ABOUT

The Department of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington includes eleven full-time faculty members, who are affiliated with History, Psychology and the Jackson School of International Studies, as well as 66 adjunct and affiliate faculty who hold appointments in other departments and share the feminist mission of GWSS. Intersectional and transnational analyses foreground our studies of race and ethnicity in U.S. and global contexts, as we analyze how these social formations intersect with gender, women, and sexuality in specific times and places. Our research and teaching complement and contribute to Ethnic Studies, Transnational Studies, and Women of Color scholarship.

In addition to our Feminist Graduate Program leading to a Ph.D., we offer undergraduate majors and minors in GWSS and graduate certificate programs in Feminist Studies and Sexuality and Queer Studies. All undergraduate majors are required to complete a senior capstone course and participate in an internship—distinctive marks of our commitment to excellence in writing and critical thinking, and to linking those skills to community-based social justice practice. Our alumnae hold important positions in academic, professional, and non-profit institutions.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our scholarship draws upon rich and varied histories of feminist thought to push the analytic edge of scholarship foregrounding gender, race and sexuality as integral components of local and global social structures, particularly within the contexts of capitalism, globalization, nationalism and neoliberalism. We orient around social justice concerns by employing a relational analytics of power, representation and transnational circulation. We see ourselves as pushing against various disciplinary, institutional and governmentality practices. The sites of our analysis include race/racism, ethnicity and immigration, cultural production and circulation, economic circulation and knowledge constructions, among many others. We draw on interdisciplinary methodologies to facilitate these inquiries which are strongly influenced by social sciences but reshaped through the humanities, genealogy, cultural studies and post-structuralism.

The scholarship in our department can be displayed across several overlapping clusters:

1. Gender, sexuality, violence and social justice
2. Transnational perspectives on gender, racism, ethnicity and U.S. ethnic formations
3. Political economy, popular culture and commodity circulation
4. Theorizing power and representation
5. Methodology: cultural studies, feminist science studies and inquiry

NAME CHANGE

2011-2012 marked our first year as the newly renamed Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies Department. Students at the graduate level will now receive their degrees and certificates in Feminist Studies. These changes reflect current debates in the field that involve feminisms in different historical and geographic contexts; push research and teaching in new directions; and speak to complex, powerful relationships among social categories.

Gender is critical to our collective work. The ways bodies and social relations are constituted within a field of power, both inside and outside of man/woman binaries, are central to our scholarship and teaching.

Women Studies is the history and future of our department. Analyses of sexism and of women's places in the world are critical to our work. We retain the non-possessive “women” instead of the more common “Women's
Studies” to indicate that our work as a department is not owned by or solely relevant to women.

Sexuality is integral to our scholarly and political inquiry into subjects as varied as reproductive politics, violence and war, racism, development, art and music, cultural studies, digital humanities, and queer studies.

Feminism is an analytic that opposes all forms of inequity and operates across traditional academic disciplines. Theories, politics, and histories grounded in decades of feminist scholarship allow our students to critique injustice and generate responses to oppression.

The core of this intellectual work articulates race and ethnicity in U.S. and transnational contexts, as we analyze how these social formations intersect with gender, women, and sexuality in specific times and places. This is an exciting time for us to discover debates of the past, evaluate debates of the present, and shape debates of the future!

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

The Women Studies Program was founded in 1970. The first course was offered in Autumn Quarter 1970 (PDF). Demand for the major grew over time and departmental status was achieved in 1996. GWSS in its current configuration builds on decades of feminist research, teaching, and organizing. Our graduate program is the first of its kind in the Pacific Northwest and one of less than twenty doctoral programs in the U.S.

All undergraduate majors are required to complete a senior capstone course and participate in an internship—distinctive marks of our commitment to excellence in writing and critical thinking, and to linking those skills to community-based social justice practice.

Intersectional and transnational analyses foreground our studies of race and ethnicity in U.S. and global contexts, as we analyze how these social formations intersect with gender, women, and sexuality in specific times and places. Our research and teaching complement and contribute to Ethnic Studies, Transnational Studies, and Women of Color scholarship.

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