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 (https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/?searchType=facl&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 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/).

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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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WMNST 502</td>
<td>Global Perspectives on Feminism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMNST 507</td>
<td>Feminist Theory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMNST 509</td>
<td>Feminist Pedagogies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or WMNST 508 Feminist Methodology</td>
<td>3</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.
Formal Meetings

Once a Ph.D. committee is appointed, dual-title students must include two Graduate Faculty members from the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department. Dual-title students in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies receive GCAC-900/GCAC-901 Graduate Assistantships 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 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 509 Feminist Pedagogies (3 cr.) or WMNST 508 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 available to students in this program 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
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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