

WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

Director of undergraduate studies: Igor De Souza
(igor.h.desouza@yale.edu); wgss.yale.edu

Genders and sexualities are powerful organizing forces: they shape identities and institutions, nations and economies, cultures, and political systems. Careful study of gender and sexuality thus explains crucial aspects of our everyday lives on both intimate and global scales. Scholarship in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies is interdisciplinary and wide ranging, drawing on history, literature, cultural studies, social sciences, and natural science to study genders and sexualities as they intersect with race, ethnicity, class, nationality, transnational processes, disability, and religion.

Students majoring in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies take a series of core courses, develop an individual area of focus, and write a yearlong or single-term senior essay. The program encourages work that is interdisciplinary, intersectional, international, and transnational. Individual focus areas evolve along with students' intellectual growth and academic expertise. Recent examples of areas of focus include literature and queer aesthetics; transnational feminist practices; the intellectual history of civil rights activism; AIDS health policies; gender, religion, and international NGOs; women's health; food, sexuality, and lesbian community; and gender and sexuality in early education.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Students are held to the requirements in place when they declared their major.

However, with approval from the director of undergraduate studies (DUS), the following requirements, updated for the academic year 2024-2025, may be fulfilled by students who declared the major in a prior term.

Twelve term courses are required and this major may be taken either as a primary major or as one of two majors. Requirements include two intermediate courses selected from WGSS 205, 206, 207, or 340. Majors are strongly encouraged to take these intermediate courses during their first two years. The major also requires one methodology course, seven courses in an area of focus (one of which must be an upper-level seminar in WGSS numbered 350 or above) and a two-course senior requirement. The area of focus consists of at least seven courses, the majority of which should be drawn from program offerings. Substitutions to the major requirements may be made only with the written permission of the DUS.

Methodology courses Given its interdisciplinary nature, the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies major necessarily relies on a wide range of methodologies: literary criticism, ethnography, visual analysis, historiography, and quantitative data analysis, among others. Each student is expected to acquire competence in at least one methodology relevant to their area of focus and planned senior essay. Students are advised to take a methodology course by their junior year in preparation for the senior essay. Methodology courses may be drawn from any department, but are subject to DUS approval for WGSS credit.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

The yearlong senior essay The two-term senior sequence consists of WGSS 490, The Senior Colloquium, in which students begin researching and writing a senior essay, followed by WGSS 491, The Senior Essay, in which students complete the essay. The senior essay is developed and written under the guidance and supervision of a WGSS-affiliated faculty member with expertise in the area of focus. Students are expected to meet with their essay advisers on a regular basis.

The single-term senior essay Majors may opt to complete the senior essay requirement in an approved upper-level WGSS seminar in the fall or spring term, with the approval of the instructor, by writing a senior essay of twenty-five to forty-five pages in lieu of the course's normal writing requirements. Students who choose the single-term senior essay take one additional WGSS course of their choosing to fulfill the twelve-term-course requirement.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Prerequisites None

Number of courses 12 term courses (incl senior requirement)

Distribution of courses 2 intermediate courses as indicated; 1 methodology course; 7 electives in area of focus

Senior requirement Senior colloquium and senior essay (WGSS 490, 491); or single-term senior essay in an upper-level seminar and one additional elective