



Assessment of Student Learning Plan (ASLP)

2019-2020 Academic Year

Overview Information:

Degree Program: B.A. in Women & Gender Studies

Contact Person for the Assessment Plan: Rose Cleary, Director

Current Date: May 26, 2020

List the date of the most recent academic program review/self-study: 2012

Program Assessment Plan Information:

Do you have a Formal Program Assessment Plan? Yes No

If **NO**, your department/program does not have a Formal Assessment Plan (beyond this academic year), please complete all sections of this ASLP form.

Mission Statement:

1. Provide your program's mission statement in the space below, or provide a link to the statement from your program's webpage.

The Women and Gender Studies Program at USM will use the transformative power of feminist education and scholarship, theory and action, to improve the lives of Maine people and the communities in which they live.

2. Briefly describe the ways in which your program’s mission statement is aligned with the USM mission.

USM mission states faculty are committed to fostering a spirit of critical inquiry and civic participation as we educate future leaders; *WGS mission* is to apply feminist pedagogical practices to cultivate students’ skills of theoretical analysis in their academic and community work for social justice.

USM mission embraces academic freedom for students, faculty, and staff, and advocates diversity in all aspects of its campus life and academic work; *WGS mission* is to utilize feminist principles to encourage students’ articulating their independent and diverse viewpoints and values and valuing those of others.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

If your program has diversity, equity, and inclusion related goals, or a diversity, equity, and inclusion statement; please provide a link to the statement and/or goals. Then, briefly describe any assessment activities related to your program statement/goals regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Women and Gender Studies students will

- *Engage intellectually the consequences of difference as manifest in diverse ethnicities, sexualities, and political perspectives.*
- *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.*

These diversity, equity, and inclusion goals are at issue in the assessment activities completed this year and those planned for AY 20-21. Our assessment focus has been on the concept of “intersectionality” and whether the scholarship, experiences, and points of view of people of color and people who are differently abled are sufficiently considered in the WGS program.

Assessment of Student Learning: Program Assessment Steps

Step 1: Program-level Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s)

- a. Please provide the **URL** for your **program-level student learning outcomes** as published on your department’s website:

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

- b. Please provide the **URL** of your **curriculum assessment map** showing when your student learning outcomes are assessed and in which courses:

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

- c. Please list the program learning outcomes which were assessed since the submission of your last ASLP (May 2019).
- *Engage intellectually the consequences of difference as manifest in diverse ethnicities, sexualities, and political perspectives.*
 - *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.*

Step 2: Assessment Methods Selected and Implemented /Summary of Results

In Spring, 2019, WGS students in two upper level courses (WGS 390 Contemporary Feminist Theories and WGS 490 Capstone Experience in Women and Gender Studies) were asked to write reflective essays assessing the quality of instruction they had received and their ability to apply “intersectional” and “disability” theories in their assigned research projects. The decision to focus on these particular aspects of feminist theory was based on student feedback regarding these areas.

These essays were reviewed by the WGS Faculty Council in Fall, 2019 and then referred to the WGS curriculum committee for follow up.

A subcommittee of the curriculum committee was then charged with conducting a curriculum review with particular attention to student concern that the WGS curriculum did not thoroughly introduce women of color feminism, had significant overlap between lower level and upper level courses, and did not cover disability studies.

The purposes of the review were to:

1. *Get a sense of coverage of 101, 201, and upper-level courses*
2. *Determine common overlap in readings and authors*
3. *Determine whether women of color feminism (intersectionality, black feminist theory, post-colonialism, transnational feminist theory) is introduced throughout the curriculum*
4. *Determine whether disability studies is introduced throughout the curriculum*

Findings of the curriculum review:

Lower-level courses (101 and 201)

Generally, both 101 and 201 contain significant amounts of feminist writing or introductory-level theory that is focused on the experiences of non-white persons in the US and globally. There are not heavy levels of duplication between the levels - on initial review, only one reading (Sojourner Truth's Ain't I a Woman) was duplicated between 101 and 201 among the syllabi we reviewed.

The 101 courses vary a lot, but most seem to introduce sex and gender and social construction, introduce race and class, introduce sexuality and LGBTQ+ Issues, introduce intersectionality, and include some historical coverage of the women's movement (including diverse actors) and some global feminism. Feminist disability studies is largely missing from these syllabi.

Upper-level courses (380 and 390)

The 380/390 courses also cover women of color feminisms, along with significant amounts of other material. The focus of these courses seems to reflect the discipline of the professor more than lower-level courses.

There are some readings widely used in the lower-level courses (Roxanne Gay's Bad Feminist, the Combahee river collective, McIntosh's knapsack) - that show up in upper-level courses (380/390). Feminist disability studies are also largely absent from these courses.

The level and pace of readings of 380/390 seems not too different from 201. We note that Sue Shon's Women of Color Feminism (which provided the platform for student critique of curriculum) did have a more challenging reading pace.

Broader notes:

It is true that the same writers on intersectionality and women of color feminism show up over and over - Crenshaw, Hill-Collins, Davis, Lorde, often foundational texts from the 1980s-90s. There is also a heavier focus on Black feminist theory than on transnational feminist theory, post-colonial feminist theory, indigenous feminisms, Latinx or other women of color feminist theory, etc.

There is very little disability studies scholarship throughout the curriculum as a whole.

With these findings regarding curricular content, the WGS curriculum committee recognized the need to collect additional feedback from students about their learning. Subcommittee members designed a survey for students in the program. Planned distribution of the survey in Spring, 2020 was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. We now intend to collect this information in AY 20-21.

Step 3: Using the Assessment results to Improve Student Learning

Reflective essays from students in Spring, 2019 have been utilized to focus a curriculum review in AY 19-20. With additional survey data to be collected in AY 20-21, faculty intend a more detailed coordination and mapping of WGS program goals / learning outcomes related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The intent of our work is to ensure that these outcomes are adequately introduced (entry level) and reinforced (mid-level) so that students can achieve mastery in their application of these aspects of feminist theory in their capstone projects.

Further, based on this experience of working with students' reflective essays as a means of assessment, the curriculum committee will propose the use of such assessments in other WGS required classes as a mechanism of ongoing program assessment.