

# WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

<b>Graduate Program Head</b>	Alicia C. Decker
<b>Program Code</b>	WGSS
<b>Campus(es)</b>	University Park
<b>Degrees Conferred</b>	Dual-Title
<b>The Graduate Faculty</b>	View ( <a href="https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/?searchType=fac&amp;prog=WGSS">https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/?searchType=fac&amp;prog=WGSS</a> )

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 major 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 (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-titles/>).

Students will be considered for admission to the interdisciplinary master's or Ph.D. dual-title programs by the WGSS Graduate Studies Committee. 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.

Applicants may apply to the dual-title program in two ways:

1. As an "external" candidate. When a student first applies for graduate study at Penn State, they can indicate their interest in a dual-title on the main online graduate application (each department will list its dual-title options). After the major disciplinary program admits a student into its degree program, the interested student's application is forwarded to the WGSS dual-title Graduate Studies Committee for consideration. This student may apply using the same application materials as provided to the disciplinary program and Graduate School. It is *strongly* recommended, however, that a dual-title applicant include in their statement of purpose a discussion of how their research will integrate the partner fields (i.e., the disciplinary

major and the interdisciplinary major). Alternatively, the applicant is encouraged to attach both a separate statement of purpose and a writing sample demonstrating their previous work with and in feminist/gender theory. *Please note: External candidates with little or no previous course work in women's, gender and/or sexuality studies are unlikely to be admitted; in that case, the student is encouraged to take at least one graduate core course in WGSS upon matriculation, and then to (re)apply as an "internal candidate" (see below) after completing at least one core WGSS course.*

2. As an "internal" candidate. Current Penn State graduate students pursuing a degree in one of our partner programs can also apply for admission into the dual-title Ph.D. in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The application *and official admission* must be completed *before taking qualifying exams*. Internal applications are considered twice per year, with application deadlines on October 15<sup>th</sup> for fall semester consideration, and February 15<sup>th</sup> for spring semester consideration. Internal applicants will provide, in addition to their original application materials for graduate study at Penn State: an unofficial 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.

\*Important reminder: As noted above, Doctoral students must be admitted into the dual-title degree program in WGSS prior to taking the qualifying examination in their major disciplinary graduate program, and no later than the end of the fourth semester.

## Degree Requirements

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-titles/>).

To qualify for a dual-title degree, students must satisfy the requirements of the disciplinary graduate program in which they are enrolled, as well as the degree requirements for the interdisciplinary 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

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Required Courses</b>		
WMNST 502	Global Feminisms	3
WMNST 507	Feminist Theory	3
WMNST 509	Feminist Pedagogies	3
	or WMNST 508 Feminist Methodologies	
3 additional credits of graduate coursework will be completed with prior consultation and approval of the Director of Graduate Studies in WGSS		3
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>12</b>

Candidates for the 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 disciplinary graduate program in which they originally enrolled, as well as the degree requirements for the interdisciplinary 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.

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Required Courses</b> <sup>1</sup>		
WMNST 502	Global Feminisms	3
WMNST 507	Feminist Theory	3
WMNST 508	Feminist Methodologies	3
	or WMNST 509 Feminist Pedagogies	
9 additional credits of elective graduate coursework will 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.		9
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>18</b>

<sup>1</sup> Any exceptions to the WGSS degree requirements stated above must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

### Qualifying Examination

The qualifying examination committee for the dual-title Ph.D. degree must include two Graduate Faculty members from Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Faculty members holding appointments in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. There will be a single qualifying examination, with questions from both the disciplinary graduate degree program and from 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 (but not past the fourth semester, per Graduate Council policy).

### Doctoral Committee Composition

In addition to the general Graduate Council requirements for doctoral committees (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/doctoral-dissertation-committee-formation/>), 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.

### Comprehensive Exams

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 methodologies, global feminisms, and feminist studies in the student's partner discipline.

### Doctoral Dissertation And Defense

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 policy GCAC-218 Minors (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-218-minors/>).

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 Feminisms (3 cr.) and WMNST 507 Feminist Theory (3 cr.). The additional three credits must be chosen in consultation with 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 Feminisms (3 cr.), WMNST 507 Feminist Theory (3 cr.), and either WMNST 509 Feminist Pedagogies (3 cr.) or WMNST 508 Feminist Methodologies (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. The request entails completing the "add graduate minor" (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/forms-and-documents/ges-owned-forms-and-documents/addgrminorpdf/>) form, and getting the signature of the WGSS Director of Graduate Studies. At least one Graduate Faculty member from WGSS must serve on the candidate's Ph.D. committee.

## Student Aid

Graduate assistantships available to students in this program and other forms of student aid are described in the Tuition & Funding (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/funding/>) section of the J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox

Graduate School's website. Students on graduate assistantships must adhere to the course load limits (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad/gsad-900/gsad-901-graduate-assistants/>) set by the Fox 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 include: the Sara Woods Outstanding Graduate Student Award, the Sara Woods Outstanding Student Teaching Award, and the Laura Richardson Whitaker Memorial Graduate Award. The department also allocates several awards from the Judith Harges Fund, which supports graduate research and professional development for students whose research is centered on reproductive justice.

## 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, for those planning an academic career;
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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