Women's & Gender Studies Program                                                                             May 23, 2011

**Progress on Assessment**

**Program Mission**

Women's and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary program that examines the role of gender in the construction of lives, cultures, community norms, meaning systems, and systems of representation. All of the key areas of study within the program use cross-cultural or multicultural investigations to understand the dynamics and differences in the operation of gender. Within specific contexts but also across differences, the program also focuses on the lives of women--on women's past and present active involvement in the making of the world. Each of the two tracks also emphasizes the ongoing interplay of theory and practice.

**Goals/outcomes**

The two tracks of the majors were developed around the following goals/outcomes first approved in the fall of 2005:   
1. Knowledge of the foundational concepts and issues in the discipline of Women's Studies or Gender Studies.  
2. Knowledge of the historical positioning and social construction of women or gender.  
3. Knowledge of the systemic nature of gender.  
4. Knowledge of women or a gender system outside the student's cultural and national experience.  
5. Knowledge of the complexities of the categories "women" and "men," including differences in class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexuality.  
6. Knowledge of the theories and methods central to the discipline of Women's Studies or Gender Studies.  
7. Knowledge of upper level work in the other track within the program.  
8. The ability to analyze representations--mass media, literature, histories, politics, etc.--from the frameworks within Women's Studies or Gender Studies.  
9. The ability to make connections among three elected courses.  
10. The ability to bring a Women's Studies or Gender Studies perspective to an upper-level course outside the program.  
11. The ability to construct a focused bibliography and to summarize and critique a piece of literature within the bibliography.  
12. The ability to develop a research or scholarship proposal in Women's Studies or Gender Studies.

**Identify program components**

**The requirements for the major are built around the outcomes.** This major was approved by the faculty in the spring of 2007 (outsiders viewing the major for the first time, might think of it has having four pieces, labeled A. B. C. and D below).

A. For Outcome #1, **Each track requires a foundational course**: WGS 106 Introduction to Women's Studies or WGS 116 Introduction to Gender Studies.

B. For Outcomes # 3, # 6 and #11, **Each track requires a theory course**: WGS 360 Feminist Theory for Women's Studies or WGS 360 or A&S 332 or 333 for Gender Studies.  
or .

C. In addition, majors in each track are required to take **at least one course from each of the following emphases**. The six courses must be selected in consultation with the program director or the faculty member in the program. (See the college catalog for the listing of courses)

Institutions or Knowledge Systems(Outcome #3)**.** This requirement emphasizes the study of the systemic nature of gender or of the critical perspectives brought to a discipline by feminist theory or gender theory.

Representations(Outcomes #5 and #8). This requirement emphasizes feminist approaches or gender study approaches to the examination of gender in representation; this requirement also can involve the recovery and examination of representations that previously had been invisible due to gender bias.

Global Perspectives(Outcome #4). This requirement emphasizes the importance of gaining knowledge far from one's own subject position. For this unit, students must choose a course outside their own cultural and geographical experience.

Historical Contexts(Outcomes #2 and #5). This requirement emphasizes the study of women or gender in specific and detailed historical context(s) or the study of the methodology of women's or gender history.

Self Making.(Outcomes #3 and #5). This requirement emphasizes the feminist and gender studies examinations of processes and narratives that transform beings into gendered humans.

D. Finally, **the major includes a capstone experience** of at least one of the following: directed study, Honors thesis, practicum, or internship. This integrative experience is also likely to address outcome #12, especially since the major was developed, in part, to respond to the fact that students (at Albion and elsewhere) interested in women's or gender studies were moving away from concentrations, with their integrative requirement of an internship, and towards majors, with their integrative requirement of a directed study or a thesis.

During the advising process required for the selection of courses for the emphasis, outcome #7 is addressed, and during that same advising process and during the final interview (mentioned below), outcome #9 is addressed.

**Methods/data sources and instruments**

In 2009 an “assessment committee” worked on an instrument for assessment of Gender Category courses. This instrument was employed By Dr. Franzen in W&GS 106 that year. The data were supposed to be collected and computed by somebody. No data seem to have come out of the project, and I do not know if another committee has worked on it further.

Upon reflection, the W&GS Committee decided that assessment of the theory course required for both the majors and the minors would be a better measure. Majors and minors ordinarily take their theory course in the junior or senior year. Anecdotal evidence from our exit interviews with graduating majors in May 2010 revealed that they had trouble recalling exactly what they gained from WGS 106 or WGS116, because they had learned so much since their introductory course.

The theory requirement for the Women’s Studies major and minor may be met by WGS 360, Feminist Theory or PLSC 369, Feminist Political Theory. The theory requirement for the Gender Studies major and minor may be met by WGS 360, PLSC 369, or AS 333, The Sociology of Sex and Gender. The individuals who teach these courses were asked (periodically, beginning in fall, 2010) to meet, discuss, and suggest a pathway by which to assess these three different but related courses. This they did not do. Thus we have no data.

In examining the learning objectives of the three courses, I propose that assessment of one learning objective that is similar among them might serve as a focus of assessment:

+ Students will be able to write and speak about important concepts in feminist theory.

(PLSC 369)

+ Students will learn and be able to apply a variety of perspectives of feminist theory

on gender. (AS 333)

+ Students will use feminist theory to understand the development of feminist thought

in the U.S. and elsewhere. (WGS 360)

Students would be given a choice from two or three questions or case studies. They would apply their understanding of feminist theory in writing a short paper, to be written not later than February 28th of their senior year. Students would ordinarily write their paper soon after completing their theory course, and some do complete the course in their junior year.

Exit interviews of graduating majors will continue each year.

Trisha Franzen has been using Facebook to contact alums from 1992 until the present. We will be able to ‘recover’ our future and our past.

Ruth Schmitter

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