

Assessment of Student Learning Plan (ASLP): Women & Gender Studies

2016-2017 Academic Year

A. College, Department, Date

College Academic Affairs
Department Women and Gender Studies
Date June 1, 2017

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**

https://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/wgs/1.%20Learning%20Outcomes%20_%20Self%20Study%202012.pdf

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).

This year, WGS assessed 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 a rubric 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						
100 Introduction to WGS						

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, chose a rubric 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 used for the thesis and the internship papers, 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).

- 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 2017, and presented their work in the Thinking Matters conference in April. The Director of WGS used scoring rubrics at the Thinking Matters presentation, which were then reviewed for feedback by other WGS faculty who attended the presentations.

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 was led by the Director of Women and Gender. In 2017, WGS Capstone students met learning outcome #6 with scores in the “Excellent” and “Good” range on all criteria, showing that the WGS Capstone curriculum is aligned well with its learning outcomes.

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 continues to refine its delivery of a two-semester pathway for thesis students. In fall 2017, the two senior WGS students who are considering the potential thesis option will enroll in a combined section of HON 311: Honors Thesis Workshop/WGS 320: Advanced Topics: Feminist Thesis Workshop, taught by the Director of WGS. 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. The new requirement that students plan a two-semester thesis project should help students begin research sooner and produce more polished manuscripts.

Additionally, related to WGS 201, two focus groups, one with faculty and another with students, revealed that content and learning outcomes could be more clearly articulated for both instructors and students. Students expressed a desire to have a course that introduced them to feminist theory and critical race theory in ways that engaged with current events and issues of significance to WGS students. Faculty teaching 201 also agreed that introducing transnational feminisms, transcultural approaches to studies of race, gender and sexuality, and an introduction to feminist analyses of cultural production and interpretation were appropriate content for 201. Next semester, the WGS Curriculum Committee and interested faculty will explore how current learning outcomes are aligned with the refined focus of WGS 201.

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 a sequence of WGS core courses, including 201: Women, Knowledge and Power, WGS 390: Feminist Theories and WGS 485: Capstone, as well as a focus group with full- and 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> </u> X <u> </u>	R	<u> </u> O <u> </u>
Students/Faculty Community Leadership (advisory boards, committees, conference presentations)	<u> </u> X <u> </u>	R	<u> </u> O <u> </u>

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 require 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.

Upper-level courses: WGS 490 requires an oral presentation of a capstone project at an event that is open to the public, either the USM Women and Gender Studies Research Symposium or Thinking Matters.