



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES INTERDISCIPLINARY SIGNATURE AREA

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS)

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Proposal: To create a Signature Area in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, supported by a Center, joint faculty appointments, curricular innovations, and coordinated CLAS programming.

Background

From its earliest articulation in the 1970s, Women's Studies has been an interdisciplinary field incorporating women's history, the sociology of women, feminist philosophy, economics, political science, and psychology as central to the understanding of women's lives. As the field has matured, the focus has shifted from studying women in isolation to studying gender relationships. Women's Studies seeks explanations for women's subordinate status across a wide variety of spheres; Gender Studies more pointedly explores relationships among men and women and uses gender as a category of analysis in an effort to uncover the assumptions about masculinity and femininity that shape our institutions, practices, and ideologies. Recent attention to sexuality has further expanded Women's and Gender studies, forcing inquiry into the ways that norms of gender and sexuality intermingle and inform social relationships.

While it is important to recognize the impact of gender systems on individual men and women, it is also significant to understand the impact of gender on larger processes and institutions. For example, seeing gender and sexuality as central to the ways we order our world, scholars have rethought conventional narratives of the rise of democracy, demonstrating that the "universal," democratic subject was actually conceived as a white, middle-class, heterosexual man. As this example suggests, identities and experiences tied to race, ethnicity, class, nationality, and physical ability have been fundamental to the project of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, which has been at the forefront of a broad approach to diversity within research, curriculum, and the community. Courses and research in these areas focus on issues that are central to all of our lives (both materially and ideologically), and demonstrate the ways a wide variety of disciplines engage with these concerns.

Building on Our Resources

Identifying Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) as an Interdisciplinary Signature Area will build on the research and teaching strengths of faculty across the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. There are already more than twenty faculty members in CLAS with

research/teaching areas in WGSS including Joanne Addison, English; Brenda Allen, Communication; Elizabeth Allen, Psychology; Laura Argys, Economics; Pompa Banerjee, English; Allison Bashe, Psychology; Myra Bookman, MH/MSS; Michelle Comstock, English; Mary Coussons-Read, Psychology; Colleen Donnelly, English; Jana Everett, Political Science; Sonja Foss, Communication; Pamela Laird, History; Marjorie Levine-Clark, History; Susan Linville, English; Lorna Moore, Anthropology; Brad Mudge, English; Anna Sampaio, Political Science; Candice Shelby, Philosophy; Gillian Silverman, English; Cate Wiley, English; and Margaret Woodhull, MH/MSS.

The publications of these WGSS faculty members encompass a wide array of subjects, varying methodologies, and attention to global issues. A sample of these publications include:

- Brenda J. Allen, *Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity*. Waveland Press, 2004.
- Laura Argys, “Legislating Love: The Effect of Paternity, Child Support and Welfare Policies on Father-Child Contact.” (with H.E. Peters, H. Wynder, and J.S. Butler), *The Review of Economics of the Household* 2(3): 255-74.
- Jana Everett, “All the women were Hindu and all the Muslims were men: State, identity politics and gender, 1917-1951,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 36 (2001): 2071-80.
- Sonja K. Foss, Karen A. Foss, and Cindy L. Griffin *Feminist Rhetorical Theories*. Sage, 1999.
- Pamela Laird, *PULL: Networking and Success Since Benjamin Franklin*. Harvard, 2006.
- Marjorie Levine-Clark, *Beyond the Reproductive Body: The Politics of Women’s Health and Work in Early Victorian England*. Ohio State University Press, 2004.
- Susan Linville, *History Films, Women, and Freud's Uncanny*. University of Texas Press, 2004.
- Brad Mudge, *The Whore's Story: Women, Pornography, and the British Novel, 1684-1830*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Anna Sampaio, *(Terror)izing Latino Immigrants: Race, Gender, and Immigration Policy Post 9/11*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Our CLAS faculty regularly teach courses in WGSS. A sample of these courses includes:

- ANTH 4200/5200 Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective
- CMMU 4020/5020 Feminist Perspectives on Communication
- ECON 3100 Economics of Race and Gender
- ENGL 3450 Twentieth Century Woman Writers
- HIST 3343 Women in US History
- HIST 4307/5307 History of Sexuality
- HIST 4345/5345 Gender, Science, and Medicine, 1600-Present
- PHIL 3500 Ideology and Culture: Racism and Sexism
- PSC 4555/5555 International Women’s Resistance
- PSY 3611 Psychology of Women
- PSY 3235 Human Sexuality
- SOC 3080 Sex and Gender

Both the publication and teaching records of CLAS indicate active involvement in the field of WGSS, but the resources and curriculum structure devoted to WGSS are inadequate for a top research university. CLAS clearly has an excellent history of participation in WGSS work, but it is uncoordinated. In the past, faculty have made efforts to collaborate around WGSS research

and teaching (through ad hoc meetings and academic colloquia), but in the absence of institutional support, these efforts have been hard to sustain. Informal conversations make clear that faculty are eager for the University and CLAS to acknowledge and promote WGSS-related work.

Students, too, would benefit tremendously from a coordinated and visible WGSS program. Student interest in WGSS issues was clearly articulated in the Fall 2006 semester with the formation of GISA (Gender Issues, Scholarship, and Action), a student club which grew out of the one currently-required course for the Women's and Gender Studies minor. This club was featured in the *Advocate*, the article noting the absence of gender issues in existing student clubs. A WGSS space would provide a campus home for students who are committed to study and activism relating to women's, gender, and sexuality issues.

Curriculum Structure

Although a minor in Women's and Gender Studies exists, it does not reflect the strength of our WGSS faculty nor the demands that students make for WGSS courses. For example, ENGL 3400/HIST 3611, Introduction to Women's Studies, is the only core class, and it has often over-enrolled since it was instituted in 1986. Moreover, there is no comparable course at the graduate level. The Masters of Humanities and Social Sciences programs offer graduate students the option to concentrate in WGSS areas, but these students have remarked on the lack of availability of WGSS courses at the 5000 and 6000 levels.

In the past year, a group of faculty have made concerted efforts to increase the visibility of the Women's and Gender Minor, including the creation of a website (<http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/clas/wgst>) and a name change from Women's Studies to Women's and Gender Studies, to reflect the current state of the field. We have also attempted to institute a course heading (WGS) for cross-listing courses, but have met obstacles in implementing this essential component for alerting students to the existence of the minor. The creation of a WGSS Signature Area is crucial not only for faculty development, but also to enhance and make visible curricular developments for students.

With a WGSS Signature Area, we would also implement much-needed core courses at all levels of the curriculum and facilitate interdisciplinary faculty teaching. At the 3000 level, we would offer the core course for the minor, but in radically different form than it is offered now. This would be a truly interdisciplinary introduction to women's, gender, and sexuality studies, incorporating ideas and methods from across CLAS departments. At the 4000/5000 level, we would offer an advanced survey of feminist thought. In addition, we would institute a 6000-level course for graduate students, "Theories and Methods in Feminist Research." These new interdisciplinary core courses are necessary to enrich our already strong discipline-specific courses in WGSS.

Faculty across departments often are not aware of the links that exist across CLAS, nor is there any systematic attention to WGSS curriculum planning. For example, in Spring 2007, the history department is offering History of Sexuality, and psychology is offering Human Sexuality. While these courses are clearly complementary, students might be better served not having to

choose between them in the same semester. With a strong interdisciplinary program in WGSS, including support staff, course offerings across the college could be better managed. This seems especially important as the visibility of the program and the numbers of students interested will increase.

WGSS Center, Faculty, and Staff

As a top research university, UCDHSC needs to have a Center supporting both academic research and wider issues relating to women, gender, and sexuality. A physical space for the Center would provide a place to establish a WGSS library, a location for students to gather, and a setting in which to hold seminars. The Center would offer a crucial place for students experiencing gender-related problems to receive assistance and referrals to Student and Community Counseling Center. The WGSS Center would also regularly sponsor events such as symposia and lecture series on issues relating to women, gender, and sexuality.

The administrative structure of WGSS would include a director drawn from the CLAS faculty and a steering committee made up of interested CLAS faculty (possibly on a rotating basis). The director and steering committee would work together to systematize curriculum, plan events, and advise students interested in the WGSS program. Staff support would assist the director of WGSS. Faculty participation in WGSS would come from our existing CLAS departments, but we also need new faculty lines which could be specified as joint appointments with WGSS.

Cross-School and Cross-Campus Collaboration

WGSS scholars and teachers in CLAS have interests which closely intersect with the Program on Domestic Violence in the Graduate School of Public Affairs; with the Health Sciences Center's various women's health initiatives (such as the Women's Health Research Center); with programs run by Auraria's GLBT Student Services; and with emerging activities at the Center for Bioethics and Humanities. In the past, CLAS has lost crucial opportunities to merge resources and ideas with these other institutions and programs. For example, in 2005, there was a Colorado Research Symposium on the Health of Women and Girls. GSPA was a sponsor for this event. CLAS had representation through a presentation by Professor Lorna Moore, but was otherwise not involved. With a WGSS Signature Area, we might enlarge an event like this to include particular perspectives from the humanities and social sciences. WGSS would also promote opportunities to collaborate with other Auraria institutions. Metro State's Institute for Women's Studies produces a calendar each year for Women's History Month, on which UCD has been sadly underrepresented. The creation of a Signature Area in WGSS would not only ensure increased involvement and visibility of CLAS faculty, it would also spark genuine academic collaboration across the city.

Community Connections and Diversity Initiatives

Denver is home to many organizations which would welcome coordinated participation from WGSS students and faculty. These include organizations such as Smart Girl and Girls Inc., which are interested in building mentoring connections between college students and younger girls in the community. This kind of community involvement is not a response to current University strategic planning but an integral part of women's and gender studies, which has

always positioned itself at the intersection of scholarship and activism, research and practice. The Women's and Gender Studies minor already requires a service-learning component which forces our students to become involved with community programs. WGSS would create a more conspicuous and planned interface with the Denver community.

As diversity becomes a central part of the University's mission, it is essential to maintain a broad definition of just what diversity means. Because Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies highlights the interrelationships among a wide variety of social identities and practices, it will serve the interests of our students and our faculty. Scholarship in the areas of WGSS emphasizes the dynamic connection among different forms of social exclusion, such as those pertaining to race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and physical ability. With UCDHSC's emphasis on creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, CLAS can demonstrate its commitment to a broad definition of diversity and inclusion by identifying WGSS as a Signature Area.

Five-Year Plan

- X Distribution and analysis of faculty and student questionnaires to obtain further feedback on interests and needs relating to WGSS
- X Establishment of new core WGSS courses at the 3000, 4000/5000, and 6000 levels
- X Establishment of Smart Girl mentoring program (already in existence at Colorado Springs and in the planning phases at UCDHSC); see <http://www.smart-girl.org/>
- X Creation of brochure and website for WGSS (incorporating the CLAS Women's and Gender Studies website and student group GISA [Gender Issues, Scholarship, and Action])
- X Conference in conjunction with "Changing the Face of Medicine: Celebrating America's Women Physicians," American Library Association/National Library of Medicine traveling exhibit to be hosted at Denison Memorial Library, April-May 2009; see <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/>
- X Publication of volume of papers associated with "Changing the Face of Medicine" conference
- X Establishment of WGSS Center
- X Hiring of first joint appointment with WGSS

Funding Possibilities

NEH Challenge Grants: "NEH challenge grants help institutions and organizations secure long-term improvements in and support for their humanities programs and resources." Requires matching funds. (<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/challenge.html#program>)

NEH Grants for Teaching and Learning Resources and Curriculum Development: "Grants for Teaching and Learning Resources and Curriculum Development support projects that improve specific areas of humanities education and serve as national models of excellence. Projects must draw upon scholarship in the humanities and use scholars and teachers as advisers." (<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/teachinglearning.html>)

We have been in contact with Don Bridger of the Division of Sponsored Programs Administration, who is assisting us with additional funding possibilities.