

Women's and Gender Studies Major Description

Women's and Gender Studies is a 44 unit major housed in the School of Social Sciences at Sonoma State University. Women's and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary and dynamic discipline that is a major presence at universities throughout the country and increasingly, the world. The major offers students the ability to acquire knowledge and develop skills in the following ways:

KNOWLEDGE. Students are trained to critically examine the experiences and opportunities of women and men in relation to race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and nation. Students develop an understanding of masculinity and femininity as historically and culturally specific constructions that shape human development. Students acquire an advanced appreciation of how and why gender influences and is embedded in the division of labor, mechanisms of social control, and major societal institutions including the family, health care, education, law, religion, the workplace, and the media. Students gain important knowledge about historical and contemporary forms of resistance and activism around issues of gender including feminist movements, gay rights movements, men's movements, women's health movements, and others. Students learn about the major themes in feminist theory and applications of feminist theory to real life problems.

SKILLS. The curriculum consistently reinforces the development of strengthened abilities in writing, critical thinking, group project planning and public speaking. Furthermore, WGS students are required to complete a major research project (WGS 425) that provides them with skills in qualitative data collection and analysis.

EXPERIENCE IN THE REAL WORLD. WGS requires a 4 unit internship. Most students complete this requirement through service in several settings, thereby increasing student experience in different work environments and enhancing their resumes for employment. A complete databank of available internships is maintained and continually updated by the WGS Department. Examples of internships include: Planned Parenthood, United Against Sexual Assault, YWCA, Circle of Sisters, several local elementary and secondary schools, Read to Me Program, Women's Health Resource Center at Sutter Community Hospital, National Women's History Project, and numerous other opportunities.

ABILITY TO DOUBLE MAJOR OR MINOR. WGS encourages students to double major or minor in another discipline. The 44 unit major is designed to effectively and efficiently coordinate the number of units necessary to accomplish these goals.

PREPARATION FOR ADVANCED STUDY. Many WGS majors pursue advanced degrees. WGS prepares students by providing a foundation in the major trends in feminist theory and research and research and writing skills. Past students have presented papers at conferences and submitted articles for publication in preparation for graduate school. WGS majors have also spent a semester in a university in another country (Ireland and Australia most recently) providing them with experiences and opportunities valuable to advanced education and career development.