**WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES**

**Graduate Program Head** Alicia Decker  
**Program Code** WGSS  
**Campus(es)** University Park  
**Degrees Conferred** Dual-Title  
**The Graduate Faculty** View [here](https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/?searchType=fac&prog=WGSS)

Students can earn a dual-title master’s degree (M.A./M.S.) or a dual-title Ph.D. in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS). All dual-title degrees must be paired and completed simultaneously with a graduate degree in one of our partner programs. These departmental partners are: Art Education, Communication Arts and Sciences, Comparative Literature, Curriculum and Instruction, English, French and Francophone Studies, Geography, History, Mass Communications, Media Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, and Rural Sociology. For students outside of these fourteen degree programs, we offer a graduate minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Our dual-title master’s and Ph.D. degrees provide students with conceptual, methodological and pedagogical training in the field of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Our graduate program embraces intersectional and transnational feminist approaches to knowledge production, pedagogy, and community engagement. Faculty and graduate students in WGSS use interdisciplinary frameworks to research questions that span the arts, humanities, and the social sciences. Because this degree is combined with a master’s or Ph.D. from one of our partner departments, students are well-prepared to produce cutting-edge, interdisciplinary scholarship; to teach across both disciplines; and to excel in a career in either field.

**Admission Requirements**

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs ([http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-title-graduate-degree-programs/](http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-title-graduate-degree-programs/)).

Students will be considered for admission to the master’s or Ph.D. dual-title programs by the WGSS graduate admissions committee. Applicants can apply to the dual-title program when they first apply for graduate study at Penn State by indicating their interest on the online application. Those applications are considered on the timetable of the partner department; that is, after the partner program has admitted a student into their degree program, that student’s application is forwarded to the WGSS dual-title admissions committee for consideration. This group of applicants may apply with the same application materials as provided to the partner program and Graduate School. However, it is strongly recommended that the statement of purpose discuss how their research will integrate the two partner fields. A dual-title applicant is encouraged to attach both a separate statement of purpose focusing on their particular areas of engagement within gender studies, and a writing sample that demonstrates their previous work with and in feminist/gender theory.

Applicants to the dual-title should have a junior/senior cumulative average of at least 3.00 (on a 4.00 scale) and should have previous course work in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies or in related fields.

Current Penn State graduate students, who are already pursuing a graduate degree in one of our partner programs but who have not yet taken their qualifying exams, can also apply for admission into a dual-title Ph.D. degree in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The deadlines for current graduate students to be considered for admission are October 15th or February 15th each academic year. Internal applicants will provide, in addition to their original application for graduate study at Penn State, their Penn State graduate transcript; a statement of purpose addressing research and professional goals that reflect interest and substantive engagement in interdisciplinary and feminist research, theories, and/or methodologies; and a letter of recommendation from a member of the WGSS graduate faculty.

Doctoral students must be admitted into the dual-title degree program in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies prior to taking the qualifying examination in their primary graduate program.

**Degree Requirements**

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs ([http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-title-graduate-degree-programs/](http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-title-graduate-degree-programs/)).

To qualify for a dual-title degree, students must satisfy the requirements of the primary graduate program in which they are enrolled, as well as the degree requirements for the dual-title in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. WGSS requirements for each degree program are listed below.

Candidates for the dual-title M.A./M.S. degree must complete twelve credits of graduate coursework and write a thesis or scholarly paper that centrally engages the field of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

### Degree Requirements for the Dual-Title Master’s Degree

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WMNST 502</td>
<td>Global Perspectives on Feminism</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>WMNST 507</td>
<td>Feminist Theory</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>WMNST 509</td>
<td>Feminist Pedagogies</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>or WMNST 508 Feminist Methodology</td>
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3 additional credits of graduate coursework will be completed with prior consultation and approval of the Director of Graduate Studies in WGSS.

**Total Credits** 12

Candidates for dual-title M.A./M.S. degree in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies must have at least one member of the WGSS Graduate Faculty on their master’s advising committee.

### Degree Requirements for the Dual-Title Ph.D.

To qualify for a dual-title degree, students must satisfy the requirements of the primary graduate program in which they are enrolled, as well as the degree requirements for the dual-title in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

These requirements include: eighteen credits of graduate coursework and a dissertation that centrally engages the field of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.
The nature and timing of these formal meetings vary depending on the program. Partner programs may require additional meetings such as annual evaluation meetings, qualifying exams, and proposal reviews. The nature of these meetings and their frequency may differ from one program to another.

Once a Ph.D. committee is appointed, dual-title students must include at least one WGSS-affiliated adviser in all formal meetings required by their programs. This ensures that students are guided by experts in both disciplines and that the dual-title degree program's requirements are met.

The dissertation must be accepted by the doctoral committee, the head of both graduate programs, and the Graduate School. A dissertation on a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies topic is required of students in the dual-title degree program. That dissertation must be approved by the student's Ph.D. committee. Upon successful completion of the final oral examination (the dissertation defense), the student's partner discipline.

Dual-title graduate degree students may require an additional semester to complete their course work and meet the 15-credit requirement. The dissertation can be completed with prior approval from the Director of Graduate Studies in WGSS. No more than three credits counting toward elective coursework can be completed at the 400-level, and at least one of the elective courses will be taken in a department other than the student's major degree program.

The qualifying examination committee for the dual-title Ph.D. degree must include two Graduate Faculty members from the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. There will be a single qualifying examination, with questions from both the primary graduate degree program and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Dual-title graduate degree students may require an additional semester to fulfill requirements for both areas of study, and therefore, the qualifying examination may be delayed one semester beyond the normal period allowable.

In addition to the general Graduate Council requirements for doctoral committees, all candidates for the Dual-title Ph.D. in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies must have at least two members of the Graduate Faculty of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies on their advising committee. One of these members must serve as chair or co-chair of the doctoral committee, as reflected in Graduate Council requirements for all dual-title Ph.D. programs. In addition, we strongly recommend that at least one of these WGSS-affiliated faculty have their tenure home outside of the student's partner discipline.

Dual-title Ph.D. students take one combined comprehensive exam that integrates questions from both disciplines. The Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies-affiliated faculty members on the student's doctoral committee are responsible for assessing a student's mastery of the following areas: feminist theory, feminist methodology, global feminisms, and feminist studies in the student's partner discipline.

A dissertation on a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies topic is required of students in the dual-title degree program. That dissertation topic must be approved by the student's Ph.D. committee. Upon researching, writing, and completion of the doctoral dissertation, the candidate must pass a final oral examination (the dissertation defense). The dissertation must be accepted by the doctoral committee, the head of both graduate programs, and the Graduate School.

Formal Meetings

Once a Ph.D. committee is appointed, dual-title students must include the WGSS-affiliated advisers in all formal meetings required by their partner program (annual evaluation meetings, qualifying exams, proposal defense, etc.). The nature and timing of these formal meetings vary according to each partner discipline's graduate requirements and program practices.

Minor

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements for minors in Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/) and GCAC-700 Professional Degree Policies (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/).

An interdisciplinary graduate minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies is available. A student seeking a minor does not have to pass through an admissions process, and a minor can be completed by any student who is simultaneously completing any graduate degree at Penn State.

Master's Minor

Master's Minor Requirements: To earn a master's-level graduate minor students are required to take 9 credits of course work in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Six of these credits include WMNST 502 Global Perspectives on Feminism (3 cr.) and WMNST 507 Feminist Theory (3 cr.). The additional three credits must be chosen in consultation with the student and pre-approval from the Director of Graduate Studies in WGSS.

Doctoral Minor

To earn a doctoral-level minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies students are required to complete 15 credits of graduate course work. Nine of these credits must include core theory: WMNST 502 Global Perspectives on Feminism (3 cr.), WMNST 507 Feminist Theory (3 cr.), and either WMNST 508 Feminist Pedagogies (3 cr.) or WMNST 509 Feminist Methodology (3 cr.). Students also must complete 6 additional credits of Women's Studies course work (at least 3 of which must be at the 500 level); these courses must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies of WGSS.

Official requests to add the minor to a doctoral student's academic record must be submitted to Graduate Enrollment Services prior to establishment of the doctoral committee and prior to scheduling the comprehensive examination. At least one Graduate Faculty member from WGSS must serve on the candidate's Ph.D. committee.

Student Aid

Graduate assistantships, fellowships, and other forms of student aid are described in the Tuition & Funding (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-funding/) section of The Graduate School's website. Students on graduate assistantships must adhere to the course load limits (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad-gsad-900-gsad-901-graduate-assistants/) set by The Graduate School.

Dual-title students in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies receive most of their funding through their partner discipline. The Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department offers a limited number of one-year graduate assistantships offering those students the opportunity to teach within WGSS. Dual-title students can apply in January/February (deadline: February 15) for an assistantship beginning the following academic year. These assistantships provide funding and critical professional experience for students training for positions in the field of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

The Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies provides several awards to dual-title students to support their research efforts and recognize their accomplishments in teaching and research. These awards include the Faculty Development Award, the Student Leadership Award, and the Community Engagement Award.
include: the Sara Woods Outstanding Graduate Student Award, the Sara Woods Outstanding Student Teaching Award, and the Laura Richardson Whitaker Memorial Graduate Award.

Courses
Graduate courses carry numbers from 500 to 699 and 800 to 899. Advanced undergraduate courses numbered between 400 and 499 may be used to meet some graduate degree requirements when taken by graduate students. Courses below the 400 level may not. A graduate student may register for or audit these courses in order to make up deficiencies or to fill in gaps in previous education but not to meet requirements for an advanced degree.

Women's Studies (WMNST) Course List (https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/wmnst/)

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of the dual-title graduate degree in WGSS, students are expected to:

1. Demonstrate deep conceptual and historical understanding of intersectional feminist theory and methods.
2. Apply current feminist literature from their partner discipline to their own research agenda.
3. Comprehend the conceptual and practical dimensions of feminist pedagogy.
4. Formulate and execute an independent research project that significantly furthers knowledge and theory within interdisciplinary feminist scholarship.
5. Communicate effectively conceptual and methodological arguments in both written and oral formats to interdisciplinary audiences.
6. Exhibit a commitment to professional standards and ethics in teaching, research, and service.

Contact

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<th>Campus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Program Head</td>
<td>Alicia Catharine Decker</td>
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<td>Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Professor-in-Charge (PIC)</td>
<td>Jennifer Ann Wagner Lawlor</td>
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