

Statement About the Assessment Process  
Department of Gender and Women's Studies

The Department of Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) uses two approaches to evaluating our major. We use a survey that is filled out by all majors in the senior capstone seminar for GWS majors in both the Fall and Spring semesters. The summarized information is discussed by the Curriculum Committee and then brought to the Department meeting for further discussion. One use of the survey is to help us understand the students' perceptions of what they have learned from the major, how the major fits in with their other major and certificates, and which courses they valued for specific areas of their academic and professional growth. The Curriculum Committee also reads a sample of student papers from courses in a number of different areas in GWS, such as science/health, theory, multicultural/international, social sciences, and the humanities. We can then compare how those papers meet our own evaluation criteria for our majors, such as strong critical thinking skills, developing clear and appropriately referenced arguments in written work, able to apply feminist theories appropriately. We have been pleased to see that overall the student work does reflect what we hoped they would learn and that their survey comments identify many of those same areas as strengths they have developed from their major. Based on the surveys, we have also identified areas in which we can develop more curricular options. For example, students wanted more courses and a greater variety of topics for the upper level health and science courses. Several years ago, we developed a Special Topics course in women's and have tried to develop new topics to teach under that number so students have an option to go into much more depth in women's health. A sample of topics include: "Women, Sex Hormones, and Health," "The Politics of Contraception," "African American Women's Health," "Global Women's Health and Human Rights," and "Lesbian, gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Health." Some of these courses also are designed to fit in with our emphasis on multicultural and global women's issues. The last course on the list was specifically designed to serve the students completing an LGBT Studies Certificate as well as GWS majors.