to recreate them and I enjoy taking pictures because I believe capturing every moment gives me a chance to go back and relive those exciting, joyful, or even sad moments of my life. I am currently reading a book by Rakesh Satyal titled *No One Can Pronounce my Name* and also “100 need to know tips for moms of tween and teens” by Letitia Suk.



Oluwafisayo Ogundoro

I graduated from the MALS master's program in Gender and Diversity Studies in December 2019. What I love most about the MALS programs was the quality of the professors. My professors were kind and empathetic. They always wanted to see their students grow. Dr. Tedesco and Dr. LeRoy-Frazier are great teachers who carefully took the time out to look at my papers. Their effort helped me to hone my writing ability. Likewise, the writing consultant was a great resource.

Another opportunity that the program gave me was teaching me about the value of humanity and making an impact. This spurred my desire to learn more about social development.

I am currently in the second master's program in Sociology where I intend to develop my quantitative and qualitative skills. Afterward, I intend to obtain a doctoral degree in sociology.

My advice to incoming MALS students is that you have good faculty members that would help you to advance your career goals.

Tobi Oloyede

It is an honor to be featured on this platform. I am an international student from Nigeria. I started my journey with The MALS program in 2017, but I deferred my admission until 2018. All the while I was in Nigeria, the MALS director, Dr. Marie Tedesco kept in touch with me via emails. From then, I knew there was something not only about ETSU, but specifically about the MALS program. I am not a routine person, and so I had always loved to do things quite differently. When I heard about the MALS program and the flexibility it gives to create

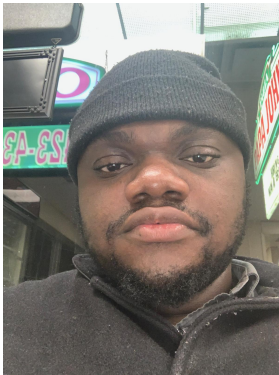
your personal program of study (interdisciplinary) even within a concentration, I knew that was it. My concentration was Gender and Diversity (Women's and Gender Issues) and I graduated in August 2020.

Finding myself in an entirely different culture and socializing was challenging, but the most rewarding thing is the exposure I have acquired and the passion I have come to realize. One favorite thing I like about ETSU is the welcoming nature of both students and faculty, and I love the serenity of East Tennessee. My favorite event was when my colleagues and I presented on "Stigma: An Interpretive Lens" at Women on Wednesdays in October 2019.



Advice I would go back and give to myself is to never underestimate anything, be prepared to give whatever you do, your best. Advice for students is to be open-minded and be prepared for the journey ahead.

I'm currently reading *The Essential Rumi* by Coleman Barks. I love to sing, write and drive. Once cause that's important to me is serving the underserved community, particularly women and children. I love listening to music, it is spiritual.



Kolade Olaiya

My favorite thing about ETSU is Dr. Tedesco. It helped to have a professor who treated me like her child. Despite all my shortcomings, she did not give up on me. My concentration was regional and community studies. I was interested in regional and community studies because I minored in poverty studies in my undergrad at Furman University.

My father directed me to MALS. Towards the end of my senior year in college, my father told me about the MALS program at ETSU. He researched masters programs for me because I had no direction at the time. Then, my interactions with Dr. Tedesco when I was applying built my interest in MALS. The idea of doing a poetry project interested me.

My project was very challenging and rewarding. I did not complete the project in May because of my inability to balance school and work. However, I completed the project in the summer of 2020. The revision of the support paper and story was challenging because I had to make sure the grammar was good. I also had a surgery three weeks before my defense. The work was rewarding though because the story from my project is going to be published in the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs magazine *Confluence*, coming out this fall, and 5 out of the 6 poems were published in *Rigorous* magazine, an online journal.

We just got word that Kolade won the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs' creative writing prize for his short story, "Facing Boarding School." Congratulations!

Georgia Dover

I began my journey with the MALS program in the fall of 2000 and ended it in the fall of 2019. Nineteen years. Now, you may be wondering, is that possible? Believe me, it most definitely is, life tends to happen. I began the program at a time when I was raising my two daughters and as a single parent it was extremely hard...I found that I was not able to give adequate attention to anything and I knew that my priorities lay with my family, so I dropped out of the program. My intention was that I would go back the next year. That next year turned into many, many, many years later.



In 2017, I once again applied and was accepted into the MALS program. Before re-entering the program, I worked as a Family Service Worker for the

Tennessee Department of Children Services and as an In-Home Counselor for Camelot Care Centers, Inc. It was in those capacities that I was exposed to the effects of drug and alcohol addiction on families and especially the children of these addicts. I worked with families where the addictions had landed both mother and father in jail, in the grave, or both. I worked with grandparents who had to take over the raising of their grandchildren. When there were no family members, the children were placed in foster care and I saw the struggles of the children being placed with strangers and watched the feelings of not belonging as they manifested in negative and risky behaviors. I knew that the MALS program would give me the opportunity to explore different disciplines such as social work, counseling, criminal justice, and many others that would expose me to options to provide a range of services to the parents and the children in the hopes of bringing the families back together in an overall healthy environment. My concentration in Gender and Diversity allowed for that.

For my culminating project, I conducted a study with the local jails to see what type of programs are offered to the inmates to help them with basic needs, alcohol and drug issues, education, employment and financial assistance. I found that these services barely existed. I spoke with the jail personnel to see if they were willing to disseminate a list of services that was available within the community and/or if they were willing to form partnerships with the community to give access to these services. I don't believe that I would have had the confidence to speak with the jail personnel or gotten the information that I was able to obtain if I had not been in the MALS program and exposed to other disciplines within the University.

I want to acknowledge the cohort that I graduated with; we became a cohesive group that encouraged each other and that I never experienced before, in my entire educational journey. I believe that came from having small group classes; we were able to get to know each other and we were not only classmates, we became friends. I also want to acknowledge two ladies who mean the world to me and who got me through this program. Dr. Marie Tedesco and Dr. Jill LeRoy-Frazier helped me to see my strengths and weaknesses when it came to my education and helped me to rise up to a better understanding of not only the culture of East Tennessee but the world. In other words, because of the exposure that I received while in the MALS program, I see now with different eyes.

New Student Profiles



Cally Chisolm

I am so excited to be one of the new MALS students this year. My concentration is in Gender and Diversity studies. I am also a graduate assistant for the Diversity Educators program, and I am so grateful for that opportunity as well. Before coming to Johnson City, I lived in Joplin, Missouri for two years to attend Missouri Southern State University, where I got my B.S degree in Mass Communications with a minor in Speech Communications. I also received my Associate's degree from Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield, Missouri.

My hope is to combine my background in communications with my interdisciplinary studies in the MALS program to learn more about sexual health and gender communications (specifically within religious communities and organizations). I am also very passionate about LGBTQ+ rights and am always learning how to be a better ally and accomplice for the cause. In my free time, I enjoy reading historical and contemporary fiction novels. I'm currently reading "A Little Life" by Hanya Yanagihara. I also spend a bit of time with my favorite shows – Parks and Recreation, New Girl, and Seinfeld.

I am really enjoying the MALS program so far, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to continue my education at ETSU. Johnson City is a beautiful place to live and I look forward to exploring it more once the pandemic is over.

Ciarán Drinnon

I graduated from ETSU with a BA in Political Science and Women's Studies in 2019, and I entered the MPA program here that fall. I decided to switch into the MALS program because I wanted to pursue a more academically-oriented career path. I plan to go back for a Ph.D. after this.



Rhetoric has always really interested me, and I've taken interest recently in how we (in the core Anglosphere) talk about historical figures and what the evolution of that says about the power dynamics present in our society. My degree doesn't have a concentration, but my research interest, specifically, is the rhetoric of "heroism" in accounts of Robert Falcon Scott and Sir Ernest Shackleton's early-20th century Antarctic expeditions in relation to our evolving perceptions of masculinity and leadership. As far as hobbies go, I'm the captain of ETSU's quiz bowl team, and I do botanical, entomological, and ornithological illustration.

I am currently reading Scott's journals from the *Terra Nova* expedition. It's hard to say what my favorite book is. My favorite *serious* book is *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell. My favorite *fun* book is either *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams or *Good Omens* by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett. I don't watch many movies, so I'm not sure what my favorite is. I quite like *Jaws* and *The Princess Bride*.

Things I can't live without: Music, I suppose (my favorite band is The National), video games (been playing a lot of *Among Us* and *Animal Crossing* lately), my family, and my dog.



Caroline Daniels

Since graduating with a B.A in English/Theatre, I've worked for various theaters in Charlottesville, VA and Asheville, NC, as a stage manager and house manager, as well as designing props, sets, costumes, and sound. I produced a 25-minute circus show for the Asheville Fringe Arts Festival in January 2020, and have worked at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Scotland for two summers through Live Arts Theater. I love traveling when I get the chance, and Scotland has been my favorite place to explore.

As part of the MALS program, I'm looking forward to being able to study theater production and design more deeply with a focus on social justice in the performing arts. I love being a part of the LGBTQ+ community and the theater community, I have two mischievous cats that I adopted within the last few years, and I practice and teach aerial arts. I'm always looking for new places to hike, so I'd love recommendations for places to go in the Tri-Cities area! I'm currently reading *What is Not Yours is Not Yours* by Helen Oyeyemi, and a bunch of LGBTQ themed Harry Potter fan fics (really good for decompressing during 2020). I'm currently watching *She-Ra* and *Disenchantment*, and getting caught up on *Bob's Burgers*.

Where are they now? Alumni profiles!



Veronica Limeberry

Graduated in 2014. Thesis: Eating in Opposition: Strategies of Resistance Through Food in the Lives of Rural Andean and Appalachian Mountain Women

Veronica Limeberry, a doctoral candidate at American University School of International Service, holds an MALS in Gender and Diversity Studies and an MPA in Economic Planning and Development from East Tennessee State University. She is the founder of an Appalachian non-profit

that provides education and outreach to promote food justice and regional seed biodiversity conservation. She has advocated at the UN for rural women's roles in hunger eradication and completed a Fulbright Research Fellowship in India, working with women and Indigenous farmers across the country. She is a current Ford Dissertation Fellow for 2020-2021. Her research interests are understanding the intersections of Indigenous territorial rights, food and agricultural sovereignty, state and tribal sovereignty, and agrarian policy in the Americas. She also works on issues of environmental peacebuilding, especially related to transitions from illicit crop production to agrobiodiversity protections for conflict resolution.

Mandi Aubrey

Graduated in 2011. Thesis: The Gastonia Novels and Ecofeminism: Rereading the Works of Fielding Burke, Grace Lumpkin, and Myra Page.



I am teaching CDST Senior Capstone and Research Invention this fall.

I am currently working on logging more miles for a triathlon. I spent Covid remodeling my house, gardening, growing as many sweet potatoes as I can, and spending time with my family. My daughter graduated high school this year, so I am excited about the next phase of my life!

Mandi is also the current MALS Writing Consultant. Thank you, Mandi!!!



Casey Lawhon Wagner

Graduated in 2016. Thesis: Restoring Relationship: How the Methodologies of Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement in Post-Colonial Kenya Achieve Environmental Healing and Women's Empowerment (Chesa Gonzalez on left, Casey Wagner on right)

I graduated from the MALS program in 2016, with an emphasis in Gender and Diversity. I live in Elizabethton with my wife and three children. I love reading, gardening, porchsitting, playing/coaching soccer, and momming. My greatest joy is teaching my three middle school-aged children about social justice issues and offering them lenses through which to view the world.

After completing the MALS program, I taught adjunct in the Women's Studies program for 5 semesters. I love being on campus at ETSU and connecting with students in the classroom. I wrote my thesis on the work and legacy of Wangari Maathai, who created the Green Belt Movement in order to alter environmental degradation while providing jobs for women. Her life inspired me to start a landscaping business focusing on training women in a field which is typically staffed by men. Greenher Landscaping was created in 2017 and specializes in eco-friendly landscape design and installation, cleanup jobs, small/medium tree removal, monthly maintenance, and sustainable living options (including compost bins, rain barrels, pollinator gardens, etc).

My degree from ETSU enabled me to not only meet many amazing people, but also provided the inspiration to create a business which is geared towards empowering other women and being a responsible citizen on the planet.

Are you an alum and want to have your profile included in our next newsletter?

Click any option below so we can email you and create a profile for our next newsletter!

Yes

Select

Absolutely

Select

It's my wildest dream

Select

AGLSP Survey

(Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs)

This survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. According to the AGLSP, this information will help them understand students' experiences in Graduate Liberal Studies programs. Click the link below to take the survey! It's open to all alum and current students.

https://gscs.formstack.com/forms/aglsp_student_alumni_survey

Job Opportunities

Kimberly Barber, a current MALS student, is the new Executive Director of The Crisis Center, Inc., of Bristol, Virginia. They are recruiting candidates to fill the full-time position of Volunteer Initiatives Manager/ Community Educator. Specifically, the community education activities of the role will be focused in rural TN. See listing below for details and application:

[https://www.indeed.com/m/viewjob?](https://www.indeed.com/m/viewjob?jk=3e29a558198e9348&from=serp&prevUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.indeed.com%2Fm%2Fjobs%3Fq%3DVolunteer%2Binitiatives%2Bmanager%26l%3D%26jt%3D%26radius%3D)

[jk=3e29a558198e9348&from=serp&prevUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.indeed.com%2Fm%2Fjobs%3Fq%3DVolunteer%2Binitiatives%2Bmanager%26l%3D%26jt%3D%26radius%3D](https://www.indeed.com/m/viewjob?jk=3e29a558198e9348&from=serp&prevUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.indeed.com%2Fm%2Fjobs%3Fq%3DVolunteer%2Binitiatives%2Bmanager%26l%3D%26jt%3D%26radius%3D)

There are also two part-time positions open at The Crisis Center, Inc. Click below for more information:

<https://www.indeed.com/jobs?l=Bristol%2C%20VA&vjk=e16fef8b16244d2a>

<https://www.indeed.com/jobs?l=Bristol%2C%20VA&vjk=7715b47ab980103e>

Contact Info

Dr. Jill LeRoy-Frazier, MALS Graduate Coordinator; Professor and Chair, Division of Cross-Disciplinary Studies; leroyfra@etsu.edu, (423) 439-5678

Dr. Julie-Fox-Horton, Archival Studies Graduate Certificate Coordinator; Assistant Professor, Cross-Disciplinary Studies; foxhorton@etsu.edu; (423) 439-4223

