

Program Assessment Plan Template

Program Name: Women's Studies Program

Department:

Assessment Year: 2005-06

Plan Contributors: Bauer, Chikwendu,
Kesselman, Hewett

Step One : Who are you and how do you do what you do?

I. A. *Mission Statement: (Who are you and what do you do?)*

The Women's Studies Program at SUNY New Paltz, founded in 1972, was among the first women's studies programs within the SUNY system and in the country. Long considered the flagship women's studies program among the four-year SUNY colleges, the Women's Studies Program is an interdisciplinary academic program that offers a Bachelor of Arts degree and a minor; and until the State's standards changed, offered a Women's Studies/Elementary Education major. Our courses encompass the study of women's historical experiences, analysis of the presuppositions of academic disciplines from a feminist perspective, and a general exploration of women's social, cultural and political experiences in the U.S. and globally.

Our mission is twofold: to provide students majoring and minoring in Women's Studies with specific, challenging, program-based courses grounded in feminist analysis and centered on the inquiry into gender and women's experiences; and to serve the greater student body through GE electives. Our objectives include ensuring that our courses and curriculum are racially and ethnically inclusive and reflect a transnational perspective. We are committed to addressing the connections between women's experience and other systems of domination. Overall we offer courses that are broad-based, interdisciplinary and representative of the latest feminist research on women and gender.

As an interdisciplinary program, we are committed to initiating and fostering campus-wide conversations about women's and gender-related issues as well as feminist scholarship. Our objectives thus include providing education and leadership on women's issues, on campus as well as in the greater community.

I.B. *Scope of your program: (What are the boundaries of your program?)*

The Women's Studies Program has both fixed and fluid boundaries. Our program is comprised of two kinds of courses: the women's studies-generated courses that provide the core curriculum and the department-generated courses that provide feminist perspectives within specific disciplines. We offer a major, a minor and until December 2003, we offered a women's studies concentration in elementary education. We still have students completing that major.

The core curriculum provides the required courses for the major and the minor: *Women: Images and Realities*, the introductory course; *Practicum*, the class which supports the women's studies internship; and *Senior Seminar*, the capstone course taken by majors in their final semester. We are currently in the process of instituting an additional required course, *Feminist Theory*, which has just been approved for a permanent course number. Additional Women's Studies-based core courses that are options to

fulfill other major and minor requirements include *History of Women since 1890*, *History of Women after 1890*, and *Women and Work*.

Many of these core women's studies courses also contribute to the General Education Program. *Women: Images and Realities* enrolls up to 120 students each semester and fulfills the diversity requirement under GEII and III. Both of our women's history courses as well as *Women and Work* fulfill the US Studies requirement under GEIII, and *Women with Women* fulfills the diversity requirement under GE2 (and we are planning to submit it for GEIII). In addition, *Senior Seminar* is a writing intensive class and *Women: Images and Realities* has frequently participated in the FIG Program through collaborations with Black Studies, Sociology and English.

We have been adding significantly to our core courses by applying for permanent numbers for several special topics courses. Two courses, *Feminist Theory* and *Reproductive Law and Public Policy* (crosslisted with Political Science), were approved by the curriculum committee in December 2005. Two others, *Feminist Art and Culture* and *Love and Sex*, received minor comments, and we expect approval by early spring 2006.

Most of these core courses generated by the Women's Studies Program are interdisciplinary and informed by current feminist thinking and scholarship. Nationally and internationally, the vibrant field of Women's Studies continues to develop, as evidenced by the growing numbers of master's and doctoral degree programs around the country. One of the key characteristics of feminist scholarship is its interdisciplinarity; our women's studies-generated courses are vital in that they provide this multifaceted and cross-disciplinary inquiry into women's experiences. The women's studies core courses are thematically organized and bring a number of scholarly approaches to particular issues. For example, *Women and Work* combines historical, literary, legal, sociological and economic analyses of women's experiences of work.

The department-generated courses contribute a discipline-specific approach to women's experiences (i.e. *Psychology of Women*, *Women's Literature*) and/or include gender as a category of analysis within a particular discipline (i.e. *Gender and Anthropology*, *Communication and Gender*). These courses considerably broaden the women's studies-offered classes and are also vital to the program. However, since they are generated within specific departments and are supported by the Women's Studies Program, they cannot respond to the program's emergent needs nor serve the specific needs that the core curriculum does.

I.C. *What activities/processes contribute to the program? (How you do what you do?)*

In order to encourage departmentally-based faculty to offer women's studies courses, we contact faculty members who have done research about gender and encourage them to offer women's studies courses. We also have a colloquium series in which faculty members present their gender-related research in progress.

In order to develop courses that reflect the latest interdisciplinary research about topics important to women's experience, we offer core courses through the Women's Studies Program. Most of these courses are taught by full- and part-time women's studies-based faculty. Some department-based faculty members also teach these courses, and we welcome their participation. We also solicit and consider course proposals from qualified community members to augment the offerings of our

program. For example, in spring 2005 we offered a course entitled *Women and the Criminal Justice System*, taught by a part-timer who practices law in the community and has an MSW as well as a JD.

To educate the campus and community about women's issues, we organize an annual conference on topics that are of current interest. Past topics have included Woman, Gender, and Science; Women, War, Peace and Revolution; Women and Popular Culture; Women and Social Activism; and Women and Violence. These conferences include scholars involved in research on the topics as well as professionals and activists from the community, and they have attracted audiences of up to 300 people. We also bring speakers to campus and invite the campus community to our colloquia series. Finally, as part of our commitment to improving the position of women on our campus, we support feminist student organizations and co-sponsor programs with them.

As part of our educational mission, we create opportunities for students to cultivate experiences outside of the classroom. Our Practicum course, required for majors, revolves around internships on campus and in the community. It has enabled us to develop valuable connections with community organizations and has provided students with important experiences and networking opportunities that have helped many of them secure jobs after graduation. Some students engage in internships outside of the Practicum course as well.

Step Two: Where are you heading and what performances show your progress?

II. A. *What are your priority goals for the next five years (5-8 total)?*

1. *What do you want graduates to know? Be able to do? To believe?*

The Women's Studies Program seeks to prepare undergraduate students who:

- Are reflective and critical thinkers
- Have an understanding of feminist theory and the current issues that feminist scholars, professionals and activists are addressing
- Are sensitive to the intersection(s) of gender, race, class, nationality, culture, religion, and sexuality in their own lives and in the lives of others
- Can apply feminist theory and women's studies frameworks to both local and global contexts
- Are committed to working toward social justice and change in a democratic society, and believe in the importance of addressing women's experience in all fields of human endeavor

2. *What goals do you have for your program? (e.g. out of class experiences, advising, curriculum, faculty development)*

The Women's Studies Program seeks to:

- Maintain and develop a coherent, multidisciplinary, and diverse curriculum that reflects U.S. and global perspectives as well as new directions in women's studies scholarship
- Maintain effective teaching grounded in feminist pedagogies
- Maintain effective mentoring and advising procedures
- Retain and hire faculty involved in cutting-edge research in women's and gender studies and feminist theory
- Maintain and develop its role as a center for interdisciplinary work on gender
- Maintain its role as a community resource and participant in the feminist community

II. B. *What is the performance you desire to gauge your progress?*

1. *Student Learning Performances (outcomes)*

Students who have completed the Women's Studies Undergraduate Program should be able to:

1. Articulate and apply the core concepts of women's studies and feminist theory.
2. Identify significant historical themes of women's experience.
3. Identify the intersection(s) of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, and culture in women's lives.

4. Explain how women have used various cultural forms to express themselves and to effect social change.

2. *Program Performances*

1. Diverse curriculum: The program offers a rich and diverse range of courses that reflects

U.S. and global perspectives as well as new directions in women's studies scholarship

2. Effective teaching: Faculty utilize various pedagogical techniques (lectures, discussion, seminars, presentations, and classroom activities) grounded in an awareness of feminist philosophies and guided by syllabi that identify course objectives and student-learning outcomes

3. Out of class experiences: The curriculum advances students' abilities to engage in discipline-relevant coursework that allows them to apply knowledge and to engage in leadership positions on campus and in the community

4. Recruitment and retention of students: The program provides academic advising and guidance to current, incoming, and transfer students

5. Community-building: The program provides a community for students, faculty, and Hudson Valley community members through such activities as colloquia and conferences

Step Three: Describe your methodology

| II. B. 1 and 2 <i>Desired Performance (from previous step)</i> | III. A. <i>What aspects of the performance are critical to measure?</i> | III. B. <i>How (by what means) will you gather the data?</i> | III. C. <i>When will Assessment Begin?</i> | III. C. <i>Who is Responsible for What?</i> |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Student Performance 1:</p> <p>Students should be able to articulate and apply the core concepts of women's studies and feminist theory</p> | a. knowledge of core concepts | Use rubric to assess sample of essays in Senior Seminar in which students situate independent projects theoretically | 3/2007 | Rubric designed and essays read by Seminar Instructor and Coordinator |
| | b. ability to apply core concepts and use them to inform interpretations of subject material | same | 3/2007 | same |
| | | | | |
| <p>Student Performance 2:</p> <p>Students should be able to identify significant historical themes of women's experience</p> | a. knowledge of historical themes | Use rubric to assess sample of essays in Senior Seminar in which students trace historical theme(s) relevant to project | 3/2007 | Rubric designed and essays read by Seminar Instructor and Coordinator |
| | b. ability to situate subject material within its historical context | same | 3/2007 | same |
| | | | | |
| <p>Student Performance 3:</p> <p>Students should be able to identify the intersection(s) of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, and culture in women's lives.</p> | a. comprehension of the ways in which race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, and culture intersect | Use rubric to assess sample of essays from Senior Practicum or Feminist Theory | 11/2006 | Rubric designed and essays read by relevant instructors and Coordinator |
| | b. ability to trace these intersection(s) in women's lives | same | 11/2006 | same |
| | | | | |
| <p>Student Performance 4:</p> <p>Students should be able to explain how women have used various cultural forms to express themselves and to effect social change</p> | a. familiarity with at least one cultural form that women have used, either through student completion of specific courses or presence of appropriate texts on other course syllabi | Review of Women's Studies major plan and of other syllabi, to be conducted over a one-year period | 3/2006 | WS curriculum committee |

| | | | |
|--|--|--------|--|
| b. ability to formulate interpretative positions about how women's cultural productions effect internal, cultural, and/or political change | Use rubric to assess random sample of essays from literature, art history, and theater classes | 4/2008 | Rubric designed and essays read by appropriate instructors and Coordinator |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|-----------------|--|
| Program Performance 1: Diverse curriculum | a. Availability of courses that suit student interest | Student questionnaire, designed by student intern | 12/2005, 3/2006 | WS curriculum committee |
| | b. Variety and diversity in course offerings | Syllabi review, to be conducted over a one-year period; revision of courses as needed | 3/2006 | WS curriculum committee |
| Program Performance 2: Effective teaching | a. Variety in pedagogical techniques | Syllabi review, to be conducted over a one-year period | 3/2006 | WS curriculum committee |
| | b. Awareness of feminist pedagogies | WS faculty questionnaire, to be handed out after colloquia on feminist pedagogies | 2/2006 | WS steering committee |
| Program Performance 3: Out of class experiences | a. Variety of experiences | A random sample of essays from Practicum internships will be assessed. | 10/08 | Practicum instructor and WS curriculum committee |
| | | | | |
| Program Performance 4: Recruitment and retention of students | a. Perceived benefits by students | Student questionnaire | 12/2005; 5/08 | WS curriculum committee will assess results of questionnaire; coordinator will coordinate assessment of advising |

| | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| | b. Perceived benefits by faculty | Faculty will review students' suggestions and discuss their feasibility | 2/2006 | WS steering committee |
| | | | | |
| Program Performance 5: Community-building | a. Perceived benefits by community | Conference questionnaire given out to conference participants | 10/2005, 12/2005, 1/2006; 10/2007 | WS conference committee and steering committee |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

D. *What additional resources will you need to complete your plan?*

The assessment process will be quite difficult without more faculty in the Women's Studies program. As a stopgap, stipends for part-time faculty will help provide some of the personnel needed to carry out assessment. Longer term, we need at least one more full-time faculty member based in Women's Studies to help with this process. In addition, we need an increased budget for photocopying and additional materials, such as paper and toner.