

DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY AND WOMEN'S STUDIES

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Mission statement

The Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies is committed to social transformation. Members of the department produce and disseminate interdisciplinary feminist knowledge and theories, and view them as vitally connected to community engagement and activism. They critique the construction of differences as producing and reinforcing social, cultural, economic and political inequities, and understand gender and sexuality as inextricably bound to other forms of difference. The department began as a women's studies program in 1989 and was granted departmental status in 2007. To more accurately reflect the intellectual project, in 2013, the department was renamed Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. The department introduces students to new analytical, theoretical and creative frameworks to enable them to understand, critique and transform themselves and the world around them. Faculty members represent a wide variety of disciplines and engage students from diverse fields of study in research, teaching and public service.

Through teaching, activism, scholarly and creative production and community engagement, GSWS provides analytical and critical tools to equip students for careers in a broad range of fields and prepares them to engage in:

- Individual and collective transformation
- Critical thinking and writing
- Research drawing from interdisciplinary methodologies
- Political and community engagement and advocacy
- Analyzing transnational and global networks (recognition of the ways that they are bound up in global networks of power)
- Recognizing the complex interaction between multiple modes of difference
- The production of creative work

The department offers a major leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree, an undergraduate minor and a post-graduate certificate. The department has particular strengths in race, racialization and antiracism studies; LGBTQ studies and queer theory; postcolonial/decolonial/anticolonial studies; health and health policies; and research and activism for social justice change in the academy and the broader community.

Vision statement

Students, faculty, and staff in the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies engage in activism, creative endeavors (productions) and traditional academic scholarship in order to strengthen connections

with one another and the community and to work toward social justice and collective liberation.

Departmental values

- a. As faculty and staff who center consent and collaboration as guiding principles, members practice consensus-based decision-making processes in meetings with one another and emphasize collaboration in classrooms, on campus and within communities (community-based activism).
- b. GSWS seeks to generate individual, interpersonal and structural transformations that recognize, in the words of Audre Lorde, "that there are no single-issue struggles because there are no single-issue lives." This commitment drives how GSWS shapes their curriculum, classes, scholarship, creative work and departmental activity.
- c. The department stands in full support of their students' and our colleagues' scholarly, creative and activist pursuits, and structures classes to attend to diverse and inclusive learning practices, forms of creative expression and activist pursuits. This interdisciplinary work is viewed as academically rigorous and creatively rich, and as enabling fresh insights into pressing topics.
- d. Because of a belief in transparency and dialogue, the department designs their curricula and assessment in direct conversation with students.
 - Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, Certificate in (Post baccalaureate graduate certificate) (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/college-humanities-sciences/gender-sexuality-womens-studies/gender-sexuality-womens-studies-certificate/>)

GSWS 501. Feminist Theory. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This seminar provides an overview of the theories of feminisms.

GSWS 602. Feminist Research Epistemology and Methods. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course explores the implications of feminist theorizing across disciplinary and cultural contexts for both epistemology (theories of knowledge) and methods (theories and approaches in the research process). Students will examine how knowledge and power intersect, how gender theory and feminist politics influence research, how the knower influences knowledge production and how social location shapes inquiry. Students will experiment with feminist methods and approaches to researching issues related to gender, sexuality and women, and ethical considerations as these issues affect vulnerable populations.

GSWS 620. Theorizing Sexuality. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This course examines and explores constructions of human sexuality (sexualities) and theorizes how these constructions operate within contemporary culture.

GSWS 622. Women and Public Policy. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This seminar differentiates theories of feminisms and explores the effects of policies, or their absence, for women in the U.S., briefly examining theories of policymaking and the policy process in relation to feminist theories and the feminist project.

GSWS 624. Gender and Cultural Production. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. This seminar takes as a starting point an understanding of culture as the expressive practice of meaning making that lies at the intersection of art, imagination, technology, space and politics.

GSWS 691. Topics in Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. 1-3 Hours.

Semester course; 1-3 lecture hours. 1-3 credits. Course may be repeated with different topics as approved. Prerequisite: permission of instructor. An in-depth study of a selected topic in gender, sexuality and/or women's studies. See Schedule of Classes for specific topics to be offered each semester.

GSWS 692. Independent Study. 1-4 Hours.

Semester course; variable hours, variable credit. Maximum 4 credits per semester. Maximum total of 4 credits in all independent study courses. Prerequisites: completion of 6 credits in gender, sexuality and women's studies courses.