

## **THE FIELD**

Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies (WGSS) is a growing and evolving field that explores the intersections of sex, gender, race and sexuality, with over a thousand undergraduate and graduate departments nationwide. Beginning in the late 1960s, what was then called “women’s studies” developed as an interdisciplinary academic field alongside ethnic and critical race studies. Admitting its first students in 1974, the department at UMass Amherst is one of the oldest in the country. The field has also had an enormous impact on other academic disciplines. While maintaining a core interest in power as it is expressed through systems of gender-based hierarchies, the field continues to expand to include new work, insights, and critiques.

## **THE MAJOR AND THE MINOR**

WGSS at UMass Amherst offers an undergraduate major and minor, focusing on the intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. This integrative analysis is at the center of the curriculum. The faculty have diverse training across the disciplines of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. WGSS department faculty areas of research and teaching include: body politics; critical race studies; sexuality studies; disability studies; queer studies; sustainability; black feminist thought; feminism, comedy, and humor; feminist science studies; labor studies; history; expressive culture; critical prison studies; Asian and Asian American feminisms; Latin American studies; South Asian studies; reproductive politics and political economy; social justice feminisms; social movements; transgender studies; migration studies; transnational, decolonial, and post-colonial feminisms.

For the major, students can select a general approach or design an individualized course of study. Examples of past individualized programs include feminist health politics or gender and sustainability. An academic advisor is available for major or minor advising, and students also have a faculty advisor. Students design their programs selecting from the wide range of courses listed in the WGSS course description guide each semester. All students are admitted and are encouraged to contact the chief undergraduate advisor at [wgss-advisor@umass.edu](mailto:wgss-advisor@umass.edu) for assistance.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

In addition to college and university requirements, majors take seven required courses that approach gender with an integrative analysis that embeds gender in race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality. The courses introduce classic works in the field, analyze developments in feminist theories, examine new methodologies in feminist scholarship, and explore critical race feminisms, transnational feminisms, and sexuality studies. The major is 36 credits including the seven requirements. The remaining courses, 200 level or above, are electives within the department, or other approved courses at UMass and the Five Colleges. Students can earn elective credit in independent studies or internships related to the major.

## **OPTIONAL CONCENTRATIONS**

Majors have the option of designing an individualized course of study focused on a particular theme, in consultation with their faculty advisor. Examples of concentrations include women’s health and sexuality; African American women; the impact of race, sex, and class in American history; the construction of white privilege; Latin America; peace and militarism; gender and sustainability; poverty; labor organizing; feminist writing and criticism; arts management; sexual violence; fashion and media; trans issues and queer theory; and more.

## **DOUBLE MAJORS**

Many WGSS students also major in another field, as the interdisciplinary and integrative nature of the major allows flexibility to develop coherent and complementary programs of study. These include the departments of Afro-American studies, anthropology, art, biology, communication, comparative literature, education, English, history, journalism, Judaic studies, legal studies, philosophy, political science, psychology, social thought and political economy, sociology, theater, and others.

### **HONORS OPPORTUNITIES**

Honors opportunities in WGSS range from honors courses to research and project options. Opportunities are also available for upper-level honors research through a departmental honors research track. Contact the departmental honors coordinator for information.

### **STUDY ABROAD**

Majors are encouraged to study abroad if it supports their academic and career goals. Contact the International Programs Office (413-545-2710, [umass.edu/ipo](http://umass.edu/ipo)) and work closely with the academic advisor to choose appropriate courses.

### **CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

A student who graduates with a degree in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies will develop critical thinking skills, strengthen reading, writing, and spoken communication, hone research abilities, and apply theory and skills to real-world circumstances. Graduates work in education, law, human services, medicine, the arts, technology, and are administrators and managers in the public and private sectors. The major also provides appropriate preparation for graduate programs and professional schools. The UMass Amherst graduate certificate in feminist studies complements a degree-granting discipline and advances feminist research and methodology.

### **COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND FINE ARTS**

The humanities focus on human creativity, endeavor, and culture. The imaginative and creative arts—literary and performing—derive from life and teach about human behavior and constructs of social reality. The history of social, political, and economic systems illuminates and shapes the present and future. Students in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts are expected to broaden their perspectives on individual and cultural expression within their own and other societies, to understand the development and evolution of the discipline of study in relation to the culture from which it emanates, and to learn the methods by which knowledge in the discipline is gained.

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