



LUMS

Saida Waheed  
Gender Initiative



**SAIDA WAHEED GENDER INITIATIVE**  
SPRING NEWSLETTER  
2020



The Saida Waheed Gender Initiative (SWG I) was able to squeeze in two events before the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown hit Pakistan. We were able to hold a seminar and film screening and are excited to share details with you. SWGI Is also moving towards starting a gender and sexuality studies minor for our undergraduate programmes – read on for more details.

## SEMINAR

We hosted a talk by Dr. Karrar Hussain on 4 February, 2020. Dr. Hussain is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the Lahore University of Management Sciences. His broad interest is development economics, with a focus on behavioural economics. In his talk titled ‘Mobilizing Women Voters: Experimental Evidence from Pakistan’, he discussed how reducing the gender gap in politics remains a challenge in much of the developing world. He shared some of the main findings of his research that indicated that one of the major reasons for the gender gap in voting is the lack of mobilisation of women by political leaders. Dr. Hussain and his research team evaluated a randomized door-to-door campaign by an incumbent politician in Pakistan, a campaign that was conducted by women and focused on women. The women were informed of the public service delivery work undertaken by the incumbent on policy preferences that were highly ranked by women. The randomisation took place at the polling station level, allowing them to use official electoral data on gender-disaggregated turnout and vote shares.



# FILM SCREENING

## 'Abu' – A film by Arshad Khan

Arshad Khan is a Montreal-based filmmaker and film festival programmer. Khan's internationally acclaimed, award-winning autobiographical documentary *Abu* (2017) has played at film festivals around the world and won the INSPIRIT Foundation grant for 2018/19. *Abu* documents his rocky relationship with his father after Khan came out as a gay man. It also chronicles the wider story of young gay people fighting homophobia and invisibility within South Asian and Muslim cultures.



The film screening, which was held on February 25, 2020, drew a wide and diverse audience from across the city and was followed by a lively discussion with Arshad Khan about his inspiration, the process of making the film, and his experiences screening it around the world. Members of the audience shared their own emotional responses to the film and personal stories, and there was a wider discussion about marginalised sexualities in South Asian cultures including in Pakistan and in the diaspora.



## INTRODUCING A MINOR IN GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

We are very excited to announce that the Saida Waheed Gender Initiative along with the Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani School of Humanities and Social Sciences (MGSHSS) is moving forward to introduce a new minor in gender and sexuality studies (GSS) housed in the MGSHSS but will be open to students across the university. The minor will include a combination of foundational courses and electives with an interdisciplinary academic program focusing on gender and sexuality. The program's core curriculum will build upon feminist scholarship, incorporating interdisciplinary agendas, intellectual debates, changing methodological practices, and major scholarly shifts that inform the field. As a program committed to critical thinking and social analysis, the GSS minor will introduce students not only to the complex histories, cultures, political activities, and expressions of gender and sexuality, but will also raise questions about larger social and institutional formations.



Informed by the insights of critical race feminism, feminist critiques of conventional domains of knowledge, and queer inquiries challenging traditional understandings and assumptions about sexuality, this minor is designed to move students beyond simple binary descriptions and contemporary, popularised accounts of gender. Instead, gender is analysed in the full complexity of its construction over time and using a variety of disciplinary lenses.



Given the cores of the minor as well as the cross-disciplinary nature of the electives that will be offered, the LUMS Gender and Sexuality Studies Minor will equip students with the tools to bring critical feminist perspectives across a number of disciplines. This skill-set will be invaluable with the increased focus on the inclusivity of growth, gender inequalities, and a renewed emphasis on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, students enrolled in this minor will have the added advantage of tapping into the vibrant research emphasis on gender that LUMS has built in the last few years. This in turn will add tremendous value to their portfolio as they enter the job-market.



We are already planning an exciting line-up for the Fall semester and are keeping our fingers crossed that the situation improves so that we can safely hold in-person events. We will keep you posted during the coming months as the situation becomes clearer. In the meantime, we wish you and your loved ones well during these trying times and hope you are taking all necessary precautions to get through this in the best possible health and spirits!



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