

**SPECIAL REPORT
OF THE
GRADUATE COUNCIL**

concerning a

**REVISION OF THE CERTIFICATE IN
ADVANCED FEMINIST STUDIES
INCLUDING A CHANGE OF CERTIFICATE TITLE TO
CERTIFICATE IN FEMINIST STUDIES
(#5557)**

**Presented at the
785th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
March 7, 2019**

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

GRADUATE COUNCIL

Nadia Al-Ahmed, Pamela Aselton, Joseph Black, Justin Burch, D. Anthony Butterfield, Ana Caicedo, Canan Çevik, David Cort, Robert DeConto, Jennifer Friedman, Mark Hamin, Laura Hancock, Neil Immerman, Cynthia Jacelon, Ramakrishna Janaswamy, Barbara Krauthamer, John Lopes, *Chair*, David Morin, Martina Nieswandt, MJ Peterson, Sarah Pfatteicher, Sarah Poissant, Rebecca Reznik-Zellen, Frederic Schaffer, Patrick Sullivan, Bianki Torres, David Vaillancourt, Tilman Wolf, Kristine Yu

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

The Graduate Council recommends approval of this proposal.

Provide a brief overview of the proposal.

This proposal makes four changes to the requirements for what has formerly been called the Advanced Certificate in Feminist Studies, and which we would like to rename simply the Certificate in Feminist Studies.

The first change (aside from the title) is that we specify that all elective courses for the certificate should fulfill one or both of the categories Critical Race Feminisms or Transnational Feminisms (rather than one "open" elective and one that fulfills one or both of these categories).

The second change to the certificate program is the addition of a fifth capstone course in WGSS, preferably taught by WGSS core faculty. This fifth course will take the place of the Final Research Project (WGSS 793A).

The third change is that we clarify that the five required courses should be taken in the Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies department (taught by core faculty), taught by pre-approved affiliate faculty, or approved by petition (ideally at the time of enrollment). While this is our practice, we wish to specify this expectation clearly as a requirement.

The fourth change is the introduction of a cap on the amount of time permitted to complete the certificate. There is currently no time limit. We propose to require students to complete the certificate in a maximum of five years.

Describe the existing requirements, listing any required courses, various means toward completion, and any other information relating to current practices.

The current requirements are as follows:

Requirements

The program currently requires the following coursework*:

1. Two core approved graduate courses:
 - a. **Feminist Theory (WGSS 791B):** Although a background in theory is required for admission, this course is both a foundational core requirement and prerequisite for the Issues in Feminist Research Seminar. Students approach this theory course with a range of theoretical expertise and emphasis is placed on methodological and historical contexts. Course content explores the intersection of race, class, gender and sexuality in a national and/or global perspective and examines selected paradigms in feminist theories. Offered fall semester only.
 - b. **Issues in Feminist Research Seminar (WGSS 691B):** A three credit methods seminar with course content that explores an integrative analysis and may examine selected paradigms in feminist theory. Offered spring semester only.
2. Two interdisciplinary approved electives from the following categories:
 - a. **Transnational/Critical Race Feminisms:** This requirement ensures that students understand the critical importance of the anti-racist politics of racial justice movements and women of color to feminism, and further accommodates the inclusion of transnational feminisms, critical race studies and sexuality studies into the field of inquiry. This course should be selected from the designated options in the WGSS course guide, but a petition for inclusion form is also available.
 - b. **Open elective (previously Feminist Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Approaches):** Students must also select one other course with substantive feminist content to include as their second elective. Ideally, this course will be selected from the WGSS course guide, but a petition for inclusion form is also available.
3. **A final research project - WGSS 793A:** The final stage for the completion of the certificate is a year-long research project under the direction of a committee of two faculty members, at least one of whom is a WGSS faculty member. Students begin working on this project as part of small writing groups during the fall of the year they plan to complete; submitting an abstract and

project draft to their committee at the end the fall semester. Upon their committee's approval, certificate students enroll in 793A for the spring semester during which they complete their project. The project culminates with the submission of a full-length project and an oral presentation at the graduate student symposium at the end of the spring semester.

Research projects may take a variety of forms including but not limited to a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation; a research paper or project of outstanding quality; a book chapter; a performance or multimedia presentation. Whatever the field of study, the research paper must focus on the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality and, if relevant, transnational issues. It can be developed from 1) a paper submitted to meet one of the core requirements; 2) prior research; 3) a practicum or other project. The student's advisor and the Associate Director of the Graduate Program will evaluate the project for final approval. A final copy of the research project is to be left with the program office.

**Please note that in the interest of encouraging student involvement in the intellectual life of the program, a maximum of two courses (half of the required coursework) can be applied towards the certificate prior to acceptance as a certificate student.*

Courses will be offered and coordinated by core, adjunct and associated graduate faculty of the Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies Program and will be published in the WGSS Course Guide every semester. Our Graduate Program Director provides supervision of research and advising. For further information, contact the Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies Program, W401 South College, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA. 01003. Telephone 413-545-1922.

Describe the proposed requirements, including all course requirements or other means toward completion, as well as any admissions or continuation requirements.

The renamed "Certificate in Feminist Studies" must be completed by students in five years or less. The Certificate requires the following coursework:*

1. Two core approved graduate courses in the Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies department:
 - a. Feminist Theory (WGSS 791B): Although a background in theory is required for admission, this course is both a foundational core requirement and prerequisite for the Issues in Feminist Research Seminar. Students approach this theory course with a range of theoretical expertise and emphasis is placed on methodological and historical contexts. Course content explores the intersection of race, class, gender and sexuality in a national and/or global perspective and examines selected paradigms in feminist theories. Offered fall semester only.
 - b. Issues in Feminist Research Seminar (WGSS 691B): A three-credit methods seminar with course content that explores an integrative analysis and may examine selected paradigms in feminist theory. Offered spring semester only.

2. Three electives with substantive feminist content that fulfill one or both of the following categories: Transnational OR Critical Race Feminisms. This requirement ensures that students understand the critical importance of the anti-racist politics of racial justice movements and women of color to feminism, and further accommodates the inclusion of transnational feminisms, critical race studies and sexuality studies into the field of inquiry. At least two of the three electives should be courses taught by WGSS core faculty and selected from the designated options in the WGSS course guide. Students may petition to count one course taught by faculty who are not among core WGSS faculty or not listed in the WGSS course guide provided that (a)

the course has feminist content and/or approach (b) approval for taking the course is sought and received prior to taking the course. Pre-Approval for counting such courses towards the Certificate is at the discretion of the Graduate Program Director and/or Associate Program Director.

***Please note that in the interest of encouraging student involvement in the intellectual life of the program, a maximum of two courses can be applied towards the certificate prior to acceptance as a certificate student.**

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Provide a rationale for these revisions.

As to the first change (regarding our specification that all electives should fulfill one or both of the categories Critical Race Feminisms or Transnational Feminisms), this is in line with the goals and mission of the department.

Most courses offered by our core faculty meet these criteria, as do many of the pre-approved courses offered by affiliate faculty. This specification not only foregrounds our shared understanding of what constitutes critical intersectional feminist studies, but also avoids the substitution of courses that attend to “women’s issues” without substantive content centering race and transnational perspectives, as required for our certificate.

As to the second change (that the required courses for the certificate will be taught by core faculty in WGSS, pre-approved affiliate faculty, or by petition), this change attempts to streamline our petition process and to make certain that substituted courses meet the certificate criteria outlined above.

As to the change from a four course plus final research paper (793A) certificate to a five course certificate, our department has found that the process of guiding students through the creation of an original research project is cumbersome, labor-intensive, and more nearly mirrors the work of producing a master’s thesis in its current form than completing a graduate certificate. As we continue to set the groundwork in our WGSS program and curriculum for a PhD program, targeting 2021 for the arrival of our first cohort of WGSS PhD students, and as we reassess our experience over the course of several years of guiding increasingly large groups of students with widely different levels of preparation through the certificate process, we have decided that a five-course certificate is most beneficial to students and faculty. The department’s faculty and the graduate committee (made up of affiliate faculty in multiple other departments) are unanimously in favor of this change to a five-course certificate program. The faculty and graduate committee are also unanimously in favor of changing the title of the certificate program to Certificate in Feminist Studies (in place of Advanced Certificate in Feminist Studies) to reflect the preparation of the students and also the specific requirements of our certificate.

Finally, we have put a cap on the amount of time permitted for the completion of the certificate. All students will be required to complete the Certificate in five years or less. This change reflects

the practical and pedagogical challenges of a graduate certificate. Students who have spread out their coursework over more than five years lose out on the focused mentorship offered by WGSS core faculty and the Graduate Program Director, who closely monitors the progress of our students over a term of 3-5 years. These students also lose out on the experience of building close working relationships with other certificate students in their cohort. We have found that there are also curricular challenges that arise when students return to complete our certificate after many years, as faculty and curricular changes often make it difficult for these students to continue what they had started years earlier.

List the degree programs (majors) that will be affected by these revisions. If the proposal is the change University-wide requirements (such as General Education requirements), note that it will affect all majors.

Graduate Program in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies

If any programs or departments outside of the proposing college will be affected by the proposed revisions, describe those relationships here and include any memoranda of understanding from those colleges and departments as appendices to this proposal.

These proposed changes will affect only the certificate students in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies and not students enrolled in other programs or departments. The department of Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies sustains strong relationships with affiliate faculty. The outside faculty who make up the Graduate Committee are in unanimous support of these changes as well.

If this proposal requires no additional resources, say so and briefly explain why. If this proposal requires additional resources, explain how they will be paid for. For proposals involving instruction, indicate how many new enrollments are expected and whether the courses have room to accommodate them.

These proposed changes require no additional resources and will not affect the budget of our department in any way.

MOTION: That the Faculty Senate approve the Revision of the Certificate in 19-19 Advanced Feminist Studies, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 19-050.

[Proposal attachment on the following page]

Attachment

Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies

Graduate Program Requirements

* PROPOSED CHANGES ITALICIZED AND UNDERLINED

Certificate in Feminist Studies (NOT "Advanced Certificate"). The Certificate must be completed by students in five years or less.

The program requires the following coursework:*

1. Two core approved graduate courses *in the Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies department:*
 - a. **Feminist Theory (WOMENSST 791B):** Although a background in theory is required for admission, this course is both a foundational core requirement and prerequisite for the Issues in Feminist Research Seminar. Students approach this theory course with a range of theoretical expertise and emphasis is placed on methodological and historical contexts. Course content explores the intersection of race, class, gender and sexuality in a national and/or global perspective and examines selected paradigms in feminist theories. **Offered fall semester only.**
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