

## **Dr. Valerie Lynn Schrader**

**Professor Tenure-Line**

**Communication Arts and Sciences**

**Title of your research project.**

Empowerment is Beautiful: Feminism and Post-Feminism in Beautiful: The Carole King Musical

**Description of research. Please provide a few sentences that explain the question and the methods employed in this research project.**

This rhetorical analysis examines the production script of Beautiful: The Carole King Musical through the lenses of second-wave feminism, third-wave feminism, and post-feminism. Based on the life of American singer/songwriter Carole King, Beautiful focuses on the triumphs and tribulations of King's career as a songwriter in the 1960s New York Brill Building, as well as King's personal life, including her relationship with her spouse/lyricist Gerry Goffin. Through this analysis, we explore how Beautiful's characters Carole King and Cynthia Weil embody elements of second and third-wave feminism, and suggest that Beautiful: The Carole King Musical conveys an overall empowerment message that is written for a post-feminist audience, given King's and Weil's empowerment through individual choices rather than through feminist activism. We conclude that this utopian post-feminist message may be problematic for a twenty-first-century audience in that it fails to acknowledge women's current career struggles.

**Did this project include Penn State students as researchers?**

Yes

**If yes to the above question, please state where it was published.**

This article was co-authored with former Penn State student Julia Schuller. It was published in Studies in Musical Theatre.

**What problem do you address with your research?**

How feminism and post-feminism are represented in Beautiful: The Carole King Musical.