Program Assessment Report
Gender Studies Program
2007

Learning Objectives: What student learning outcomes are you assessing?

This year the Gender Studies Program revised its mission statement, clarifying for ourselves, and we hope for our students, our educational purposes. This revision was prompted by the program’s transition from Women Studies to Gender Studies in 2005-2006. This new mission statement now serves as the source of our intended student learning outcomes and their assessment. As a result, we were able to make some important adjustments and revisions to our assessment instruments this year, a process that will continue over the next few years as we fine-tune their use. The following is the new mission statement, adopted at a Gender Studies Advisory Committee meeting on 7 April 2007:

The Gender Studies Program focuses on the production of knowledge related to the categories woman and man, masculinity and femininity, female and male; because these terms always emerge in relation to one another, we believe they must be studied in tandem. We understand gender to be the construction of biologically sexed bodies into culturally-specific roles and behaviors and we seek to trouble the “naturalness” of these categories from historical and cross-cultural perspectives. Because we believe that gender definitions and roles are contingent, we view them as subject to revision and alteration. Such changes are not simple: as gender operates simultaneously on multiple registers—from the individual to the global—we believe that we must probe our own role in participating in and (re)producing gender categories, even as we seek to eliminate injustices that arise from gender inequalities.

In 2006 our program’s name changed from Women Studies to Gender Studies in order to reflect our own revisions and alterations of the meanings of “gender.” Our focus on gender reflects the complex convergences of multiple axes of identity. With gender front and center, the program examines identity categories including race, class, sexuality, ability/disability from perspectives that draw upon feminist, queer, race and post-colonial theories. The Gender Studies Program draws from scholarship in a range of intellectual traditions, including anthropology, art, biology, history, literary and media studies, rhetorical analysis, religion, sociology. This cross-fertilization energizes our analyses and produces a body of knowledge that is seldom available elsewhere in higher education.

In Fall 2007 the program will continue its assessment discussions, formalizing still further the specific learning outcomes we seek for our students.

Steps: What mechanisms are you using to assess the outcomes?

We currently have three assessment tools in place.
1. **Assessment of Gender Studies 494 Research Presentations**

This year the program piloted a new assessment tool, “Connecting Senior Presentations to Mission Statement.” The Gender Studies Advisory Committee used significant discussions at meetings to develop a plan for the use of our senior research seminar, GS 494: Gender Research Seminar, as a location for meaningful assessment of our program outcomes. Based on those discussions Chris Kline and Amy Ryken developed an assessment instrument for use at the public presentations of our seminar students, and tested that instrument, with the help of two other faculty (including another committee member and one “at-large” faculty member) at the presentations on 2 May 2007. The instrument is designed, specifically, to measure two particular outcomes, the presenters’ abilities to “demonstrate critical understandings of gender, sexuality, and culture, as well as their connections,” and their abilities to “apply understandings of scholarly work to life decisions.” The assessment process involves the completion of a simple grid form at the presentations. Following this test usage, Kline and Ryken compiled a report that included both their findings regarding student learning outcomes and their recommendations for continued refinement of the assessment instrument. Kline will lead a discussion of the recommendations during Fall, 2007 in anticipation of our continued use of this instrument in Spring, 2008. The 5 May 2007 report by Kline and Ryken, which includes the revised assessment form, is attached to this report.

2. **Exit Interviews**

For several years we have conducted exit interviews of our graduating seniors. In recent years we have asked our graduates the following five questions:

1. What enduring understandings do you take from the program as you graduate?
2. What do you believe will be the effect of Gender Studies on your future lives?
3. What are the strengths of the Program as you have experienced it?
4. What one piece of advice might you give our Program?
5. What would be your dreams for the Program?

The notes from the interviews of our 2006 and 2007 graduates are attached to this report.

3. **Five-Years-Out Survey of Graduates**

The Program’s first response to the growing need for assessment data took the form of a survey of former students. These surveys were very informative in providing an updated sense of learning outcomes as alumni routinely suggested their enhanced sense of the meaning of their education in their lives after college. It has now been several years since we have conducted this survey. The Program will revisit this assessment tool during our discussions in Fall 2007 in order to decide whether to continue the use of this instrument.

**Feedback: How is the information derived from your assessment used in program curricular planning?**
Though working without a formalized process for using our assessment data in program curricular planning, the Gender Studies Program has long made use of collected data to initiate significant revisions in multiple aspects of the Program. The Program will formalize a process for the use of assessment information in the coming year. Again, though, even without a formalized process, the Program has engaged in significant discussion with meaningful programmatic changes—curricular and co-curricular—as a response to our assessment findings. Below are a few of the most important changes prompted by assessment data in the last three years.

1. Transition from Women Studies to Gender Studies
This shift had been a topic of conversation for several years among Program faculty. In addition, in exit interviews students repeatedly encouraged this change, viewing the educational opportunities of Gender Studies to more broadly match their educational goals. In 2005-2006 the Program formalized this transition, changing the name of the Program and revising the capstone course accordingly. In 2006-2007 the Program rewrote its mission statement and celebrated a new dedicated gateway course, Gender Studies 201: Introduction to Gender and Feminist Studies, both important steps in completing the transition.

2. Creation of Gender Studies 201: Introduction to Gender and Feminist Studies
In their exit interviews over the last several years students routinely urged a heightened Program presence on campus—both curricular and co-curricular. One response to this request has been the development of the new gateway course, GS201. For many years the Program relied on Comparative Sociology 212 as its gateway course, and this course served us very well. More recently, though, Program faculty decided that a dedicated, multi-disciplinary gateway course was now appropriate, given the Program’s evolution and growth. This course has been in the works for many years, and benefited from Burlington Northern funding in its genesis. We are very grateful to Professor Joshi for shouldering the significant and heavy responsibility for preparing and delivering the first iteration of the course, which she taught in Spring 2007 with great success.

3. Addition of New Courses:
Students have also suggested their interest in expanded offerings in the Program’s elective courses. Program faculty have continued to develop new courses, and the Program has also continued to seek out elective courses taught by other campus faculty. Examples of new elective courses added in the last couple of years include Classics 225: Women and Gender in Greece and Rome; History 305: Women and Gender in Pre-Modern Europe; Religion 320: Women and Gender in Christianity and Islam; English 446: Studies in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century American Literature: Impolite Subjects—Sex and Gender in Early American Narratives.

4. Co-Curricular Events
Students have also suggested repeatedly their interest in substantial co-curricular opportunities as Gender Studies minors, seeking both the development of a learning
community and opportunities to continue learning outside the classroom. We have responded in multiple and varied ways to these suggestions. For instance, we now host at least one “Dinner and Theatre” event each year, involving a discussion over dinner with the director or dramaturg of a campus show, a discussion focused in particular on the dynamics and implications of the presentation of gender in the show, followed by attendance at a performance. Responses to this format have been very positive. (We had roughly 30 students and faculty in attendance for our event held in conjunction with this spring’s Arcadia production, directed by Jacalyn Royce.) Students have also responded very positively to our efforts to host lectures, roundtables and conversations featuring Program faculty, as well as our continued sponsorship of traditional visiting lecturers.