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5/13/2015

Women's Studies Assessment Plan

WS Program Mission statement:

The Women's Studies program offers a multi- and interdisciplinary approach to the study of gender, equality, and social justice. Through our courses and our co-curricular events, the program fosters a community of learners who are educated to become leaders and agents of social change, capable of identifying and addressing critical world problems.

Women's Studies Program Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the women's studies program, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of women's experiences in history, society and culture and be able to critically analyze those experiences
2. Articulate an understanding of the complexity of power structures and modes of authority, especially as they pertain to structural and institutional modes of power
3. Understand and provide critical commentary on key works of feminist scholarship and creative work
4. Have a sophisticated understanding of feminist perspectives, including points of commonality as well as debates among feminists.

Specific objectives (student learning outcomes) for each of the content areas of the major

Foundational/praxis courses:

The required courses for the women's studies major introduce students to the complexity of both women's and gender issues, including the ways that such intersect with class, race, and other forms of identity and difference. The foundation courses also introduce students to the concept of "praxis" in women's studies, that is, to the history and diversity of feminist theoretical views and their complex relationship to feminist political practices and solutions. To that end, the foundation/praxis courses also will provide students with beginning experiences in developing their own leadership skills by engaging them in group, campus- and community-based learning assignments that are informed by the scholarship and practice of feminist leadership studies.

Upon completion of the foundation/praxis courses, students will be able to think critically about gender, women's lives, and their own experiences and will be able to analyze stereotypes and cultural representations of gendered norms.

Learning goals and objectives.

After taking the foundation/praxis courses, students will have a basic understanding of:

- the diversity of feminisms, including debates within the feminist movement and a sense that there are differences historically and cross-culturally
- theories that motivate the social, cultural, political, and literary studies of women, gender, and feminist issues
- the relationship between theory and practice and the importance of that relationship in women's studies, and
- their own leadership skills and abilities as social change agents, informed by the scholarship and practice of feminist leadership

Area A: Historical Knowledges (material, cultural, social)

This area grounds students in the general field of women's history. In keeping with the contemporary scholarly focus on pluralistic "histories" rather than on the more reductive and globalizing notion of "history," this area's approach will expose students to Western and non-Western, transnational, and transcultural histories and thus to diverse historical experiences of women. To this end, courses will not focus solely on American history and nor will they pertain exclusively to the academic field of history. Rather, this multi-disciplinary area will allow students to investigate historical developments through multivalent approaches. As a result, students will attain a more complex knowledge of the evolution of women's histories as they examine the historical evolution of the concept of "woman" across national, social, cultural, and political boundaries. Moreover, through courses featuring historical accounts of the emergence of international women's movements and changing perspectives on gender, women, and feminist issues over time, students will gain an understanding of the richness and diversity of feminisms as well and of the historical roots of contemporary feminist concerns.

Learning outcomes for Area A. Area A aims to satisfy the following learning outcomes:

Students will understand:

- A foundational grounding in women's history/ histories, including historical accounts of the emergence of the women's movement, in the US and globally
- Changing perspectives on gender, women, and feminist issues over time; the development and evolution of ideas on these issues
- An appreciation of the richness and diversity of feminisms
- An understanding of the historical roots of contemporary feminist concerns

Students who choose to take multiple courses in this area will likely achieve all of these outcomes.

Area B: Social and Behavioral Sciences:

Courses in the social and behavioral sciences will provide students with an understanding of the contemporary reality of women's lives and gender relations and enable them to analyze the concept of gender critically. Students will use institutional, structural, and behavioral analyses to assess gender relations and women's status in various societies. Cross-cultural, global, and intersectional perspectives will connect gender inequality to other categories of oppression and allow students to comprehend the diversity of women's experiences. Students in these courses will gain a critical understanding of how various research tools, including quantitative and qualitative methodologies, are used to study women and gender. Students will learn how feminism has informed both social research, and how social research has informed feminist theory.

Area B aims to satisfy the following learning outcomes:**Students will understand:**

- cross-cultural studies of women's lives and gender issues
- the intersectionality of women's issues with those of other types of oppression
- how various types of research tools and social/behavioral science research methods are used to study women and gender
- Institutional, structural, and behavioral analysis of gender and/or women's lives

Students who choose to take multiple courses in this area will likely achieve all of these outcomes.

Area C: Representations and Expressions (creative, literary, and visual arts)

Courses in the literary and visual arts demonstrate the various methods women have employed to achieve voice and visibility. Such efforts at representation lead to critical points about the attainment and negotiation of power and agency. These courses will also expose the reality of women's lives and concerns, including their social and/or political views, issues of sexuality, and the relationship between the personal and the political. Analyzing multiple texts of women's lives in such detail necessitates an examination of the cultural and/or global diversity of feminist perspectives and feminist political/social/cultural movements. Ultimately, students will emerge from these courses with an enhanced ability to express themselves critically on the subject of creative and culturally diverse texts that address women.

Area C aims to satisfy the following learning outcomes:**Students will understand:**

- how a multiplicity of feminist perspectives and movements demonstrate the cultural and/or global diversity of women's issues and concerns
- the ways in which various literary and/or artistic works expose the reality of women's lives and concerns, including their social and/or political views, issues of sexuality, and the relationship between the personal and the political

- how and why literary and/or artistic works have been utilized by women writers/artists to express women's issues, find women's voices, and/or explore women's sense of agency
- how women are represented in both literary and/or visual arts

Students who choose to take multiple courses in this area will likely achieve all of these outcomes.

“Theory Intensive” Courses meet the following objectives and goals (in addition to any area objectives/goals above that they also fulfill):

1. Students will learn how to read relevant secondary literature that employs at least one feminist theoretical perspective and discuss its relationship to primary texts.
2. Students will learn how to write lengthier argumentative essay or research papers that emphasize the use of research methodologies and/or style sheets appropriate to that course and assignment
3. Students will learn relevant feminist theories and learn to reflect on the relationship between feminist theory and practice.

Assessment

The Women's Studies program already has a positive track record of assessing its Women's Studies Concentration; we will build on those experiences in our assessment of the major. We will continue to measure student attainment of PLOs by the following direct and indirect means:

- 1) a rotating assessment of course-level SLOs as they articulate with each of our major's four PLOs, which roughly correspond to area requirements for Historical Knowledges; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Representations and Expressions; and the theory intensive requirement;
- 2) intake and exit surveys of students in both the major and the concentration;
- 3) alumni surveys;
- 4) an annual faculty retreat in which we review and discuss courses, including pedagogy, content, and achievement of goals and objectives, and engage in participatory strategic planning.

Three-Year Assessment Plan:

AY 2014/2015:

Collect and analyze data specific to PLO #2: “Articulate an understanding of the complexity of power structures and modes of authority, especially as they pertain to structural and institutional modes of power.”

Dr. Meghan Rich and Prof. Justine Johnson will collect data from two courses designed to map onto PLO#2, SOC 220: Social Stratification, and WOMN 215/SOC 315: Feminism and Social Change, respectively. Each will select one or more course-level SLOs and collect appropriate data. They will then meet with the Chair to discuss how effectively the courses articulate with PLO#2 and recommend changes as necessary and appropriate. Finally, a brief report will be drafted and circulated to the Program Steering Committee and included in annual reports. Participating faculty will report briefly at the following year’s annual retreat on any changes implemented as a result of the assessment process.

Benchmarks for student performance will be established using data collected in each area over time. We expect that this data will enable us to identify specific benchmarks after the completion of the first three-year cycle.

AY 2015/2016:

Collect and analyze data specific to PLO #3: “Understand and provide critical commentary on key works of feminist scholarship and creative work,” and PLO#4: “Have a sophisticated understanding of feminist perspectives, including points of commonality as well as debates among feminists.”

Faculty volunteers will be selected based on which courses are offered in any given year; the procedure will be the same as that outlined for AY 2014/2015.

AY 2016/2017:

Collect and analyze data specific to PLO #1: “Demonstrate an understanding of women’s experiences in history, society and culture and be able to critically analyze those experiences.”

Faculty volunteers will be selected based on which courses are offered in any given year; the procedure will be the same as that outlined for AY 2014/2015.

The program level assessment cycle will be repeated every three years. It may be modified to target areas of specific concern or improvement based on a given year's findings.