WGS 400: INDEPENDENT RESEARCH IN WOMEN'S, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

WGS 400 CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Research paper or supervised readings on topic relevant to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Proposal signed by a faculty advisor and the director or assistant director of WGSS required prior to registration. Refer to Index for General Courses. May be repeated for credit if topic is different.

WGS 400 COURSE OVERVIEW

Independent study work in the WGSS Program involves an orchestrated collaboration between the WGSS Program Advisor or Director, the WGSS core/affiliated faculty supervisor, and the graduate student applicant. The particular responsibilities of all three parties are articulated below. This description and the accompanying paperwork represent a three party agreement. Careful adherence to these policies and procedures will facilitate the process. Graduate students and core/affiliated faculty should consult with the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Advisor or Director if they have any questions about the process.

I. Course Objectives:

WGS 400 offers students the opportunity to connect their primary program of graduate study with their interest in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies for the purpose of producing a substantial scholarly research project, dissertation or thesis chapter, art portfolio, or creative work on a topic that explicitly foregrounds gender and its intersections with race, class, sexuality, coloniality, nationality, ability and/or ethnicity. It is _expected_ that students will utilize feminist and gender studies methods drawn from their disciplinary fields of study and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

This course is designed with the goal of facilitating students' broader scholarship objectives. With that in mind, the design of the independent study and the proposed outcome will be determined by the student and her/his primary WGSS faculty supervisor and be approved by the WGSS Advisor or Director. Examples appropriate to WGS 400 final products are:
- A scholarly research paper (20-25 pages excluding bibliography).
- An alternative written project (e.g. narrative, dissertation or master's thesis chapter, work of creative non-fiction or fiction, two or three shorter scholarly papers, or collection of poems), so long at the total project length is not less than 20-25 pages.
- A literature review focused on feminist or gender scholarship and suitable for the student's master's thesis or dissertation, with complete bibliography (20-25 pages excluding bibliography).
- An activist/community project equivalent in scope and design to a semester's long research project in the student's discipline.
- A substantial creative project; a portfolio, visual, literary, or performance work recognized as the equivalent of a semester's worth of single course work in the student's discipline.

Please note: It is *expected* that the final product be polished and professional in composition and content; while students may continue to work on their projects after competing WGS 400, the WGSS program retains a final copy of the WGS 400 product in their offices for periodic program review.

II. Getting Started – Submitting your Project Proposal:

The procedures and guidelines below are required components for enrolling in WGS 400. Coordinating independent study paperwork and faculty collaboration takes advanced planning. We encourage students to begin this process as soon as they know their topic or project. Ideally students should arrange their independent study before the semester begins. In cases where the student starts shortly after the beginning of the semester, paperwork must be completed as soon as possible. *All WGS 400 paperwork, including the Project Proposal and Agreement form, must be processed by the first Friday of the semester.*

1. Students must have applied and been accepted into the WGSS Certificate Program in order to enroll in WGS 400. Applications can be found at: http://wgs.illinoisstate.edu/academics/graduate/apply.shtml

2. Interested students must secure the agreement of an appropriate WGSS core or affiliated faculty supervisor for their work. Only WGSS faculty can supervise WGS 400. A complete list of WGSS faculty can be found on the Program's website: http://wgs.illinoisstate.edu/people/
    * Many faculty are not on contract over the summer. If you plan to do a summer project, then it is your responsibility to ensure that your faculty member will be available to supervise during the summer months. You are encouraged to consider several faculty supervisor options in case your top choice is not available.

3. Together with the faculty supervisor, students must draft and submit to the WGSS program a **project proposal** that includes:

    a. Overview of the Project: A descriptive summary of the student's intended project (e.g. research paper, creative project, etc.), which contextualizes the project in both the student's home discipline and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. In other words, what is your project? How does it fit with the work already being done on the topic? What do you think your contribution to the conversation will be?

    b. Preliminary Thesis or Insight: The project overview should include a *preliminary* description of the student's primary arguments, tentative thesis, specific questions to be addressed, or a draft artist statement.   We understand that this will shift, grow and change as the project develops.

c. <u>Methodology</u>: Please describe (as applicable) the disciplinary methodologies, theoretical frameworks, or inspirations you will engage or use in the execution of your project. For example: "I propose to use an intersectional framework to examine how white women construct their sexual identity in the Chicago suburbs. Such framework incorporates…" Or, "I be applying Foucault's notion of biopower to the regulation of Muslim women's bodies in the U.S. after 9/11. Foucault argues…" Or, "I will be using a snowball sampling technique to assess the student awareness of HIV/AIDS on campus. Such technique is ideal because…"

d. <u>Preliminary Timeline</u>: Please outline your intended schedule for completion of this project, including a brief description of your proposed meeting schedule with your faculty supervisor and your anticipated work output (for example: "I plan to check-in with my faculty supervisor each Wednesday throughout the semester" or "I will dedicate 10 hours of studio-time each week to the completion of this project".)

e. <u>Bibliography:</u> All proposals must be accompanied by a preliminary bibliography of *at least* 5 sources. Students should work consistently with the style most common in their home discipline (e.g. Chicago, APA, MLA, etc.).

Please note: In cases where the proposal is incomplete, unclear, or lacks focus, the WGSS Advisor or Director will work with the WGSS faculty supervisor and student to clarify their understanding of the project's scope, method, and content. The WGSS Program is happy to review proposals as many times as needed.

4. Students must also submit an Agreement form that includes signatures of agreement from the student, faculty supervisor, and WGSS Advisor or Director.

5. Once the project is approved, the WGSS Advisor (or Director) will open a section of WGS 400 and add an override to the registration system. At that time the student can enroll in the course. *Students cannot enroll in their section of WGS 400 until their paperwork has been completed and approved.*

III: Throughout the Semester

As you work on your WGS 400 project, please keep in mind the following:

Faculty Meetings: Over the course of the semester, the student should meet with the core/affiliated faculty supervisor in a manner appropriate to the project and agreed upon by both in the project proposal (see "preliminary timeline" as outlined above). It is recommended that you meet with your faculty supervisor every 2-3 weeks.

Mid-Semester Check-in: The WGSS Advisor or Director will initiate a mid-semester conversation with your faculty supervisor to assess your overall progress, whether any changes have been made since your project proposal submission, and whether your project continues to meet the WGSS guidelines. Students should communicate with their faculty supervisor if they have concerns about their WGS 400 project or progress.

Completed Projects: At the end of the semester, the student will submit the final project to both the core/affiliated faculty project supervisor **and** the WGSS program. Because the WGSS Program is the "department" of record, the WGSS Advisor or Director collaborates in the process of assessing the work and thus requires a copy of the final product. The WGSS Program recognizes and respects the expertise of its core/affiliated faculty, and the faculty supervisor ultimately assigns the final grade. The course, however, is a WGSS offering, and the WGSS program must ensure that the work meets the appropriate standards outlined in this document.