

**College of Letters and Science  
Annual Survey and Report of Departmental Assessment Practices**

Please return to: Associate Dean Herbert Wang by May 25, 2001  
c/o Associate Academic Planner Elaine Klein  
307 E. South Hall, 1055 Bascom Mall, Madison WI 53706

Department Name: Women's Studies Program

**I. Assessment Plan**

- Q1. The department has an assessment plan for the undergraduate program. Y N
- Q2. The department has an assessment plan for the graduate program. Y N NA
- Q3. The assessment plan/s is/are linked to the departmental mission. Y N

*Please identify the types of tools in the assessment plan(s); if possible, indicate the academic years in which they have been or are intended to be employed:*

| Tools used to directly assess student learning: | Undergraduate Program | Graduate Program |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|
| National Exams                                  |                       |                  |
| Local Exams                                     |                       |                  |
| Capstone Courses                                | ✓                     |                  |
| Embedded Testing                                | ✓                     |                  |
| Student Portfolios                              | ✓                     |                  |
| Theses, Dissertations                           |                       |                  |
| Performance Evaluations                         |                       |                  |
| Pre & Post Testing                              |                       |                  |
| Tools used to directly assess student learning: | Undergraduate Program | Graduate Program |
| Student Surveys                                 |                       |                  |
| Exit Interviews Survey                          | ✓                     |                  |
| Alumni Survey (informal)                        | ✓                     |                  |
| Employer Surveys                                |                       |                  |
| External Reviews                                |                       |                  |

Q5. Of the tools used to directly assess student learning, which provide the most useful information?  
The results of the evaluated work that professors assign in their courses; student portfolios

Q6. Of the tools used to directly assess student learning, which provide the least useful information?

Q7. Of the tools used to indirectly assess student learning, which provide the most useful information?

Exit survey conducted in capstone seminar

Q8. Of the tools used to indirectly assess student learning, which provide the least useful information?

Q9. Please elaborate on any of the responses given above (please attach additional pages as needed).

## II. Assessment Processes

Q10. Responsibility for assessment has been assumed by  an individual  a committee (Associate chair and Curriculum Committee)

*If responsibility is delegated to an individual, this person is:* the chair / associate chair /tenured faculty / untenured faculty / academic staff / short term staff / other: \_\_\_\_\_

*If responsibility is delegated to a committee, this group is:*

Specially constituted to address assessment of student learning Y N

The entire Curriculum Committee Y N

Part of the Executive Committee Y N

Part of the Undergraduate/Graduate Education Committee Y N

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q11. The department has requested funds from the University Assessment Council (UAC) to help the department assess student learning. Y N

*If "yes", did the UAC award the department funds?* Y N

*Were those funds useful?* Y N

---

Q12. The department has sought professional assistance to conduct assessment.

Y N

*If "yes", from whom has the department has sought professional assistance? (For example, the LEAD Center, the Office of Quality Improvement, the UW Survey Center, etc.)*

**Additional Information**

Please attach any assessment reports you may have submitted to the University Assessment Council in compliance with the UAC's funding support requests.

In the interest of streamlining our requests for assessment information, please identify an assessment contact person: Helen Klebesadel, Associate Chair (beginning 8/01)

Do you have any suggestions for workshops or learning opportunities in the area of student outcomes assessment?

Thank you for taking time to complete this report.

***Please return this form to the Associate Dean's Office by May 25, 2001.***

---

***University of Wisconsin - Madison***  
***Women's Studies Program***

110 Ingraham Hall  
1155 Observatory Drive  
Madison, WI 53706-1397

Telephone 608-263-4703  
Fax 608-265-2409  
<http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/wsp>

TO: Associate Dean Herbert Wang  
c/o Associate Academic Planner Elaine Klein, 307 E South Hall  
FROM: Virginia Sapiro, Associate Chair

May 18, 2001

In response to your request for information on our annual assessment of student learning, we have collected portfolios of student papers from courses in our different subareas, administered a survey of graduating seniors in our capstone courses, and I have asked the Undergraduate Advisor for reports on any feedback we have received from alumni. The Curriculum Committee has gone over these materials, especially the senior survey.

The original plan submitted by the Women's Studies Program for student assessment articulated three specific goals for the major: (1) to provide students with a strong knowledge base in Women's Studies, including knowledge of the experiences and accomplishments of women historically, currently, and across cultures; (2) to familiarize students with existing theoretical frameworks for studying and researching women and gender issues; and (3) to help students develop strong skills in critical thinking, including the ability to read critically and independently, to use theoretical concepts and to communicate clearly in writing.

The Curriculum Committee reviewed the materials we received and authorized the following observations on our assessment of student learning among Women's Studies students.

We received 2 papers each from one course in our social science track (WS320, Gender, Poverty, and Livelihoods, Professor Paula Kantor) and one in our biology track (WS531, Women and Health in American History, Professor Judith Leavitt). All of these papers reflected attention to important scholarly writings in Women's Studies, a strong grasp of the important issues, and an ability to engage in critical thinking and analysis.

We have also carefully reviewed the responses to the senior survey, completed during class time in our capstone senior seminar, WS640. Sixteen surveys were returned. For your information, a compendium of the answers, as well as a copy of the original form, is attached.

Our conclusions from reading these answers were as follows:

(1) The list of courses provided by students of their "most useful" and "best overall" course was quite varied, indicating that we are serving a wide range of students. We note the number of

students who responded positively to courses because the courses led them to think or write more clearly or analytically. With respect to whether being a Women's Studies major helped or hindered their other course work in the University, again many of our students thought the Women's Studies training was especially important for being able to think critically and analyze. They seemed to believe the Women's Studies work complemented their other work nicely, and occasionally gave them the instruments they needed to understand other fields better and more critically.

We specifically asked whether the major sufficiently covered cross-cultural, multicultural, and other diversity issues. Although we expect all women's studies courses to cover this material to some degree, and our majors are required to take a course specifically in this area, most of our students think we could do better in providing education that is multi- and cross-cultural.

We also asked about the quality of advising. Nearly all of our majors have gone to see the advisor, and nearly all had a thoroughly positive experience, and felt they got the help and information they needed.

Perhaps the most important question with respect to assessing student learning in relation to our Program goals is the one asking them to tell us what knowledge, skills, or abilities they acquired. A very large number of them specifically named critical thinking and analysis skills as well as the ability to construct an argument. Many also mentioned specific knowledge they gained.

We gave the students an opportunity to mention changes they would like to see in the major, and while a number of students named particular areas in which they would like to see more courses, and there was a strong theme emphasizing the need for more women's studies courses, there seemed to be no general areas in which students sensed deficiencies in the education afforded by a Women's Studies major.

# WOMEN'S STUDIES MAJORS SURVEY

In 1996 the University mandated that all departments and programs should undertake regular reviews of their teaching programs to determine that they are as effective as possible. One aspect of this review is to do a *survey of graduating seniors*. You have a lot of experience in our Program; you can help keep us informed about what we do well, and where we could make improvements. It is very important to the future of the Women's Studies Program that you fill out the survey. Your individual views are confidential and your responses are submitted anonymously. Thanks very much for your participation.

---

## Description of your major and future plans:

1. What semester and year will you graduate?

2. What are your post-graduation plans?

- \*Law school in fall 2001
- \*Get bachelors in nursing and masters in midwifery
- \*travel
- \*grad school eventually; not sure what for
- \*have job at non-profit law firm that advocates for people w dependent children but no health insurance.
- \*?
- \*grad school at UW in social work
- \*work for a year then Ph.D. in English
- \*work w NGO, maybe law school
- \* work a year then grad school
- \*manager at Marshall Fields in Chicago
- \*grad school
- \*move to Chicago; RN in hospital; practice public health in future
- \*law school or social work masters
- \* work, write
- \*MA in public policy maybe; Ph.D. in WS or MBA in business

3. In addition to your Women's Studies major, did you complete another major(s)? Yes No

*If so, please list other major(s):*

- \*medical microbiology and immunology; Spanish
- \*English
- \*social welfare
- \*communication arts
- \*geography, social welfare
- \*nursing (2)
- \*sociology
- \*IES
- \*Public relations and advertising
- \*zoology
- \*behavioral science

4. If you did *not* complete another major, please describe your area of concentration.

- \*Spanish
- \*Russian and business
- \*philosophy
- \*art

5. What do you believe were the benefits and drawbacks of the choice you made for you other major(s) or you area of concentration?

**Your experience of the Women's Studies major and coursework:**

5. Which Women's Studies course did you find most useful and why?

- \*422 Women and Law because it taught me a lot about women's issues in the legal realm.
- \*421 (Media) (1) because I learned how to write in this class. (2) It taught me a lot about the images that surround us in daily life, and how much of an impact it has on us. (3) it was taught in a nondogmatic, open manner by an incredible teacher; she made the class intensely interesting.
- \*101: got me hooked in WS and 103: informed me about my body; this should be a requirement for everyone.
- \*WS441 (Contemp Theory) It was just amazing to read the different ways women have conceptualized gender oppression.
- \*WS660 (Internship): got to apply all of the theory I learned to real life; got skills that made me marketable.
- \*feminist theory made me understand many of the basic and advanced arguments.
- \*I didn't think any were useful. The ones I enjoyed the most were crosslisted w English & one crosslisted with theater.
- \*Hard to say; most of the WS classes I took were useful in one way or another.
- \*WS013 and 531 (Childbirth). Learned a lot about health and history; very applicable. Lesbian culture: finally a nice focus on lesbians; Gender and the Media (421)
- \*WS640 (Capstone seminar); (1) it summed up everything I was working towards with my WS degree; (2) it provided space to think and speak for myself, to engage critically was the whole lesson plan so by talking we were never "diverging"
- \*Women's history courses were very interesting. Also pop culture was great. Theory was difficult; require it late in major. I took it too soon and was lost.
- \*WS320 (Political Economy of Gender in Developing Countries). The instructor pushed me to think and write clearly/concisely more than any other class.
- \*For most of my classes I find myself wondering for some time what I actually learned. The best and most useful for me was probably 320 (Political Economy of Gender in Developing Countries)

6. Which course would you consider the best Women's Studies course overall and why?

- \*WS103 (1) because it explained everything a woman should know about her body but doesn't. It was a perfect starter class to the WS major. (2) it drew me into WS
- \*Women in Medieval History; instructor was an excellent teacher and it gave me a view of history that I never received before; the material was captivating.
- \*Hard to say; they all had different concentrations. All of these areas (and more) should be covered to help us learn more.
- \*WS421 (Media) and 441 (Contemp THeory): because of the course reading and the professor. I think any of the courses can be amazing. A lot of it depends on the professor.
- \*102 or 420 (Women in Cross-societal) The same instructor taught both and is excellent. The classes are fascinating. I liked her grading style.
- \*WS449: (1) I've never had a teacher who was so enthusiastic and knowledgeable. I didn't know they could teach classes like this on campus. (2) Instructor did a great job explaining various theories to sexuality and alternative perspectives to sex work and pornography.
- \*English 574 Feminist Theory and Women Modernists. It was well taught and interesting.
- \*WS102 maybe, just because it really pulled me in. Well taught. (Named a professor who taught 101, not 102). WS Anthro: instructor is a great teacher.
- \*WS531 (Childbirth) very discussion oriented, relevant to self; learned about other, accomplishment on research project.
- \*WS103 was wonderful. 354 and 531 were great and very informative. 330 (320?) Pop culture was really fun – to analyze different representations of women.
- \*WS330: Latinas self-identity. It truly educated on current race relations, the history behind them and forces you to confront your own racialized experience.
- \*I transferred here so I haven't really taken enough here to answer this.

7. Did anything about the Women's Studies major make it difficult for you to graduate on schedule (getting closed out of courses; required course not offered often enough)? Please be specific.

\*Nothing stood in my way of graduating, but it was frustrating that I often could not get into the classes I wanted to because they simply weren't offered enough.

\*(4) Nope

\*Definitely having class not being offered enough

\*I think that being forced to take intro courses 101/102 after one has already had the theory and other upper-level courses is a waste of time.

\*I wish that a larger selection would have been offered. Many courses that I wanted to take weren't offered.

\*No, not really. However, gods and goddesses has not been a positive experience.

\*I'm graduating on schedule, but couldn't get into 103 until fall 2000.

\*I wanted to take Black feminisms for 1-1/2 years. I'm graduating on time, but I'm very disappointed I didn't get to take this course.

\*It was really hard to find a professor to work with on my summer internship. It was really disappointing because noone got excited with/for me.

\*No, but there are classes I really wanted to take that weren't offered.

\*All of the above. I always had problems coordinating 640 and my other classes. I had to wait 3 semesters to take it. I'm a 5<sup>th</sup> year senior.

\*Courses were always closed, and when (as a graduating senior, last semester of my school career) I asked professors to let me in, they blew me off and didn't care.

\*There should be more broad offerings each semester. The same classes are offered every semester; others never.

8. Describe any ways in which being a Women's Studies major helped or hindered your other course work at the University.

\*It helped other course work at the University because it complemented by Behavioral Science and Law classroom discussions and issues.

\*It really helped me to develop my analytical skills, it helped me to learn how to pick things apart and look past the surface of the issues; thus, I am able to understand issues from many different perspectives.

\*It helped make me a more well-rounded individual – some of the themes overlapped. When one class outside of WS tapped into the feminist theme of sorts I found I could take it a lot further because of my WS background.

\*It made me much more conscious of what I am taught in my science courses.

\*It helped me to analyze critically what I was doing. Taught me to question things.

\*It helped me learn to enjoy my education, and stop looking at it as something I had to get through.

\*It helped me become a better writer and a faster reader and enabled me to better critically analyze a broad range of material.

\* It didn't hinder. I guess it helped because I was able to apply some of the theory to literature I studied.

\*At times I felt that the course load for WS classes was a lot greater than for my other classes.

\*(2) No

\* WS major helped me to think from a women's perspective in journalism classes. Other classes did not have the same comfortable learning atmosphere as women's studies classes do.

\*Great mix of my two majors. I have such perspective on women's issue, both societal and health related.

\*It definitely hindered my other course work. All of the women's studies classes require an insultingly large amount of reading. This is very classist. For if I need to work 2 jobs to put myself through school, I cannot take women's studies classes, for the curriculum leaves you no time to do anything in your life but read women's studies.

\*The feminist perspective should be integrated in all fields of study. WS explored gender, race and class issues ignored in other fields.

\*WS gave me perspective on the bullshit in other departments, and provided a space for me to feel institutionally supported – sometimes.



9. Did the major sufficiently cover cross-cultural, multicultural and other diversity issues? Please comment.

- \*Yes, it did an adequate job of covering multicultural and other diversity issues, but perhaps there should be a required class such as "Race and Racism" for all WS majors.
- \*Yes (1)
- \*I would like to see more classes about Asian women and specifically Korean women.
- \*I guess so. But I took courses that specifically focused on women of color. I guess the major is lacking in queer studies, but I didn't take classes that looked at that.
- \*Not really, even when there was a section devoted to "minority" issues, 3<sup>rd</sup> World women's perspectives rarely entered the curriculum.
- \*Yeah, pretty much. It would have been cool to take an African American Feminism class though.
- \*There probably could have been more.
- \*No. Race issues should be blended into every course, and not just isolated to race-specific classes.
- \*No much diversity of courses offered from multicultural courses. I ended up taking a non-WS course and getting WS credit for it. Difficult to coordinate schedules.
- \*No. Stop using words like "multicultural" and "diversity;" they are so benign and apolitical. Use "race", nationalism and cultural difference or something.
- \* Yes, could be increased in 101, 103, 320, 530 classes.
- \*I think it did a great job with these classes. The only thing that has been missing is Asian studies. Where are they????
- \*Would have liked more queer (lesbian and bi) issues, ability, race issues. Should be more integrated, not just token ones.
- \* Yes but I thought so much more could have been included.
- \*I think that more multicultural courses should be offered. I would like to see a well-constructed course that surveys issues that women face around the world and provide a greater understanding of women's placement and problems cross-culturally.
- \* Yes, it did an adequate job of covering multicultural and other diversity issues, but perhaps, there should be a required class such as "Race and Racism" for all women's studies majors.

10. Did you ever go to see the Women's Studies advisor? Yes No

*If so, please comment on the quality of advising available in Women's Studies. Give examples where appropriate. Note: Current majors could have seen either or both of two different advisors during their careers here. Note: Only one respondent had not seen the advisor.*

- \*I think the advising was great – she went out of her way to help me arrange my schedule so that I could graduate when I needed to.
- \*Chris was so helpful – She encouraged me to apply for the internship class when I thought I wouldn't get in, and I did.
- \*The advising was fine, not as personal as with my other major, but I was able to get the information I needed.
- \*She was great, even though she was new.
- \*She was very helpful and was always willing to take the time to help me out.
- \*Low. I never felt my advisor was at all helpful. I quit going and did it myself and talked to deans instead.
- \*She was available often and helpful.
- \*Good. Hard for Chris to come in after Mimi had been there for so long.... but always very helpful, responsive and understanding. Great resource!
- \*Excellent advising. Really warm and caring, very helpful at finding solutions to problems and just listening too. I am grateful.
- \*It was pretty mundane regarding paperwork and requirements. I guess I'd like it to be more personal.
- \*She was very easy to talk to, and usually available. She wrote me a recommendation to go to London after I was rejected, and because of it I was later accepted. I think she may not have everything under her belt yet, but that's understandable following in the footsteps of Mimi Orner.
- Usually went on scheduling. Fine quality. I like the email announcements on the different events.
- \*Good. She really helped when I needed it and she was really interested in me as a person, not just as a student (Mimi Orner).
- \*I've seen both Mimi and Chris and both of them were most helpful.
- \*Although my appointment time felt rushed, the quality of the quality of the advising was good.

## Overall evaluation

11. Describe the specific knowledge, skills, or abilities that you acquired through the Women's Studies major that you believe will most affect your experience after graduation.

- \*Critical thinking and analysis – especially of media, government, health care system, etc.
- \*Critical thinking, understanding of race and diversity; confidence, a high self-esteem, a place to make change; how women experience their every day lives; how to not universalize women or essentialize women; it's ok to do what I want to do.
- \*An interest in feminist theory, literary theory, and queer theory, which will help me in graduate school. I don't think women's studies prepares its graduate for the "real" world, but most humanities majors don't.
- \*I have better debate skills.
- \*Critically questioning the world around me. I gained specific knowledge of political, economic, cultural reality of women's lives.
- \*I learned to articulate the sense of sexism and inequality I felt existed. This won't help me with a job but it has helped me as a person.
- \*I'm not going into a specific job where it will help me. I just consider myself better educated because of this major.
- \*I learned to read critically and write clearly, concisely and make strong arguments.
- \*A way to critically analyze and think about structures institutions in our world which affect all of us. Skills to promote empowerment in women.
- \*Critical thinking, deconstruction, having my own opinion, the structural relations in our society, how to live my life non-violently and not oppressing anyone (well, that's impossible in this world, but...)
- \*Trying to figure out others' perspectives, determining what I can learn from a situation, seeing the context of different forces. WS is more critical than other fields, it examines assumptions.
- \*I learned analytical skills, and how to look past the surface to find the true story. I learned to be proud of who I am as a woman, and how to speak up when I feel people are making me or anyone else uncomfortable or threatened.
- \*ability to analyze and construct and argument; articulate my thoughts; trust what I have to say (confidence); better awareness of people – all kinds.
- \*I know more about things that the average college student knows, I have learned now to use WS outside of class and school and in my every day life.
- \*The ability to write, to think critically, to counterargue, and to look past the surface of issues and consider the ramifications.
- \*I have fine tuned my critical reading and analysis skills throughout my women's studies major. I believe this will most affect my experience after graduation.

12. Please describe any changes you would like to see in the Women's Studies major. (For example, course requirements, the structure of the major, the types of courses that are available, balance of social sciences/humanities, advising etc).

- \*More theory should be offered during the semesters for people who do enjoy theory, I didn't necessarily find that taking 1 course from 5 different areas was helpful – I would have preferred to concentrate in a certain area of WS even though I had other majors because I think the theory is what I will focus on in the future.
- \*More courses available. The internship class 9 credits instead of 6 because there is so much to talk about (another class meeting).
- \*More humanities. I don't know.
- \*Increase the ethnic requirement to at least 6 credits. Incorporate more perspectives, especially in the theory classes to include women from other countries than the US.
- \*There should definitely be a 2<sup>nd</sup> wave history course. I became a WS major cause I wanted to be forced to read 2<sup>nd</sup> wave texts like *The Feminine Mystique* and *The Second Sex*. I've only had to read 3<sup>rd</sup> wave stuff and I think there's an assumption that women in WS have a basic knowledge of history and terms and texts but most people do not. What I know about 70s stuff I learned on my own. More of a feminist history course would be good too, one looking at 1<sup>st</sup> wave. Also I think the theory course should have the same basic curriculum no matter who teaches it. As it is, it's a coin toss as to what you learn; it's based on the prof's interests alone.

- \*Have classes available more -- create a larger diversity of classes.
- \*The emphasis on huge amounts of reading (lessen it!). We need time to actually act on our education, like time to organize in our communities. We need not be stuck in academia all the time.
- \*Stop making women of color an added on topic and Have more courses on activism and applying feminist politics.
- \*More freedom for the students to design their own course work, more integration of other ways of learning -- not just right brain rational analytical approach.
- \*More Asian Studies; more classes like the one cross-listed with Pauline Oliveros.
- \*Some classes the workload has been really heavy. I would like to see quality stressed, not quantity. It would be nice to have more of a community among women's studies majors.\*An interest in feminist theory, literary theory, and queer theory, which will help me in graduate school. I don't think women's studies prepares its graduate for the "real" world, but most humanities majors don't.
- \*More spots in classes, more classes.
- \*Goddesses and Feminine Power should NOT be included in the WS department. More emphasis on crosscultural issues. Goddesses and Feminine Powers should NOT be included in Women's Studies Department.
- \*More course offerings each semester and each class offered more often. Keep the classes small, though!

14. Please make additional comments that might be helpful for our evaluation of the Women's Studies major.

- \*I spent my junior year studying in England, where I took 2 women's studies classes, one of which was theory.
- \*Please have TA's who are women's studies majors. The TA I had for 101 was awful and had little knowledge of important theories.
- \*Find a way to get more men to take these classes.
- \*Give students more freedom to learn what they want. Have profs ask students how they want to learn. Give options for papers, etc. This increases autonomy and makes students more involved in the process of learning. WS should be a requirement for all students since this perspective is still overlooked in a male-dominated society.
- \*I think a women's studies major will be helpful no matter what future plans are.
- \*Did I mention that Goddesses and Feminine Powers should not be crosslisted with women's Studies. There is absolutely no focus of feminist analysis and we are lucky if he spends 15 minutes per 75 minute class period actually talking about goddesses. This course is essentially a history course emphasized with slides of museum pieces. It is a good course to be put in the history department but it is NOT a course that should be crosslisted with women's studies.

*Thanks!*