

Wichita State University

Center for Women's Studies

REVISED PLAN FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE WOMEN'S STUDIES MAJOR 2004

Wichita State University Mission Statement:

Wichita State University is committed to providing comprehensive educational opportunities in an urban setting. Through teaching, scholarship, and public service, the University seeks to equip both students and the larger community with the educational and cultural tools they need to thrive in a complex world, and to achieve both individual responsibility in their own lives and effective citizenship in the local, national, and global community.

High quality teaching and learning are fundamental goals in all undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programs. Building on a strong tradition in the arts and sciences, the University offers programs in business, education, engineering, fine arts, and health professions, as well as in the liberal arts and sciences. Degree programs range from the associate to the doctoral level and encompass 75 fields of study; non-degree programs are designed to meet the specialized educational and training needs of individuals and organizations in south central Kansas.

Scholarship, including research, creative activity, and artistic performance, is designed to advance the University's goals of providing high quality instruction, making original contributions to knowledge and human understanding, and serving as an agent of community service. This activity is a basic expectation of all faculty members at Wichita State University.

Public and community service activities seek to foster the cultural, economic, and social development of a diverse metropolitan community and of the state of Kansas. The University's service constituency includes artistic and cultural agencies, business and industry, and community educational, governmental, health, and labor organizations.

Wichita State University pursues its mission utilizing the human diversity of Wichita, the state's largest metropolitan community, and its many cultural, economic, and social resources. The University faculty and professional staff are committed to the highest ideals of teaching, scholarship, and public service, as the University strives to be a comprehensive, metropolitan university of national stature.

Program Mission Related to University Goals and Objectives:

“The mission of the Center for Women’s Studies is to improve women’s lives by placing women at the center of inquiry in the creation and transformation of knowledge.”

The Center for Women’s Studies (WS) and Religion (REL) is committed to the mission of Wichita State University to provide quality “teaching, scholarship, and public service” to the state’s largest metropolitan community.

By providing educational opportunities and mentoring to students from all walks of life, members of both the Women’s Studies and Religion faculty (units merged in 1989) have been nominated for awards for teaching excellence. The breadth and depth of interdisciplinary courses offered at the Center encompass Biblical Studies from historical, literary, social-scientific, and theological perspectives, women in world religions, gender-related social issues, women’s professional and domestic accomplishments as well as women’s historical experiences in the local, national, and international arenas.

With the Center’s mission to improve women’s lives, both traditional and non-traditional students, the WS program enhances WSU’s service to nontraditional women students. Many are working mothers with full-time employment and considerable family responsibilities. In addition to providing a curriculum that addresses the daily problems and concerns of working women, the Center’s interdisciplinary courses are designed to empower women students with the practical skills to take “responsibility in their own lives.”

In order to enhance the effectiveness of women’s studies majors to live and work in Wichita’s diverse urban environment, the Center also offers courses that critically examine the intersection of gender with race, ethnicity, class, age, religion, and other variables. Serving WSU’s regional constituency, graduates of the WS program are employed in “artistic and cultural agencies, business and industry, and community, educational, governmental, and health organizations” of south central Kansas.

Teaching

In this age of globalization and diversity, the Center for Women’s Studies and Religion is the only department in WSU that offers courses on women’s issues and experiences in the United States, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The department also

offers academic courses on religion in a classroom atmosphere designed to acknowledge and respect the views of all students, whatever their religious (or non-religious) background.

The WS faculty focus their research and teaching on the critical analysis of gender as a force in social, political, and religious institutions. Faculty and students explore the construction of culture, challenge the popular assumptions about gender roles, and encourage new ways of thinking, acting, and relating to individuals and society. In WS courses, students learn critical thinking skills that are “fundamental to professional training and the needs of the workplace.” The Center’s faculty “stimulates a lifelong love of learning” by mentoring women students for the pursuit of their personal intellectual development and career goals. They encourage students to integrate coursework and research from multiple disciplines for problem-solving in areas concerning women/gender relations. With an interdisciplinary undergraduate degree in women’s studies, many graduates pursue professional degrees and graduate study in diverse academic fields.

Religion courses also require students to hone their critical thinking skills, and to debate issues with others in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The Center contributes to graduate education by offering graduate-level courses for students with WS and REL concentrations in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program at the Fairmount College.

Scholarship

The Center for Women’s Studies has an interdisciplinary faculty who are highly qualified in various subjects, well-versed in women and gender studies, and experienced in cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural research and teaching. They all have PhDs and other degrees in areas with an inter-disciplinary focus. The WS faculty have extensive research programs on women and gender and they have published extensively. To promote scholarship, the Center’s faculty members have presented papers in regional, national, and international professional conferences and have published in refereed journals. Their skills in feminist pedagogy include the art of engaging students through informal cum formal techniques, rather than only the traditional lecturing procedure. The two faculty members in Religion specialize in interdisciplinary research, employing

methods derived from literary theory and the social sciences as well as history and theology.

The faculty's teaching and research qualifications have a strong cross-cultural leaning that enables them to globalize their research. They have a number of exciting Women/Gender projects that intersect with African, Asian, Israeli/Palestinian, and Latino experiences. Their courses reflect this cross-cultural research, and these are beneficial to students' global outlook. The following, demonstrates the interdisciplinary qualifications and cross cultural interests of faculty:

Stuart Lasine, Professor, Ph.D. , M.A., Comparative Literature, B.A. Philosophy

Deborah Gordon, Associate Professor, Ph.D. History of Consciousness, B.A. American Studies

Ramona Liera-Schwichtenberg, Associate Professor, Ph.D. Communication Studies, M.A. English Literature/Film, B.A., English Literature

Chinyere Okafor, Associate Professor, Ph.D. English, M.A., African Studies, Pg.D. Theater Studies, B.A. English

Doris Chang, Assistant Professor, Ph.D. History, M.A. East Asian History, B.A. History

Wesley Bergen, Visiting Assistant Professor, Ph.D., S.T.M., M. Div., B.A.

The WS faculty is actively involved in facilitating scholarship on women and change initiatives in different regions of the world. This is done through various kinds of historical, literary, ethnological, religious, and cultural research.

Public and Community Service

The Center for Women's Studies has a long tradition of public service and community outreach in the Wichita community. In keeping with its mission, the Center for WS has made links with the local community through the WS Community Council Advisory Board (CCAB), a fundraising, working Board, comprised of women who are professional and business leaders in the greater Wichita area. Members of the community regularly call on the Center's faculty for their expertise on issues that affect women both locally and internationally, as well as attend the Center's public programming which has benefited the Center, the College and the University.

With the mutually supportive relationship between the Center’s faculty and the Wichita community, the Center has fulfilled the university’s mission “to equip both students and the larger community with the educational and cultural tools they need to thrive in a complex world, and to achieve effective citizenship in the local, national, and global community.”

The WSU Center for WS also contributes significantly to the field of Women’s Studies. Unique in Kansas, the Center is one of the longest-standing, degree-granting, autonomous women’s studies centers in the country. It acts as a campus and community resource/research center for scholarship concerning women and gender issues.

Program Goals, Objectives and Learner Outcomes of the Undergraduate Major in Women’s Studies:

Goals One and Two address Learner Outcomes and Goal Three addresses Student Satisfaction. Each objective under Goals One and Two is focused on Learner Outcomes.

Goal One-Learning

The Center’s academic purpose is to offer a program of study in which students can **learn** about women across disciplines in ways that deepen their understanding of women’s contributions to knowledge.

Objective One

- Students in the major will **learn** about major social and cultural issues involving gender and race, and the ways that gender intersects with race, class, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation.

Objective Two

- Students in the major will **learn** about the social and cultural misconceptions about women, the cultural and social contexts in which they arose, the theoretical perspectives on how and why they are often perpetuated.

Objective Three

- Students in the major will **learn** about the history of women’s movements, women’s achievements in a variety of social endeavors, and the development of feminism.

Objective Four

- Students in the major will **learn** how to approach knowledge about women, gender, and race in ways that re-conceptualize both the contents and the methodologies of intellectual inquiry that have lead to past omissions of these topics.

Objective Five

- Students will **learn and understand** feminism as a complex term, encompassing social action as well as diverse theoretical perspectives on the formation of gender identity and the relationship of gender to culture.

Objective Six

- Students in the major will be able to **recognize and conceptualize** potential designs for remedies to social problems and distributions of privilege in society.

Goal Two-Learning

The Center expects that students will apply analytical and critical thinking skills to their approach to knowledge.

Objective One

- Students will **learn** to think critically about the nature of learning and the construction of knowledge, through interdisciplinary investigation.

Objective Two

- Students will **learn** how to think critically about the nature of the human understanding of race and gender.

Goal Three- Student Satisfaction

The Center for WS seeks to empower our students to use maximum autonomy and social responsibility in their lives.

Objective One

- Students will perceive themselves as exercising autonomy and social responsibility as a result of their WS major.

Objective Two

- Students will have increased awareness of the meaning of gender and race in their personal life, family relationships, employment and citizenship.

Assessment of Program Goals (method/frequency/who does it) and Learner Outcomes:

The Center for Women's Studies program assessment plan includes a variety of initiatives and measures. Assessment activities include:

1. **Method:** Exit interview/survey reflecting program goals which is administered to graduating Seniors prior to sign-off of their senior form; this measures student perception of the goals' effectiveness (their perception of what they learned); **Frequency:** Every semester for graduating seniors; **Who does it:** The Chair of Women's Studies

2. **Method:** Alumni Survey that gathers data on WS graduates' occupations and life experiences in which a women's studies degree proved useful or valuable; the data from this survey measures the correlation between program goals and learner outcomes as interpreted and articulated by alumni; **Frequency:** Every five years; **who does it:** The Chair, Faculty and Support Staff of Women's Studies
3. **Method:** Content Measure (self-assessment) in which faculty members circulate each others' student papers from 500-level (and above) Women's Studies courses; this is a way to determine how appropriate, relevant and salient each goal is according to what each faculty member foregrounds in her class. Learner outcomes are determined by assessing students' critical/analytical skills through a check sheet of program goals; **Frequency:** Yearly faculty meeting devoted to self-assessment; **Who does it:** The entire faculty of Women's Studies
4. **Method:** Survey of all students taking women's studies classes to determine General Education Impact; **Frequency:** Spring term of each year; **Who does it:** Devised by Chair, administered by women's studies faculty and faculty teaching cross-listed WS courses, tabulated by support staff

Results:

Results are on file for Alumni Survey 1999-2000; Content Measure (fall '04); General Education Impact (spring '03)

Feedback Loop:

a) Department method of administering assessment instruments:

The department administers the **exit interview/survey** for graduating seniors by having the Chair present the survey (derived from program goals) to seniors when they come to the office for sign-off of their senior form. The **alumni survey** is comprised of questions relevant to goals one and two with special emphasis on goal three, student satisfaction.

The survey is mailed to alumni with a cover letter. The **content measure** is executed by the faculty and determined by the circulation of upper-level student papers that are then measured against program goals as a reflection of course content. The **survey of all students taking women's studies classes** to determine general education impact is administered by core and cross-listed faculty members (which totals around sixteen classes surveyed).

b) What constitutes satisfactory performance:

For all four assessment instruments, satisfactory performance is constituted by the correlation between the data and the program goals. Lack of such correlation could indicate the need to rethink the goal(s) or create a more inclusive or nuanced goal(s).

c) How results of the assessments are(will be) tabulated/analyzed:

The **exit interview/survey** for graduating seniors will be analyzed on the basis of student responses to goals one, two, and three to determine their perceptions of their learner outcomes as women's studies majors. The **alumni survey** will be analyzed predominantly on the basis of meeting goal three (student satisfaction), with some emphasis on goals one and two. The **content measure** is a faculty self-assessment of the fit between course content and program goals; faculty read student papers, and then meet to analyze and discuss the results in relation to course content and curriculum development. The **survey to assess General Education** impact will be analyzed and tabulated as a means to discern the constituencies for all women's studies classes, and student perception of the classes in relation to what is being learned. Responses to questions will be quantified to arrive at percentages.

d) How the department will act on what the assessment instruments show each year:

The department will conduct one to two faculty meetings per year to examine survey results in relation to: 1) Program goals of the Women's Studies major; 2) Curricular change or revision; 3) Departmental needs and enhancements. Decisions will be made on the basis of the findings discussed and agreed upon at these meetings.

