



# The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Gesa E. Kirsch Graduate Student Symposium

Center for Writing Studies

Keynote:

## Mary P. Sheridan

Professor of English, University of Louisville

12:45pm-1:30pm Friday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017

104 Illini Union

### Feminist Maker Culture: A Work in Progress

Maker culture is trendy. Silicon Valley hypes the promise of maker mindsets in business. The White House hosts a Maker Faire to foster maker culture throughout our citizenry. The Department of Education awards lucrative grants to encourage maker practices in schools. Despite the images of diverse and inclusive young makers at high profile photo opportunities, the reality is that maker culture is predominantly a white, male club. And, despite the fusion of activist and entrepreneurial discourses to be creative problem solvers, maker culture practices often support neoliberal policies of eliminating of social safety nets in the workplace. My talk examines the deep rifts between the pervasive hype and actual practices associated with Maker Culture, noting problematic trends that reinscribe traditional power imbalances. The talk will end with a very preliminary discussion of what a feminist alternative may look like by exploring what I'm learning from the Digital Media Academy, a free 2 week camp for 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls from low performing Louisville Public Schools.