Professor Advocates for Social Justice In and Out of Classroom
by Lucy Constantino

Social movements in the United States are interwoven throughout our nation’s history, shaping our ideals, culture and beliefs. Lindsey Feitz, assistant teaching professor in the gender and women’s studies program, seeks to address the effects of social change not only on segments of society but on society as a whole.

As a PhD student of American Studies at the University of Kansas, Feitz studied the intersection of identity and American culture. Her dissertation on the globalization of Avon Cosmetics, tracing Avon’s evolution from a U.S. company to a transnational powerhouse, propelled her work in the areas of gender, class, race and sexuality.

“When I began my research, I thought I would be writing a cultural history of the gendered messages and prescriptive beauty advice Avon ladies delivered around the world,” she said. “I soon realized that Avon’s archival collection provides the opportunity to examine issues that are larger, and in many ways more significant, than its global expansion.”

Feitz’s research on Avon cosmetics stems in part from her interest in consumer culture, and how products are marketed towards an intended audience, thus influencing perceptions about the self and society as a whole.

“I'm interested in consumer culture, especially beauty culture, because of its ubiquity and influence,” Feitz said. “Women, and men, are constantly bombarded with messages about what it means to ‘be’ a woman or a man. Consuming in and of itself isn't inherently wrong, but I do think it's important to research and study the consequences of living in a society where beauty, self-worth and prescriptive notions of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ surround us in advertising, so much so that most of us fail to notice it.”

Feitz studies issues of social inequality from a variety of perspectives and academic disciplines. Her research includes looking at the ways in which gender, sexuality and race shape U.S. militarism and warfare.

“As an interdisciplinary feminist scholar, looking at the intersections of all these identities has been central to my research and my teaching in GWST,” she said.

Feitz is currently working on a book project that will provide an overview of feminism and women's studies for a general audience.

“So many students who take my Intro to Gender and Women’s Studies class say they wish there was a ‘go to’ book they could share with their fathers, grandparents, boyfriends and other people who haven’t taken or been exposed to some of the basic tenets of feminism and women’s history,” Feitz said. “I’m hoping this project might help fill this void.”
Feitz joined DU in 2011 as a postdoctoral lecturer. Since then she has made a noticeable contribution to advancing inclusive excellence on campus.

“I think inclusive excellence requires a commitment to understanding how difference, power and privilege operate in our campuses, classrooms and communities,” she said. “It's absolutely key to gender and women's studies!”

Earlier this year, Feitz was recognized for her efforts with the Provost’s Faculty Advocate Champion of Change Award.

“There seems to be a major cultural shift on our campus and I'd like to keep that momentum growing by making sure GWST and other departments continue to offer spaces where students can learn and study issues pertaining to social inequality,” she said.

Learning about social justice, or injustice, may seem as though it doesn’t pertain to everyone, but Feitz says to persevere because you just might learn something about others, and yourself.

“We’re living in a world that’s changing quickly and where issues of social inequality and justice, including race, gender, sexual orientation and class, are taking center stage,” she said. “Gender and women’s studies classes provide students the opportunity to not only study the history and context of these issues, but also gives them the tools they need to combat them outside the classroom.”