

## **Assessment of the Women's Studies Major April, 2006**

**Overview of the Major:** The Women's Studies major is an interdisciplinary major that incorporates humanities, social studies, and biological sciences into its requirements, with a strong emphasis on multicultural and global issues. All students are required to do either a second major or a concentration in order to attain additional depth of study in another field. The major was approved in 1986 and in the twenty years since approval, it has grown rapidly and, with some fluctuation, has maintained a high level of student enrollment. There are currently 142 declared Women's Studies majors. From 1987-2002, 585 majors graduated, for an average of 39 a year. Fifty-three and 52 majors graduated in 03-04 and 04-05, respectively.

**Learning Objectives:** There were three specific goals identified by the Women's Studies Program that can be seen as learning objectives for the major. When students complete the major, they will:

1. Have a strong knowledge base in Women's Studies, including knowledge of the experiences and accomplishments of women historically, currently, and across cultures;
2. Be familiar with the existing theoretical frameworks for studying and researching women and gender issues;
3. Have developed strong skills in critical thinking, including the ability to read critically and independently, to use theoretical concepts, and to communicate clearly in writing.

**Assessment History and Process:** Since the assessment of the major was first required, Women's Studies has been carrying out an annual assessment of the major. The assessment process is overseen by the associate chair of Women's Studies, who has responsibility for the Women's Studies curriculum and the major. There are two main components of the annual assessment, which have been done through all our assessments but are described as carried out in 05-06:

1. A survey (attached) was distributed to students in the senior capstone seminar for majors at the end of the Fall semester. The associate chair summarized all the responses from the Fall surveys and gave them to the Women's Studies Curriculum Committee to read and discuss. The same surveys will be distributed at the end of spring semester but will not be discussed by the Curriculum Committee until next year. Because the senior capstone seminar is a requirement for majors, this ensures that we will survey all senior majors.
2. Curriculum Committee decided on one course, taught by a Women's Studies faculty member in the Fall semester, in each of the five categories of requirements for the major: Humanities; Social Studies; Biology/Health; Multicultural/international; Theory. The associate chair contacted the professor for each course and requested that two student papers, representing the same assignment, be sent to the associate chair for assessment. The instructions included requesting permission from the students to use their papers in the assessment process. Members of Curriculum Committee were assigned to read and assess papers, based on the objectives described above. They then reported back to the Curriculum Committee, where there was a detailed discussion of how well, based on these papers, we thought learning objectives were met.
3. A third less formal aspect of the process is the informal feedback that the Women's Studies

Undergraduate Advisor gets from current and former majors, particularly about the effect of the major on employment, graduate education, etc. The Advisor is a member of Curriculum Committee, so provides that feedback as appropriate.

**Following Up on the Assessments:** Through the years of doing assessments, the Curriculum Committee and the associate chair have discussed what is working well and where there are potential areas for improvement. An informal report has been presented every year at the Program Committee meeting (equivalent to a department meeting) for discussion. Most of the findings have been that we are doing a very good job and that the major works very well to achieve both the Program's and the students' goals. The papers we have read indicate that students are meeting the learning objectives. The surveys have been extremely positive and indicated no significant problems or complaints; however, there have been suggestions for areas we could strengthen, which have led to changes such as the development of new courses, setting different priorities in requests for short term staffing, attempts to reduce some overlap between courses, improved communication with majors in certain areas, etc. There are also many requests we wish we could meet, such as for many more courses and more frequent offering of certain popular courses.

Also, some majors have identified something we are well aware of, which is the low number of faculty of color in Women's Studies. Several years ago, two faculty of color, one joint with Chican@/Latin@ Studies and one with Asian American Studies, left UW. This was a huge loss to the Program and we have not been able to replace them, but we are hoping that we will be in a position to hire jointly with those two programs again. This will strengthen the multicultural curriculum in Women's Studies and strengthen ties among Women's Studies and various ethnic studies programs.

## **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.

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### **Description of your major and future plans:**

1. What semester and year will you graduate?
2. What are your post-graduation plans in both the short term and long term?
3. In addition to your Women's Studies major, are you completing other major(s)? Yes No  
If so, please list other major(s):
4. If you did not complete another major, please describe your area of concentration.
5. Are you completing certificate(s)? If so, please list:

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

6. Is there a course that made you decide to be a Women's Studies major? If so, which course and why?
7. What did you take from your introductory courses that facilitated your success in advanced courses?
8. Which Women's Studies course(s) did you find most useful and why:
  - a. For broadest understanding of the Women's Studies degree?
  - b. For your post-graduation plans?
  - c. For your personal development and growth?
9. 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.

10. Did you experience any difficulties combining the Women's Studies major with your other major(s), concentration, certificate(s)? Explain.

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

12. Did Women's Studies courses successfully make cross-cultural, multicultural and other diversity issues core to the major? Please comment.

13.a. Approximately how many times did you meet with the Women's Studies advisor? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Approximately how many times did you communicate with the advisor by email? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Please comment on the quality of advising in Women's Studies. Give examples where appropriate.

**Overall evaluation of the Women's Studies major:**

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

16. 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/science, advising etc).

17. Why did you become a Women's Studies major?

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