

# Assessment of Student Learning Plan (ASLP): Academic Programs

2015-16 Academic Year

University of Southern Maine

## A. College, Department, Date

*College* Academic Affairs  
*Department* Women and Gender Studies  
*Date* June 1, 2016

## B. Contact Person for the Assessment Plan

Lisa Walker, Director of Women and Gender Studies

## C. Degree Program

B.A. in Women and Gender Studies

## D. Assessment of Student Learning: Program Assessment

### Step 1: Identify the Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's)

- a. Do you have your student learning outcomes published on your department's website? Yes/No

#### Student Learning Outcomes for Women & Gender Studies

1. Students can identify and discuss key intellectual, historical, and political events that led up to and supported the theories that "gender is natural," "gender is a social construct," and "gender is a performance."
2. Students can define, discuss and apply within historical contexts, key concepts in Women and Gender Studies, including sex and gender, patriarchy, misogyny, biological essentialism, homophobia, social construction, performativity, intersectionality, and agency
3. Students can recognize, interpret, and critique representations of women and men, femininity and masculinity, cisgender and transgender, both inside and outside the United States.
4. Students can compare and assess theories of gender and the intersections of gender with other forms of identity and difference such as race, class, religion, sexuality, nationality, ability and species.
5. Students can engage intellectually the consequences of difference as manifest in diverse ethnicities, sexualities, and political perspectives.

6. Students can synthesize course work with independent reading and practice outside the classroom to produce a substantial written or oral project and reflect on their experience with difference.

*Please identify **which of your student learning outcome(s) were assessed this past academic year.** (One or more of the outcomes and corresponding assessment plans could come from your department's CORE Course Blueprint(s).*

The Women and Gender studies program did not formally assess individual learning outcomes this year. Instead, responding to the drastic reduction in WGS council membership following last year's retrenchments, we chose to focus on changing the requirements for the WGS major. First, we reduced credit-hours from 42 to 36, cutting the number of elective credits that students need to graduate from 18 to 12. (See attached WGS Major Worksheet). This will enable students to make timely progress towards degree, as there are fewer elective classes offered per semester than in the past.

Second, we suspended the pre-1800 requirement until we have enough faculty to offer it more regularly. This will have an impact on the breadth of what we can accomplish for learning goal # 1 as far as teaching students to "identify and discuss key intellectual, historical and political events" leading up to current theories of gender and sexuality, and for learning goal # 2 as far as teaching students to "define, discuss and apply within historical contexts, key concepts in women and gender studies." Part of our assessment work next year will include reviewing our curriculum to think about how we might emphasize historical contexts in WGS 101, 201, 380 and 390.

In spite of diminished faculty resources, the WGS program has begun planning to assess Outcome #6, "Students can synthesize course work with independent reading and practice outside the classroom to produce a substantial written or oral project and reflect on their experience with difference." We have developed a two-semester thesis sequence for WGS thesis students, and are now developing rubrics to assess "substantial written and oral projects" that students produce as part of the capstone requirement.

- b. Do you have a **matrix or curriculum map** showing when your student learning outcomes are assessed and in which courses? Yes/No*

See below.

### Curriculum Map for Women & Gender Studies

	Objective I Define, discuss and apply	Objective II Identify	Objective III Compare and assess	Objective IV Recognize, interpret and critique	Objective V Engage intellectually	Objective VI Synthesize
EYE 109 Gender, Representation & Resistance	I	I	I	I	I	
100 Introduction to WGS	I	I	I	I	I	
201 Women, Knowledge and Power	R	R	R	R	R	I
380 Politics of Difference	M	M	M	R	R	R
390 Contemporary Feminist Theories	M	M	M	R	R	R
485 & 486 Internship & Thesis	M	M	M	M	M	M
490 Capstone	M	M	M	M	M	M

#### **Step 2: Assessment Methods Selected and Implemented**

- a. *Identify which direct measures (other than course grades), that were used to determine whether students achieved the stated learning outcomes for the degree.*

This year, WGS began collecting rubrics for assessing Outcome # 6, “students can synthesize course work with independent reading and practice outside the classroom to produce a substantial written or oral project and reflect on their experience with difference.” Sample scoring rubrics were collected for the thesis and the internship paper, which are WGS’s major written capstone projects, and for the oral presentation of capstone projects for the Women and Gender Studies Research Symposium (see attached rubrics). Next year, a group of faculty will adapt these rubrics so that they are institution and program-specific.

- b. *Briefly describe when you implemented the assessment activity, and if a scoring rubric was used to evaluate the expected level of student achievement. (This information may be shown on your curriculum map).*

Outcome #6 Assessment: All seniors completed a research project during spring 2016, and presented their work in the Women and Gender Studies Research and Awards Symposium in May.

WGS has not yet begun direct measurement of learning goals with rubrics. This year, however, WGS collected ungraded capstone student papers (internship and research papers for internship students, and theses for thesis students) for use next year in developing program-specific rubrics. Next year, a group of WGS faculty will review students' written work to assess Outcome # 6.

### **Step 3: Using the Assessment results to Improve Student Learning**

- a. *Briefly describe your unit's process of reviewing the program assessment results (i.e. annual process by faculty committee, etc).*

Assessment is led by the Director of Women and Gender Studies in consultation with a faculty committee.

- b. *What changes have been or will be made to improve student learning, as a result of using the program assessment results?*

Improve the Academic Process for Thesis Students: This year, the Women and Gender Studies program revised its pathway for thesis students by creating a two-semester thesis requirement that offers the possibility of collaborating with the Honors Program. In the past, students were encouraged, but not required, to begin work on a thesis in an Independent Study during the fall of senior year. Students who did not do an Independent Study completed a one-semester thesis, and consequently, the final project was sometimes less well-researched and less polished than we had hoped to see. Beginning in the fall 2016, students will be required to do substantial work on the thesis in the fall semester of the senior year by taking either WGS 470: Independent Study, or HON 311: Honors Thesis Workshop. The new requirement, and the new collaboration with the Honors Program, should help students begin research sooner and produce more polished manuscripts. Our first student to complete a two-semester thesis sequence in collaboration with the Honors program defended her thesis in April 2016, and the members of her thesis committee plan to meet with the Director of the

Honors program this summer to review and adjust the process of collaboration and the format of the thesis defense.

Next year, WGS will adapt the rubrics we collected in Spring 2016 to our own program, and a group of faculty will use the rubrics to assess spring 2016 and spring 2017 capstone projects.

*c. Date of most recent program review/self-study?*

The program performed a self-study in 2012 and underwent External Program Review in 2013. Learning goals were most recently revised in 2014.

**E. Course Assessment Activities:** *Is your program able to report any assessment-related activities at the Course-Level... (i.e. created grading rubrics to use in required courses, examined student progress in entry-level courses, developed a new course, etc)? Please briefly explain any assessment projects.*

Indirect methods of assessment for courses included focus groups led by the Director with current WGS seniors about their satisfaction with WGS 201: Women, Knowledge and Power and WGS 485: Capstone, as well as interviews with part-time faculty members teaching WGS 101: Introduction to Women and Gender Studies and WGS 201, about their thoughts on the curriculum for each class.

**F. Community Engagement Activities in your departmental curriculum:**

*a. Does your department have a student learning outcome that is related to any community engagement activities? If so, please state the outcome.*

WGS has over 50 community partners, and a community-based curriculum in that it emphasizes the understanding of diversity and difference within structures of power; it requires students to practice the exercise of ethical judgment and civic action. As our 2012 self-study states, the program is also committed to providing high-quality programming for WGS and other USM students exemplifies the coherence of an undergraduate experience that integrates classroom learning and out-of-class experiences into a dynamic and mutually reinforcing whole." Further, as the self study reports,

"**Community engagement** is also a crucial component in the WGS curriculum. At both the introductory and capstone level, WGS students collaborate with local or regional organizations in order to deepen their understanding of feminist theory, research, and activism as well as to provide partners with resources that advance their missions related to diversity and inclusivity.

**Internships** play a key role in the WGS curriculum. All majors either complete an 8-hour a week internship in their final year of matriculation, or write a 30-page senior thesis. The majority of students pursue the internship option. WGS interns have worked with a wide range of community partners . . .

Among alumnae/i surveyed for the self-study, 68% reported that their senior year internship experience was either very, or somewhat, useful to them professionally.”

b. Please indicate what community engagement activities are included in your program’s curriculum, and whether the activities are required or optional for students in your major.

<u>Community Engagement Activity</u>	<u>Included</u>	<u>Required/Optional</u>	
Student Research (related to a community-based problem)	<u>  X  </u>	R	O
Student-Faculty Community Research Project	<u>  X  </u>	R	O
Internship, or a Field Experience	<u>  X  </u>	R	O
Independent Study (community-related project)	<u>  X  </u>	R	O
Capstone Course (community-related project)	<u>  X  </u>	R	O
Service-Learning (course-based)	<u>  X  </u>	R	O
Study Abroad, or an International Program	<u>  X  </u>	R	O
Interdisciplinary Collaborative Project (community related)	<u>  X  </u>	R	O
Student Leadership Activities (related to a team project)	<u>  X  </u>	R	O
Students/Faculty Community Leadership (advisory boards, committees, conference presentations)	<u>  X  </u>	R	O

c. Please list any courses (i.e. EDU 400) that have a community engagement activity in your program.

*Entry-level courses:* WGS 101 and EYE 109 encourage student attendance at co-curricular events by connecting them with for credit, low-stakes reflection papers.

*Mid-level courses:* WGS 201, WGS 380, and SOC 365 (cross-listed with WGS) often tie the syllabus to co-curricular activities. This fall, for example, both WGS 201 and SOC 365 took students to the “Body World” exhibit in Portland, and provided readings and class discussion directed at a discussion of gender, racial and ethical issues in sourcing and displaying human remains.

*Upper-level courses:* WGS 490 requires an oral presentation of a capstone project at an event that is open to the public, the USM Women and Gender Studies Research Symposium. Students are also encouraged to submit their work for presentation at Thinking Matters.

**Reminder: Please complete and submit this form by the end of the academic year, May 2016.**

## The Women & Gender Studies Major (36 credit hours total)

All WGS majors must complete the major requirements listed below, as well as two "Topics Courses," and 18 credits of "Related Courses" (electives). The minimum number of credits required for the major is 36. All courses applied to the major must be passed with a grade of C or better.

### Major Requirement (18-20 Hours):

Course Title	Course #	Hrs	Term	Grade
Intro to WGS or EYE 109		3		
Women, Knowledge and Power	WGS 201	3		
Politics of Difference	WGS 380	3		
Contemporary Feminist Theories	WGS 390	3		
Capstone (2 Hours)	WGS 485	2		
Internship or Thesis (4-6 Hours)		4-6		
<b>Total Credit Hours</b>				

### One Topics Course from TWO of the Following Subject Areas (6 Hours):

Course Title	Course #	Hrs	Term	Grade
Gender, Science and Health Title:				
Gender, Culture and Arts: Title:				
Gender, History and Resistance Title:				
Women, Gender and Institutions Title:				
<b>Total Credit Hours</b>				

### Women & Gender Studies Related Courses: (12 credit hours minimum)

Course Title	Course #	Hrs.	Term	Grade
<b>Total Credit Hours</b>				