Feminist Studies Doctoral Program

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the GWSS Department will be pausing our PhD Program admissions for the 2021-2022 academic year. However, we look forward to opening admission to our program in 2022-23.

Who We Are

The Graduate Program in Feminist Studies has a strong interdisciplinary orientation. Intersectional, Decolonial, Indigenous, Queer and Transnational feminisms foreground our studies of gender, sex, and sexuality in the US and elsewhere. Our core faculty specializes in research informed by Black Studies, Latina/o Studies, Asian American Studies, Latin America, East Asia and South Asia Studies and the disciplines including Anthropology, Cultural Studies, History, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology. In addition to our core faculty, nearly 100 adjunct and affiliate faculty from departments across the university offer courses and expertise to our students.

See Faculty for additional information about our doctoral program faculty and their research interests.

Our History

The Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2020. We started as a program in Women Studies in 1970 and became a department, with our own tenure lines in 1996. Our doctoral program, which began in 1998, awarded its first PhDs in 2006. Since then 29 students have successfully completed their PhDs in Feminist Studies. In 2011, we changed our name to Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies to better describe the scope and direction of the program.

Applying to the Program

Students applying to this program must have a strong academic background in Women, Feminist, Sexuality or Gender Studies. Applicants may have a bachelors or masters degree in any interdiscipline or discipline but should have a record of academic coursework or activism that includes study of such subjects as feminist theory and/or empirical and/or theoretical analysis of race, class, sexuality, and gender.

Program Requirements

Students pursuing the Ph.D. must complete at least 60 credits of course work, which include 20 credits of core seminars: GWSS 501: History of Feminism; GWSS 502: Cross Disciplinary Feminist Theory; and GWSS 503: Feminist Research and Methods of Inquiry, taken sequentially; GWSS 504: Philosophies and Techniques of Teaching, and 40 credits of coursework in research methods and the student’s areas of concentration.

Ph.D. students take a written and oral General Examination at the end of course work, usually in the third year of study. Within four weeks of the exam students are expected to submit a dissertation proposal and present it to their committee for discussion and approval. On successful completion of the exam and proposal defense, students are admitted to candidacy for the PhD. This marks the beginning of more intensive dissertation research.

Students must complete a minimum of 30 credits of dissertation research culminating in a publishable dissertation.

Preparing for Your Future

Our Ph.D. program is designed to prepare students for scholarly careers in feminist research and teaching interdisciplinary gender, women, and sexuality studies and/or related disciplines at the university/college level. Graduates of our Ph.D. program may also find employment with governmental agencies, non-governmental agencies (NGO's) and non-profit organizations working on social issues.

In recent years, our graduates have taken tenure-track positions at major universities, postdoctoral fellowships, research positions, directorships of Women’s Centers, and leadership positions in international organizations.

Our Departmental Expertise

The UW department of Gender, Women and Sexuality is reputed for scholarly expertise in women of color and transnational feminisms. We have growing foci in digital humanities, where we are well-known for innovative experimental exchanges with communities through music, dance, and visual cultures, and in queer studies, especially queer of color and transnational queer
Funding Your Graduate Studies

Incoming students, domestic and international, are typically offered a twelve-quarter funding package comprised of a combination of department-based research and teaching assistantships and University-wide fellowship funding secured through the department, subject to satisfactory performance (which is reviewed annually). Because of our desire to work intensively with each of our doctoral students and to fund our students through the majority of their graduate training, admission to the graduate program is highly competitive. We typically admit about two to four new students each year. Students with disabilities, as confirmed by Disabilities Resource Services, may qualify for additional funding.

Graduate Manual and Forms

Please consult the Graduate Manual for additional details about the procedures and policies of the UW Graduate School and the Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies. Please see Graduate Forms to download frequently used forms.

Feminist Studies Doctoral Program Pamphlet (PDF)

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