

**Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies**  
**University of Massachusetts**  
**Amherst, Massachusetts 01003**  
**(413) 545-1922**  
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*[womens-studies@wost.umass.edu](mailto:womens-studies@wost.umass.edu)*

**MAJOR  
REQUIREMENTS AND  
APPLICATION**

Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies is an individually designed interdisciplinary major. The department uses an intersectional analysis which embeds gender within a complex web of interlocking social formations including gender, race/nationality/ethnicity, class and sexuality. Students have the option of focusing their course work around a particular theme. We encourage students to explore internships, independent studies, honors, and other educational opportunities in order to craft their own program to best suit their interests. Advising is central to the major; in addition to the staff advisor each student has their own faculty sponsor.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. If you are interested in a Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies major, talk with the advisor in the office and/or a faculty member (413-545-1922). In addition to the staff advisor, each major has a faculty sponsor to guide their academic program. Department staff or faculty can assist students in choosing an appropriate sponsor.
2. Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies maintains an open admissions policy, but requires a completed application form (attached) that outlines your intended course of study and is signed by your sponsor. You may also be invited to attend an orientation session.
3. Talk with an advisor in the office to choose a sponsor. Most WGSS faculty welcome students. Meet with the faculty member to discuss your program and have them sign your application. Leave a copy of the form with your sponsor for their future reference.
4. After your application has been submitted to the Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies office, make a short appointment with the Undergraduate Advisor to hand in your application and change your major on Spire.
5. Get your application in as early as possible. We suggest by **October 31<sup>st</sup>** in the fall and **April 1<sup>st</sup>** in the spring.

## **WOMEN, GENDER, SEXUALITY STUDIES MAJOR REQUIREMENTS**

**University Requirements:** Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies majors must fulfill the University graduation requirements of 120 credits, complete the General Education requirements, including 45 credits in residence, and maintain a minimum overall grade point average of 2.0 as well as a 2.0 in the major.

**College Requirements:** Students must also fulfill College of Humanities and Fine Arts requirements, including a foreign language requirement. See an advisor for the most up to date version of the requirements or visit the College of Humanities and Fine Arts Dean's Office.

### **Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies Requirements:**

- Complete application (including signature of sponsor).
- Take 36 total credits including these 6 required courses (prior to Fall 2016 courses were labeled WOMENSST):\*

WGSS 201

WGSS 301 or WGSS 394H (usually offered fall semester)

Majors are required to take a minimum of **two courses (total)** from at least two of the following three categories - check for eligible courses in our WGSS Course Listings published each semester (see description of these requirements starting on Page 4):

*Critical Race Feminisms*

*Transnational Feminisms*

*Sexuality Studies*

WGSS 310 – The junior year writing requirement (offered each fall)

WGSS 494TI – The Integrative Experience seminar (offered each spring)

- Maintain a cumulative average of 2.0 in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies.
- Complete end-of-program report and submit it the office.

### Notes:

- You cannot elect to take a class for the major pass/fail. Mandatory pass/fail courses can count.
- Note that each class can only satisfy one major requirement.
- Double majors must see an advisor about these requirements.

In addition to the required courses (usually totaling 18 or more credits), students need additional credits to complete the total of 36 credits for the major. If your major has a theme your theme should be clearly described in your application. If you change your focus later in the program, submit a new application spelling out the new focus. Courses must be above a 100-level to count towards the major, with the exception of WGSS 187. Component courses and skills courses must be documented.

The elective credits can be earned in any of the following ways:

- Courses offered through Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies at the University.
- Courses offered in other departments or at the other colleges listed as Departmental Courses above an introductory level in the Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies Course Guide.
- Courses listed as Component Courses in the guide count as Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies courses if at least 1/3-1/2 of the work for the course is on women, gender, or sexuality studies AND the student focuses their work on WGSS topics. If the paper topics offered are not adaptable to one of these topics, the student is encouraged to meet with the faculty member to devise a paper topic that focuses on women, gender or sexuality studies. In the case of a component course, the student is responsible for documenting that the work done for the course is sufficient to grant Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies credit. *Note: If the course has exams only it cannot be a component course.*
- *Independent Work:* Independent study, field work, and practicum credits may count towards the Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies degree if related to the student's program. Practicum, field work, or independent studies can be taken under WGSS course numbers, or course numbers in another department. As in the case of component courses, the student is responsible for documenting how the work relates to their major. A limit of 15 credits of these types of courses can count toward the major. Honors thesis/project credits are NOT included in the 15 credit limit.

**Skills Courses** are courses the student must take to learn a specific skill or background that is part of their course of study. Skills courses may be counted towards the major. For example, a student whose focus is health can use a course on anatomy to fulfill credits towards their major regardless of whether the class focuses on women, gender or sexuality. There is a limit of 12 credits that can be earned in this fashion. Skills credit must be requested in writing on the application.

At the end of your program you must fill out an end-of-program (EOP) report form, have it signed by your sponsor, and submit to the office. The report includes a list of all courses counting towards the 36 credits, and feedback on your academic program overall. Contact the office for a copy. **You will not be cleared for graduation until the EOP form is in!**

*To find out how to count other types of courses, or about course waivers, request a copy of "Waiver and Substitution Procedures for Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies."*

#### ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS

1. Students are responsible for ongoing sponsor contact, meeting with the sponsor at least once a semester, preferably to plan the coming semester.
2. There is a maximum of 15 credits of independent work that can be applied to the Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies major. All independent studies, internships, and other special projects are considered "independent work." Thus all credits earned under course numbers 296, 396, 496, 298, 398, and 498 are subject to this limitation. Credits earned over the 15

limit maximum can count towards graduation, but not towards the 36 credits needed for the major. In addition, **the University has a limit of 18 practicum credits from all departments (298, 398, 498) that can be counted towards graduation.**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND HELPFUL HINTS**

1. We encourage students to include field work and independent study as part of their course of study. An advisor is available for consultation about possible field work placements. Graduates continually tell us field work was a very important experience both as a way to make connections between experience and the classroom and as a way to test possible career interests.
2. Honors options are available. See the Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies honors coordinator for more information.
3. We suggest that students distribute their work evenly over four semesters with only three Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies courses per semester. Our experience has been that more than three of our courses in one semester may be difficult for students.

### **Student Involvement in the Department**

The Department is always open to student suggestions. The Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies Executive Committee, the decision making body for the Department, includes 2 undergraduate student representatives as well as graduate student representatives, faculty, adjunct faculty and staff.

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### **WGSS Distribution Requirement Details**

The major and minor in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies at UMass approach key issues in the field of WGSS from an intersectional perspective, emphasizing the interconnections of gender, race, class, sexuality, nation, and other power relations. The following requirements are intended to ensure that WGSS majors and minors are substantively exposed to the rubrics of transnationalism, critical race studies, and sexuality studies crucial for full engagement with the field. Within WGSS at UMass, all three of these rubrics are taught intersectionally, such that race, class, gender, sexuality and other forms of difference are meaningfully included in all courses taught within these three frames.

Students may count each course toward only one distribution requirement. If a course listing indicates that it can be used to fulfill more than one distribution requirement, a student may designate which requirement the course will fulfill. All distribution requirement classes are above an introductory level and focus on topics in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies.

Courses meeting the distribution requirement are selected based on the following criteria:

#### **Sexuality Studies**

Courses on LGBTQ studies, sex work, reproductive politics and the formation of sexuality as a category are available in numerous departments at UMass, and are now offered each semester in WGSS. Courses that count toward the Sexuality Studies distribution requirement

include those that emphasize the areas above, as well as those that emphasize “sexuality studies” more broadly, and those that focus on queer studies, trans\* studies, and intersex studies. There is no specific geographic focus attached to this requirement.

### **Critical Race Feminisms**

Critical Race Studies initially emerged as an intervention in critical legal studies, and, as such, has had a focus on the law, liberal framings of rights, and legal reform. Critical Race Studies has also developed and promoted theories of intersectionality, which have been central to recent feminist discourse. Courses that count toward the Critical Race Feminisms requirement include those that emphasize the study of race and gender in the U.S., either by focusing on the experiences of people of color as gendered and racialized subjects, or by emphasizing questions of racialization and racial formation from a feminist perspective. Eligible courses include those that focus on historical, political, economic, literary and sociological inquiries that emphasize race and gender within the U.S.

### **Transnational Feminisms**

Courses in Transnational Feminisms destabilize “Western”- and U.S.-centric perspectives on feminist thought and politics, and emphasize non-“Western” places, people, concerns, and scholarship relevant to WGSS discourses. While courses may include topics and concerns linked to U.S. geographical sites, their theoretical and critical approaches should critique or provide an alternative to “Western”- and U.S.-centric analyses. Courses that count toward the Transnational Feminisms requirement include: courses in postcolonial feminism, diaspora studies courses that focus on gender or sexuality, or courses with either non-U.S. or non-“Western” scope that focus on gender or sexuality. These courses do not take the U.S. as their exclusive referents; they may either focus on content outside of the U.S. (i.e. by focusing on people, events, histories, literatures, politics, etc. outside of the U.S.) or on content that is diasporic (i.e. including subjects inside the U.S. positioned as part of a diaspora).

A fill-in PDF of this application is available on the WGSS website.

Revised October 26, 2016

**NOTE: When turning in the application, retain these pages for your reference.**

Major changed on Spire  Date \_\_\_\_\_

**WOMEN, GENDER, SEXUALITY STUDIES**  
**University of Massachusetts**  
**413-545-1922      www.umass.edu/wgss**

**MAJOR APPLICATION**

*Please fill in all fields*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Pronoun(s) \_\_\_\_\_

TODAY'S DATE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF GRADUATION \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PERMANENT ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT NUMBER (SPIRE#) \_\_\_\_\_

SPONSOR \_\_\_\_\_ SPONSOR'S DEPARTMENT \_\_\_\_\_

Are you double majoring? Y N If so, other major: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your Primary major: \_\_\_\_\_

Minor: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you in honors? Y N

Check if applicable: Commonwealth Scholar  Departmental Honors

There are two ways to approach a major in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies: (1) a general approach or (2) a specific focus, e.g. gender and health care, feminism and the law, sexuality in history, etc. In either case courses of study should be interdisciplinary. To apply for the major complete the application form or, if you prefer, write a proposal responding to the questions on the form.

1. Do you intend to focus your major in a particular area?  
yes no (see below)

If yes, please describe your focus and course of study. Please be detailed in your description (you may attach sheets).

If no, you chose a general approach. Please write a few sentences about your interests.

2. In addition to the required courses what electives do you plan to take? If you specified a focus in question 1, please list any skills courses (see p. 3 for explanation of "skills" courses) you will include in your course of study.

3. What courses have you already taken in Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies?

