

Title: "Raising the Stakes: Giving Students Tools to Face the Challenges of the 21st Century"

Speaker: Miriam Liss, University of Mary Washington

### Abstract

Students today are faced with enormous challenges. Our current social and political realities require them to think about and solve complex problems (e.g., climate change, threats to democracy, racial inequities, bodily autonomy, gun violence, privacy). There are real democratic challenges facing 21st-century American and global citizens, and the best solutions must come from collaborative and interdisciplinary work. Yet, the pandemic, combined with increased political polarization, has resulted in social isolation and a weakened sense of community; thus, many students lack the tools to face these problems. In this session, you will learn about tools you can incorporate into your courses to help your students prepare to face these challenges more effectively. The tools stem from a feminist perspective and connect to psychological science as well as knowledge and skills from other disciplines. They are also a core part of the *Psychology of Women and Gender* textbook that I co-authored. One tool I'll highlight is a framework to help students understand intersectionality. Understanding intersectionality can help students build empathy and understanding of the life experiences and perspectives of others. It can also allow students to learn to become allies with those who hold different identity characteristics, helping students find common cause and purpose over difference. I will also share tools and practices that can help students understand how to engage in conflict in ways that build community instead of contributing to further polarization. I will share examples of how working with topics where there is not a clear "correct" answer and experts disagree can help students learn to listen and understand rather than trying to "win" or get everyone to agree. Finally, I will discuss how both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are necessary to be able to engage with challenging material in the classroom as well as the challenges students will continue to face throughout their lives. I'll provide some examples of how to increase student awareness of these skills as well as help them develop them.

### Bio

**Miriam Liss** (*she/her*), is professor and chair of the department psychological science at the University of Mary Washington (UMW), and is a member of UMW's interdisciplinary women, gender, and sexuality studies program. She is a clinical psychologist and received her Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut in 2001. She has been recognized for her teaching and research, receiving the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) Outstanding Faculty Award in 2015. She has published on an extensive range of topics including feminist identity, the objectification and sexualization of women, division of labor, minority stress theory, motherhood, social media, mindfulness, sensory processing, self-injury, and autism. Many of her publications are in collaboration with undergraduate student co-authors. She is co-author of *Psychology of Women and Gender* published by Norton and *Balancing the Big Stuff: Finding Happiness in Work, Family, and Life* published by Rowman and Littlefield.