

1980

Women's Studies Major Planning Document 1980

Women's Studies

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To: Members of the Women's Studies Committee

From: Subcommittee on the Major (Ann Fitzgerald, Robin Bartlett, Cassie Wright, Joan Novak)

Draft

Guidelines

The Women's Studies Major is an interdepartmental program administered by the Women's Studies Committee and the Director of Women's Studies. The Committee reviews the educational programs of majors in consultation with their faculty advisors and coordinates the Women's Studies curriculum.

The purpose of the major is to enable students to explore the interrelationships among the following topics: the origins and effects of gender and sex roles; the impact of institutions on women; the historical forces that shape women's position in society; the role of race, social class and sexual orientation in the lives of white women and minorities; and the situation of women cross-culturally. Women and men majoring in Women's Studies are asked to make their contribution to a greater understanding of these issues by engaging in a directed study or field service project (and sharing their work with the Community). The goal of the major is to introduce students to the new scholarship on women and the implications of that scholarship for their lives.

The Women's Studies major attempts to provide the background relevant to careers in such areas as law, business, government, social services and women's movement work. It offers the breadth as well as the specialization appropriate for students who wish to do graduate work in Women's Studies or in another academic area.

The Major

A Women's Studies major will consist of a minimum of 32 hours distributed in the following way:

*1. Courses on gender and sex roles: normally, two courses from two of the following departments focusing on the social and biological development of women.

- a. Biology
- b. Psychology
- c. Sociology / Anthro.

*2. Courses on the impact of institutions and power structures on women: normally, two courses from two of the following departments focusing on the political, economic, and religious structures which shape the lives of women.

- a. Political Science
- b. Economics
- c. Religion

3. One course focusing on history and women.

- a. Interdepartmental Women's Studies
- b. History

4. Two courses focusing on discrimination: one from Black Studies and one with a Third World or multi-cultural perspective.

5. Seminar Project. Women's Studies majors are required to engage in a directed study or a field service project and to participate in the Women's Studies Colloquium.

6. One course, to be elected by the student, from the Women's Studies curriculum.

*The following courses, depending on their focus, may fulfill one of the course requirements for both #1 and #2: English 225, Philosophy 275, and Speech Communication 229.

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An Evaluation of Model I

Our task was to compare the individually designed major program with the proposed Women's Studies model which would consist of an individually designed program tailored to the specific student, and under the jurisdiction of a committee elected/appointed by the Women's Studies Committee.

In our opinion the essential difference between the two proposals is procedural.

- 1) The existence of a Women's Studies major would eliminate the need for justification of the proposed major by the student. The IDM committee always requests that students explain why they wish to pursue an independent major, that is to explain why they cannot pursue their interests through a regular major program.
- 2) The establishment of the major itself would lessen the burden placed on the student before the major begins. The IDM committee requires that students prepare a coherent proposal which includes a justification for the major, a rationale for courses selected and a description of the senior project or culminating senior experience. The reasons for this requirement are to determine the students' objectives, to help them put together a major, and to ensure that students have a coherent description of their major which can then be submitted to future employers, professional schools, etc. This proposal is the only document the university/students have to describe their experience. But, we recognized that writing such a proposal can be an awesome task for students. Therefore it could discourage students who are interested in women's studies but don't have a clear idea about their four year plans, from pursuing an individually designed major. Under the new proposal some of this pressure would be alleviated. However, we feel that there still should exist clearly defined guidelines for the students established by the women's studies committee, as well as close supervision to help students design their major and accomplish their goals during the course of the major.
3. The IDM committee requires some kind of culminating senior experience which varies from major to major. Some students take comps e.g. in philosophy; others write a senior research project. The new model may or may not include such a requirement.

We feel that apart from ruling out the possibility that the IDM committee could reject the idea of Women's Studies, which in itself is an improbability, given the charge of that committee and the 382 requirement, we do not see any significant differences between the two proposals. Ultimately the success of a Women's Studies Major pursued in either channel will depend on the student, and the faculty advisors or Women's Studies Committee. The faculty must accept their responsibility to supervise the major.

Grace McDade
Muriel Joffe

MODEL III: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY WOMEN'S STUDIES MAJOR
Patty Harkin, Bonnie Lammeyer, John Schilb

"... As the hitherto 'invisible' and marginal agent in culture, whose native culture has been effectively denied, women need a reorganization of knowledge, of perspectives and analytical tools that can help us know our foremothers, evaluate our present historical, political, and personal situation, and take ourselves seriously as agents in the creation of a more balanced culture. Some feminists foresee this culture as based on female primacy, others as 'androgynous'; whatever it is to become, women will have the primary hand in its shaping. This does not mean and need not mean that the entire apparatus of masculine intellectual achievement should be scrapped . . .

But a radical reinvention of subject, lines of inquiry, and method will be required. . . . Certainly a major change will be along the lines already seen in women's studies: a breakdown of traditional departments and 'disciplines,' of that fragmentation of knowledge that weakens thought and permits the secure ignorance of the specialist to protect him from responsibility for the applications of his theories. It is difficult to imagine a woman-centered curriculum where quantitative method and technical reason would continue to be allowed to become means for the reduction of human lives, and where specialization would continue to be used as an escape from wholeness."

Adrienne Rich, "Toward a Woman-Centered University"

We envision a woman's studies major based on the two central needs that Rich has articulated: (1) the need to critique the subjects, lines of inquiry, and methods of the traditional male-centered curriculum, substituting a truly gynocentric perspective; (2) the need to move outside the confines of traditional disciplines and attempt a more interdisciplinary sense of wholeness. We recognize, as Rich does, that feminists may differ in their particular imaginings of the future; neither she nor we want to claim that a fixed, indisputable, monolithic canon of feminist theory does exist or should exist. At the same time, however, both she and we do believe that women's studies must bear a close relationship to feminist theorizing, and that feminist theorizing, despite the pluralism it can accommodate, has usually affirmed the needs she declares.

With this vision in mind, we would have a women's studies major take the following courses:

(1) Philosophy 275--Philosophy of Feminism

(2) Interdepartmental 246--Introduction to Women's Studies

These two courses would enable the student to undertake the sort of radical critique we consider central to women's studies--the first because it challenges traditional methods of inquiry and structures of knowledge, along with studying various theories of feminism; the second because it structurally locates itself outside traditional disciplines and self-consciously includes woman-centered scholarship neglected by them.

(3)(4) Two minority studies courses

We would follow the example of the current women's studies minor in affirming the importance of the student's taking courses which would assuredly move her outside the white-centered perspective that has pervaded the academy. Perhaps it is helpful to recall a quotation from our recent visitor Barbara Smith:

"Feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, ~~disabled~~ disabled women, lesbians, old women--as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement."

(5) Interdepartmental ?—A Feminist Critique of the Structure of Knowledge
 Yes, we are proposing a brand-new course, but we do not think implementing it would be all that troublesome. In our present and admittedly tentative conception of it, we imagine it to be something on the order of the biology seminar—i.e., a one semester, two hour a week seminar required of all senior majors, connected to an individual senior project, worth two credits. Although the participants would be working on their own particular projects, they would be contributing to (and presumably benefitting from) an avowedly interdisciplinary seminar which would serve for them as a capstone experience because it would encourage them to develop a serious rethinking of the liberal arts curriculum they are on the verge of completing. This seminar would be team-taught by two women's studies faculty members from different departments, both of whom would assume it as an overload; the prospect of faculty development would, we think, be one incentive for agreeing to accept this responsibility. Although we do not want, especially at this point in our own thinking, to dictate the content of the course, we strongly believe that it should include a feminist critique of the sciences, since many women's studies majors would not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in one.

We figure that the courses we wish to require would amount to 17 credits. Assuming that a full women's studies major should amount to roughly 32 credits, we are therefore asking that half the major should consist of these courses, with the other half consisting of electives chosen from other women's studies offerings.

omit?

all 382 offerings deal w/ the contemp. U.S.

Because we conceive the senior seminar as being an advanced level course, we believe Philosophy of Feminism and Introduction to Women's Studies ought to be prerequisites for it.

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 go beyond
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Sr.
 Capstone
 experience

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on ID246
(FS104 or Philos. 101) a prerequisite?
consent?