

WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

Mission Statement

The Women's and Gender Studies Program at Denison University takes its mission to be three-fold: to foster a critical awareness of, and intellectual sensitivity to, content, method and real-life implications of the field.

First, we aim to engage students in the intellectual content of the discipline: women's issues, the role of gender, and the intersections of gender and other politicized aspects of "identity," including race, class, age, religion, disability, and sexuality.

Second, we strive to instill in students an appreciation of the holistic and interdisciplinary character of Women's and Gender Studies. This is not just a question of content but also of method; Women's and Gender Studies scholarship uses methods that are inflected by interdisciplinarity and transnationalism. Students explore how Women's and Gender Studies treats gender issues from the perspectives of different disciplines, such as anthropology, biology, Black studies, communication, data analytics, East Asian studies, global health, international studies, music, philosophy, politics and public affairs, religion, sociology, visual arts, etc. and how these issues manifest differently in different national and transnational contexts. Students thus develop their understanding of these issues by taking into account the intersections among this array of disciplines and sociocultural and geographic locations.

Third, we aim to show students the real-life and everyday implications of their academic engagement. That is, we challenge students to see the relationship between theory and practice: to see how the academic study of race, class, and gender locally and globally is informed by and has the power to transform real lives, both others' and our own.

Curricular Goals

Denison's Women's and Gender Studies faculty are dedicated to helping students develop rigorous analyses of culture, politics, ideas and text, as well as creative leadership skills. We hope to impart to our students the history, analysis and practice of feminist scholarship, means of creative expression for their intellectual interests and concerns, and political service and activism.

Students are required to take an introductory course, WGST 101 - Issues in Feminism, a feminist methods course, WGST 310 - Feminist Research Methods, and a feminist theory course, WGST 311 - Feminist Theory. Majors are also required to undertake a semester- or year-long senior project—a research, activist, artistic inquiry, and/or internship experience — WGST 451 - Senior Research and/or WGST 452 - Senior Research. Students select additional, usually cross-listed courses according to Women's and Gender Studies Program guidelines and their own interests.

The required courses in the major and minor explore gender and justice issues, provide the methods and information to conduct rigorous analysis, engage our students in ways that challenge them to expand their thinking about the material they meet in the world, and give them the opportunity to embody feminist pedagogies. The elective courses will do the same in the context of their fields of study.

Students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of off-campus study programs, internships, fellowships, and research projects that acquaint them with women's and gender issues (information available through the Center for Global Programs, Knowlton Center for Career

Exploration, and Lisska Center for Intellectual Engagement). Students are encouraged to develop leadership skills by taking an active part in campus life, including engaging in projects developed inside and outside the academic program. Such projects have included a national grant application, a campus-wide study on violence, and a benefit concert. Students have worked with the Center for Belonging and Inclusion, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, Denisonians for Planned Parenthood, and It's My Pleasure, as examples.

The Women's and Gender Studies Program sponsors regular symposia on gender issues that include presentations by scholars, artists, and activists from across the United States and abroad as well as our own faculty. With the support of the Laura C. Harris endowment, the Women's and Gender Studies Program has hosted internationally renowned scholars including Linda Alcoff, M. Jacqui Alexander, Gloria Anzaldúa, Judith Butler, Angela Davis, Cynthia Enloe, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Nancy Fraser, Jack Halberstam, bell hooks, Ericka Huggins, and Winona La Duke. The Women's and Gender Studies Program has an institutional membership in the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) and has sponsored student memberships and conference participation.