

# WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES, B.A.

Seven Penn State campuses are scheduled for closure after Spring 2027: DuBois, Fayette, New Kensington, Mont Alto, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, and York. New students are not being admitted at these campuses.

**Begin Campus:** Any Penn State Campus

**End Campus:** University Park

## Program Description

The undergraduate program in the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the Pennsylvania State University offers a broad, interdisciplinary exploration of gender and sexuality as critical to understanding the human experience. We are committed to examining how the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality are historically informed by intersecting differences such as race, class, disability, ethnicity, and global positioning. We promote feminist engagement and research at all stages of the undergraduate curriculum and challenge the stability of categories such as "woman," "man," "female," or "male," providing students with the tools to assess identity otherwise. The interdisciplinary and expansive nature of the field is reflected in a curricular structure that includes courses cross-listed with a wide variety of departments, courses in which students develop critical, analytical, and creative skills by studying topics including women's health, queer and trans histories and theories, gender and race, and global feminisms, among others. Our teaching strategies are student-centered, politically contextualized, and oriented towards social change.

Most Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies faculty hold joint appointments in various departments across Penn State, including African American Studies, African Studies, Applied Linguistics, Asian Studies, Communication Arts and Sciences, Curriculum and Instruction, English, French and Francophone Studies, Geography, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, and Telecommunications. Our graduates receive a true, interdisciplinary liberal arts education and are well-equipped for various types of positions. Recent graduates have entered the non-profit sector, worked for large-scale corporations, attended graduate, law, or medical school, worked as teachers and principals, and become writers, poets, and artists.

## What is Women's, Gender, and sexuality Studies?

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies explores the intersection of identity, social power, and privilege. Concerned with how societies "construct" inequality and social bias, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies analyzes every aspect of our lives through a critical lens, without filtering out impacts of socio-political inequalities, and lived experiences of women and their families. With cross-listed courses in Anthropology, Communications, Government, History, Psychology, Sociology, Women's Health and more fields, students can approach Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies from almost any direction. Alongside the U.S. history of women and feminist movement, "transnational" feminism offers a wider comparative study of: constructions of gender across cultures; the legal and political standing of women and marginalized populations; the nature and impacts of gender-based violence, mass migration, militarization,

climate change, food insecurity and other contemporary challenges on the physical, social and political wellbeing of women around the globe.

## You Might Like This Program If...

- You want to translate your curiosities, experiences, passions and interests into actionable and meaningful work.
- You seek out inclusive environments, with persons of different backgrounds, cultures, and races to understand their points of view.
- You are passionate about gender equity, human rights, and social justice.
- You want to explore how gender and sexuality play a role in culture, the arts, literature, health, politics, the sciences, law, and education.
- You see yourself as a change agent in this world!

## Entrance to Major

In order to be eligible for entrance to this major, a student must:

1. attain at least a C (2.00) cumulative grade-point average for all courses taken at the University; and
2. have at least third-semester classification (<https://www.registrar.psu.edu/enrollment/semester-classification.cfm>).

READ SENATE POLICY 37-30: ENTRANCE TO AND CHANGES IN MAJOR PROGRAMS OF STUDY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/37-00-entrance-to-a-college-or-major/>)

## Degree Requirements

**For the Bachelor of Arts degree in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, a minimum of 120 credits is required:**

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	15
Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements	24
Requirements for the Major	36

**3 of the 24 credits for Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements are included in the Requirements for the Major, General Education, or Electives and 0-12 credits are included in Electives if world language proficiency is demonstrated by examination.**

Per Senate Policy 83-80.5, the college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

## Requirements for the Major

A grade of C or better is required for all courses in the major. To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn at least a C grade in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>).

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Prescribed Courses</b>		
<i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
WMNST 301N	Sexualities, Gender and Power. Feminist Thought and Politics	3

WMNST 492W	Contemporary Feminist Analysis: The Capstone Senior Seminar	3
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**Additional Courses**

*Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better*

WMNST 400N	Debates in Contemporary Feminism or WMNST 401 Doing Feminism: Theory and Practice	3
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Select one of the following: 3

WMNST 83N First-Year Seminar in Women's Studies

WMNST 100 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

WMNST 105N Living in a Diverse World

WMNST 106N Representing Women and Gender in Literature, Art and Popular Cultures

Select one of the following: 3

WMNST 494 Research Project

WMNST 495 Internship

WMNST 496 Independent Studies

**Supporting Courses and Related Areas**

*Supporting Courses and Related Areas: Require a grade of C or better*

Select 15 credits (at least 3 credits at the 400 level) in WGSS from the 15 program-approved list and in consultation with an adviser, including:

3 credits of arts and humanities courses

6 credits of natural or social sciences courses

3 credits that focus on non-Western women

3 credits that focus on women of color in the United States

Select 6 credits from the program-approved list at the 100-200 level 6

**General Education**

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

**Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)**

- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

**Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)**

- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits
- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

**Integrative Studies**

- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

**Exploration**

- **GN**, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

**University Degree Requirements****First Year Engagement**

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

**Cultures Requirement**

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- **United States Cultures:** 3 credits
- **International Cultures:** 3 credits

**Writing Across the Curriculum**

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

**Total Minimum Credits**

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

**Quality of Work**

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

**Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition**

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

**B.A. Degree Requirements**

**World Language** (0-12 credits): Student must attain 12th credit level of proficiency in one world language in addition to English. This proficiency must be demonstrated by either examination or course work. See the Placement Policy for Penn State World Language Courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/advising-planning-degree-program/course-placements/placement-policy-world-language-courses/>).

**B.A. Fields** (9 credits): Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arts, World Languages, Natural Sciences, Quantification (may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major; world language credits in this category must be in a second world language in addition to English or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the first language). Credits must be selected from the list of approved courses.

**World Cultures** (0-3 credits): Select 3 credits from approved list. Students may count courses in this category in order to meet other major, minor, elective, or General Education requirements, except for the University Cultural Diversity (US/IL) requirement.

## Program Learning Objectives

- **Career-Related Skills:**
  - Describe professional options;
  - Identify personally relevant career options to implement their gender knowledge, critical and communication skills, and feminist values in a variety of settings;
  - Develop a resumé centering around skills relevant to a business-oriented position and to placement in a graduate program.
- **Communication Skills:**
  - Communicate effectively (in writing and/or orally) the results of a project or internship;
  - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of major feminist theories;
  - Translate feminist theory and concepts into everyday language.
- **Content Knowledge:**
  - Define/explain major concepts underlying women's and gender studies;
  - Describe the basic history of Women's Studies (the "three waves" and beyond);
  - Define feminist concepts and theories;
  - Describe the interdisciplinary nature of the fields of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies;
  - Demonstrate awareness of feminist history and movement outside of the United States, i.e., global or transnational feminism;
  - Summarize the history and fundamental contributions of black feminism in relation to mainstream feminism.
- **Diversity and Ethical Considerations:**
  - Name the principles for a feminist classroom (confidentiality, respect of all, disagreeing through reason, not emotion, etc.) and practice them;
  - Integrate knowledge of cultural diversity in the context of human rights frameworks;
  - Apply basic principles of ethics to real-life situations, such as bystander action, or intervening in other forms of prejudice and hate.
- **Research Skills:**
  - Differentiate schools of feminist thought, and how research methods vary from one to the other (e.g. feminist literary analysis vs. psychological experimentation and protocols);
  - Integrate research from various academic fields into one's own research and writing;
  - Gain first-hand experience with faculty research (as a research assistant) and/or with working as an intern with a faculty member (as a teaching assistant) or with a diversity-oriented organization (as an intern).

- **Thinking Skills:**
  - Use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and (if relevant) quantitative and qualitative research to analyze real life issues related to gender and sexuality, and/or textual analysis (depending on the student's secondary disciplinary focus);
  - Synthesize theoretical concepts;
  - Formulate activist activities based on theoretical principles;
  - Formulate and defend one's own scholarly opinion regarding feminism based on reading, interpreting, and synthesizing the literature;
  - Relate classroom and course knowledge to current events, feminist concepts and theories to research and to real life.

## Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

### University Park

#### Liberal Arts Academic Advising

814-865-2545

Use the Liberal Arts Meet the Academic Advisers web page (<https://la.psu.edu/student-services/academic-advising/meet-the-academic-advisers/>) to see the contact information for the specific adviser(s) of this program

## Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2026-27 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

### Women's Studies, B.A. at University Park Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year			
Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
ENGL 15 (or Honors Equivalent (GWS))*		3 CAS 100 (or Honors Equivalent (GWS))*	3

LA 83	1.5 WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3
WMNST 100, 106N, or 83S*	3 General Education Course (GH) (US)	3
General Education Course (GQ)*	3 General Education Course (GN)	3
General Education Course (GS) (FYS)	3 World Language Level 2	4
World Language Level 1	4	
	<b>17.5</b>	<b>16</b>

**Second Year**

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3 LA 283	1.5
General Education Course (GQ)*	3 WMNST 301N*	3
General Education Course (GA) (IL)	3 General Education Course (GN)	3
BA Fields	3 General Education Course (GS)	3
World Language Level 3	4 General Education Course (GH)	3
	BA Fields	3
	<b>16</b>	<b>16.5</b>

**Third Year**

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
WMNST 400N or 401*	3 WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3
WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3 WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3
General Education Course (GN)	3 BA Fields	3
General Education Course (GA)	3 ENGL 202A, 202B, 202C, or 202D*	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

**Fourth Year**

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
WMNST 494, 495, or 496*	3 WMNST 492W*	3
WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3 WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3
General Education Course (GHW)	3 Elective	3
World Cultures	3 Elective	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

**Total Credits 126**

\* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major

‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education

# Course is an Entrance to Major requirement

† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

All incoming Schreyer Honors College first-year students at University Park will take ENGL 137H/CAS 137H in the fall semester and ENGL 138T/CAS 138T in the spring semester. These courses carry the GWS designation and satisfy a portion of that General Education requirement. If the student's program prescribes GWS these courses will replace both ENGL 15/ENGL 30H and CAS 100A/CAS 100B/CAS 100C. Each course is 3 credits.

**Bachelor of Arts Requirements:**

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/>) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in World Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as World Cultures courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-world-cultures/>).

**Advising Notes:**

- 24 credits within the major must be completed at University Park (policy 83-80). Talk with your academic adviser for additional details.
- This document is only for planning purposes. Most students are "off the plan" after one semester. At the campuses, students may sub WMNST 301N with any WMNST course if not available.
- Students need at least 24 credits in WMNST courses completed at UP due to competency requirements. Campus advisers may make work UP advisers if they have questions about their current students.
- Two general education courses (GQ, GN, GA, GH, GS) must be integrative studies courses (Inter-Domain).
- Depending on placement and proficiency, world language courses may need to be replaced with elective credits.

**University Requirements and General Education Notes:**

## Women's Studies, B.A. at Commonwealth Campuses

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

### First Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
ENGL 15 (or Honors Equivalent (GWS))*	3	CAS 100 (or Honors Equivalent (GWS))*	3
WMNST 100, 106N, or 83S*	3	WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3
General Education Course (GQ)*	3	General Education Course (GH) (US)	3
General Education Course (GS) (FYS)	3	General Education Course (GN)	3
World Language Level 1	4	World Language Level 2	4
<b>16</b>		<b>16</b>	

### Second Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3	WMNST 301N*	3
General Education Course (GQ)*	3	General Education Course (GN)	3
General Education Course (GA) (IL)	3	General Education Course (GS)	3
BA Fields	3	General Education Course (GH)	3
World Language Level 3	4	BA Fields	3
<b>16</b>		<b>15</b>	

### Third Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
LA 283	1.5	WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3
WMNST 400N or 401*	3	WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3
WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3	BA Fields	3
General Education Course (GN)	3	ENGL 202A, 202B, 202C, or 202D*	3
General Education Course (GA)	3	Elective	3
Elective	3		
<b>16.5</b>		<b>15</b>	

### Fourth Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
WMNST 494, 495, or 496*	3	WMNST 492W*	3
WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3	WMNST Course (Work with Adviser)*	3
General Education Course (GHW)	3	Elective	3
World Cultures	3	Elective	3

Elective	3	Elective	3
<b>15</b>		<b>15</b>	

### Total Credits 124.5

- \* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major
- ‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education
- # Course is an Entrance to Major requirement
- † Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

### University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

### Bachelor of Arts Requirements:

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/>) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in World Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as World Cultures courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-world-cultures/>).

### Advising Notes:

- 24 credits within the major must be completed at University Park (policy 83-80). Talk with your academic adviser for additional details.
- This document is only for planning purposes. Most students are "off the plan" after one semester. At the campuses, students may sub WMNST 301N with any WMNST course if not available.
- Students need at least 24 credits in WMNST courses completed at UP due to competency requirements. Campus advisers may make work UP advisers if they have questions about their current students.
- Two general education courses (GQ, GN, GA, GH, GS) must be integrative studies courses (Inter-Domain).
- Depending on placement and proficiency, world language courses may need to be replaced with elective credits.

## Career Paths

Employers today value effective communication, analytical thinking, and teamwork. With its emphasis on how gender, sexuality, race and other forms of diversity impact the experiences of every individual, the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies curriculum trains its majors to

recognize the impacts of bias and unequal social power in the social, cultural and political arenas. Graduates enter their post-graduate world sensitive to diverse perspectives that can either facilitate or impede team building, problem solving, and negotiation. Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies graduates—no matter where their career paths lead—are committed to the kind of institutional and social change that values all voices, and supports social justice.

## Careers

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies graduates from Penn State work in a wide variety of professions and industries. You will find us in the legal profession (one alumna runs her own legal firm, serving lower-income clients and gender-based discrimination cases). Others work in communications, marketing and advertising, business, banking and human resources. Activist students find their way into non-profits, advocacy groups, government, human development, journalism and communications. Women's health is a dynamic field—medical care, nursing and research positions are out there, as well as health administration. Teaching attracts many of our graduates.

## Opportunities for Graduate Studies

The scholarly field of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies prepares students to study some of the most complex challenges in a world where gender, race, class, sexuality, and power are always intertwined. As an interdisciplinary field, WGSS spans the arts and sciences, the humanities, and policy fields and provides applicable training for students seeking to continue their studies. Our scholars gain experience as researchers and teachers with the innovative tools to prepare them as leaders across the public, private, and educational sectors.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES (<https://wgss.la.psu.edu/graduate/>)

## Professional Resources

- National Women's Studies Association (<https://www.nwsa.org/home>)
- National Organization for Women (<https://now.org/>)

## Contact

### University Park

DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES  
133 Willard Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
814-863-4025  
[jle1@psu.edu](mailto:jle1@psu.edu)

<https://wgss.la.psu.edu>