

PROPOSAL FOR A WOMEN'S STUDIES MINOR

Committee on the Status of Women

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I. Rationale

The philosophical rationale for Women's Studies is twofold: the need for more factual information on women and the need for new theoretical constructs by which to evaluate and conceptualize this information. The data are largely unavailable and unexamined within a traditional academic program; and the old theoretical constructs, male-created and male-defined, are largely unresponsive to female experiences. The thrust of a Women's Studies program is, thus, to re-examine human actions and assumptions from a perspective which is created and defined by the female experience.

This re-examination requires, first, that we include information traditionally omitted from our academic inquiries. It requires that we ask what women have contributed to our history, our institutions, our arts, our knowledge. It requires that we look beyond the obvious data and discover that women have, in fact, made specific, definable contributions. It requires, further, that we analyze the injustices by which the cultural hierarchy has prevented women from making other contributions.

This re-examination also requires that we seek out new theories by which to examine the available data. At present, the denial of women's experience is implicit in many theoretical constructs of our academic disciplines. For example, we are asked to understand mature adulthood in relation to psychological norms for masculinity. We are asked to express our thoughts through a language which uses "man" as the general term for human and "he" as the general pronoun. We are asked to understand our history as a study of power-structures, dominated by men, rather than as a study of the areas in which women's contributions have been strongest. We are asked to accept hormonal theories of behavior developed largely from a male point of view and to consider evolutionary theories through the idea of man-the-

hunter to the exclusion of woman-the-nursing-mother. All of these theories are only examples, but together they indicate the extent to which our academic inquiries have been formulated through the experiences and theories of the dominant masculine culture. Women's Studies opens not only whole new areas of information, but also whole new perceptions of knowledge.

Women's Studies is, thus, based in the feminist perspective. Its emphasis is on illuminating the injustices and omissions of our cultural and intellectual heritage. Women's Studies separates the experiences of women and attempts to define their uniqueness. But it does not aim to leave those experiences as a separate, ghettoized area of knowledge and education. Rather it aims to integrate and reevaluate so that we can reach an understanding of what are distinctly male or female experiences, what our culture has done to make those experiences misshapen for all of us, and what we need to add to our total education in order that it illuminate the human experience in all its manifestations, not primarily in its male manifestation.

In order to give focus and emphasis to this cultural re-examination at the College of Wooster, the Committee on the Status of Women proposes the creation of a Women's Studies minor. Through this proposed minor, students will be able to examine ideas from a feminist perspective in courses offered within a number of traditional disciplines. They will be able to coordinate their understandings through cross-disciplinary courses. They will find a unifying program from which to expand and integrate their new perspectives in other areas of the curriculum. Although the program will not be unified by a methodology nor by the creation of a new discipline, it will be unified by the use of the feminist perspective to reevaluate knowledge, to broaden understanding of human experience and to develop critical awareness. In doing so, it will lead toward fulfilling some major goals of a liberal education: to grapple with the implications of our social structures, to analyze the interrelationship of past and present, to extend the range of our perceptions and diminish our intellectual provincialism, to understand more fully our own experience.

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A minor in Women's Studies consists of 6 courses:

Interdepartmental 120: Women in Contemporary Society. (currently labeled Interdepartmental 210)

Any 4 of the single-discipline courses designated as Women's Studies courses.

Interdepartmental 310: Seminar in Women's Studies. (see III. Course Proposal)

The current offerings for a Women's Studies minor are as follows (with course descriptions):

Interdepartmental 120: Women in Contemporary Society. From the viewpoint of several disciplines, the course explores the roles and images of women in American society since World War II and how and why these roles and images have changed. This multi-disciplinary approach is an introduction to the growing field of women's studies, and the impact on various disciplines of the recent interest in and research on women will be considered.

Psychology 115: Psychology of Women. An introductory course which focuses on three content areas: psychological implications of events unique to women; psychological literature on sex-roles and developmental differences between men and women; and a feminist critique of the treatment of women in classic and current psychological theories and research. Social Science Division.

English 110: Poetry by Women (a specially designated section of the Experience of Literature). British and American women poets from the 16th to the 20th century. Special emphasis on the works of Denise Levertov and Adrienne Rich.

English 110: Major Fiction by Women (a specially designated section of the Experience of Literature). Novels by George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Doris Lessing. Analysis from a feminist perspective of both early novels, portraying female adolescence, and mature novels, portraying a complex social or emotional situation.

Physical Education 200: Women in Sports. Psychological, sociological, and physiological factors which contribute to an interest and ability to participate in sports with special reference to those factors particularly significant to women.

General Literature 232: Sex Antagonism in Western Literature. An investigation of the literary expression of attitudes toward women, sex, and love. A comparison of selected readings from Near Eastern, Greek and Roman, Hebrew and Christian literature and mythology with modern literature and mythology. The discussions will be concerned with the causes, the forms of expression, and possible solutions to sexual prejudice.

History 301: Women's History in America (a specially designated section of Problems in History). The title is self-explanatory. A research paper on a topic of the student's choice will be an important part of the course.

The minor, at present, will be administered by the Committee on the Status of Women, which will be responsible for reviewing proposed courses, advising departments on the development of appropriate new courses, reviewing current courses in order to prevent repetitious offerings, and supervising the interdepartmental courses.

III. Course Proposal for Interdepartmental 310: Seminar in Women's Studies.

A. Catalogue Description.

Interdepartmental 310: Seminar in Women's Studies. The course is designed to integrate previous course work in Women's Studies, through reading in women's accounts of their own lives and through individual student projects. The Seminar is the concluding course in the Women's Studies minor, but is open to any students who have taken at least three Women's Studies courses, including Interdepartmental 120.

B. Course Objectives.

Seminar in Women's Studies, Interdepartmental 310, will be the final course in the minor in Women's Studies. Its primary objective will be integration of information, concepts, and methods learned in the earlier courses in the minor. In a larger sense, the objective of Seminar in Women's Studies, as of the minor, is to help fulfill the traditional goals of liberal education: the unsettling of conventional assumptions, the questioning of values, the enlargement of understanding, the recognition of social and historical influences on the self, and the discovery of new and more lasting guidelines in one's own life and in social relations.

As a means toward realization of the objective, the course will emphasize study of the personal experience of women in diverse periods of the past, varied societies of the present, and different stations within society. First person accounts by such women--journals, diaries, and formal autobiographies--will constitute the main body of reading, but the course will begin with reading in relatively comprehensive theoretical works in Women's Studies. While common reading, designed to integrate the students' previous diverse course work, will be the principal activity of the course, students will also be able to pursue individual projects. Such projects could include a standard research paper, intensive reading in a particular type of material, or work with women and groups serving women in the local community. Regardless of which kind of

project is chosen, students in the seminar will share reports and concentrate on integration of their experience with Women's Studies in general.

C. Possible syllabus.

A rough outline, based on appropriate areas of consideration, the theoretical intent of the course, and the emphases in personal writings by women:

Weeks 1 & 2: Theoretical foundation for Women's Studies

Week 3: Personal writings as a tool of Women's Studies

Week 4: Parenthood

Week 5: Personal Relationships

Week 6: Work

Week 7: Power structures

Weeks 8-10: Concentrated work on individual projects; discussion and group consideration of these projects.

Possible texts include Lamphere & Rosaldo, Women, Culture and Society; Berenice Carroll, Liberating Women's History; Moffat & Painter, ed., Revelations: Diaries of Women; Working It Out.

D. Relation to other courses and departments.

Seminar in Women's Studies is a new course, replacing nothing in the present curriculum and having no close connection to any existing departmental courses, except that it will build on existing Women's Studies courses now offered in several departments and on the existing introductory Women's Studies course. The Seminar will probably be taught every other year and will be staffed, in turn, by the various faculty members teaching courses in the minor. The Seminar could be taught by a single faculty member or by a team. Since the Seminar will be an infrequent demand on the time of any one faculty member, it should have no significant effect on either departmental teaching loads or department contributions to Freshman Studies.

E. Library resources.

Library resources for the Seminar are currently adequate, in the sense that existing Women's Studies courses have an adequate foundation in library materials.

Since the Seminar represents the culmination of the minor, it is appropriate to note that the minor as a whole will require library resources in addition to those developed for separate courses. These additional requirements are primarily several Women's Studies journals, although from time to time there may also be theoretical monographs in Women's Studies and bibliographies that do not fall to any one departmental Women's Studies course. (See V. below.)

IV. Additional suggested courses.

Two additional courses will soon be proposed to the Educational Policy Committee by the departments involved. The Art Department will propose a course titled Women Artists in Twentieth Century America and the Sociology Department will propose a course titled the Sociology of Women.

The Committee on the Status of Women has made preliminary contacts with other departments which we feel have particular contributions to make to a Women's Studies program. These departments include Economics, Philosophy, Political Science and Religion. The director of Black Studies has also expressed an interest in the possibility of developing a Black Studies-Women's Studies course. The Committee will continue to be active in urging appropriate departments to develop Women's Studies courses and in working with departments with current offerings to refine those offerings in relation to the program as a whole.

V. Library resources.

In updating library holdings, the Committee on the Status of Women will rely heavily on the departments with Women's Studies offerings. As each course is proposed, it will be the responsibility of the proposing department to review the relevant library resources. Since this procedure has been in effect in the past, we assume that the library already has sufficient resources to sustain the basic needs of the current courses.

In a field of study which is of relatively recent interest and which often requires interdisciplinary perspectives, we need also to be particularly conscious of the journal literature. Andrews Library currently receives the following journals

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pertaining to Women's Studies: Ms. (1972-); Womensports (1975-); Women's Studies Newsletter (1976-); Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society (1975-); and we have received Feminist Art Journal (1973-77). The Committee on the Status of Women will be active in urging the additional acquisition of the following journals, listed in order of priority and selected for reasons of scholarship, subject matter covered, and compatibility with the courses in the minor:

1. Women's Studies Abstracts; vol. 1, no. 1 Winter 1972
P.O. Box 1, Rush, New York 14543
Quarterly 25.00/yr
2. Women's Studies; vol.1, no. 1 1972
Gordon & Breach Science Publishers
One Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016
3 issues/vol. 29.00/vol.
3. Feminist Studies; vol. 1, no. 1 Summer 1972
417 Riverside Dr., New York, N.Y. 10025
Irreg. 12.00 for 2 issues
4. Women & Literature; vol ., no. 1, 1972
Douglass College, New Brunswick, N. J. 08903
2 issues plus annual bibliography 7.00/yr