A Career Guide for Women’s Studies Majors

Women’s Studies is an interdisciplinary academic program explicitly dedicated to the study of women, gender and sexuality in all areas of human life. As an academic field, Women's Studies start from the assumption that gender shapes both individual lives and social institutions. Our curriculum provides students with a theoretical framework for analyzing and acting upon the intersections of gender, race, class and sexuality, both historically and in contemporary societies worldwide.

“Feminism is for everybody.” --Bell Hooks

History of the Women’s Studies Program

Wheaton College has a long history of nurturing women's education and women scholars. Since its founding in 1834 by noted educator Mary Lyon, Wheaton has been committed to offering young women a challenging curriculum. As a women's college, Wheaton's early years were devoted to offering a liberal arts education comparable to that offered at fine men's colleges.

By the 1970's, feminists had begun to challenge the traditional liberal arts for its lack of attention to women's lives and accomplishments. The field of Women's Studies has flourished in the last thirty years as researchers and teachers have tried to develop a more complete version of human knowledge.

At Wheaton, the Women's Studies Program, established in 1977, has developed in partnership with the Gender Balanced Curriculum Project, which was initiated three years later to integrate the new scholarship by and about women throughout the entire curriculum. This curriculum transformation project, which was funded by F.I.P.S.E. (the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education) and the Ford Foundation, is nationally recognized, and Wheaton is regarded as an important educational innovator in this regard.

When Wheaton made the decision to become co-educational in 1988, the College committed itself to expanding its gender-conscious education to include young men. Our effort to be distinctively co-educational builds on our strong curricular foundation, a faculty with an equal number of men and women, faculty commitment to gender-aware
pedagogy, and a Student Life staff who foster equal partnerships between male and female students in all aspects of college life.

The commitment to Women's Studies among the faculty is one of Wheaton's greatest strengths. Publications and conferences by Women's Studies faculty make the College an important center for Women's Studies scholarship. The conference on violence against women hosted by Professor Kersti Yllo in the summer of 1995 and the conference on co-education in the fall of 1998 have brought leading scholars and educators to the Wheaton campus. Frinde Maher's co-authored Feminist Classroom and Paula Krebs's co-edited Feminist Teacher Anthology (1998) are widely acknowledged as leading sources on feminist pedagogy. Other publications by Wheaton's Women's Studies faculty include Mary Beth Tierny-Tello's Allegories of Transgression and Transformation (1996), Paula Krebs's Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire (1999), Beverly Clark's Kiddie Lit (2003), Allison Levy's Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe (2004), and a 2005 special issue of Gender & Society co-edited by Hyun Sook Kim.

The College currently offers both a major and minor in Women's Studies.

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**Hands on Learning through Internships and Service Learning**

In collaboration with the The Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services, Women's studies majors are urged to pursue internships, volunteer experiences, service learning opportunities and independent research that will complement their course work in women's studies. Below is a list of a few organizations that Women's Studies majors have sought out internship opportunities.

- Amnesty International
- Center for Health and Gender Equity
- Horizons for Homeless Children
- Children's Hospital Boston
- Transition House: Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence
- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center
- Global Fund for Women
- Off Our Backs: the feminist news journal
- Womensplace Crisis Center
- Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts
- Casa Myrna Vazquez
- Women for Women International
- Feminist Majority Foundation
- National Council of Women’s Organizations
- Women’s Studio Workshop
Skill Development

Women’s Studies majors and minors at Wheaton College will develop a number of beneficial career skills such as developing strong research and critical thinking skills. Below are a few additional examples of the skills in which a student can develop as Women’s Studies major or minor at Wheaton.

Speaking to groups
Clarifying ideas
Evaluating results
Reading critically
Evaluating information
Summarizing ideas
Confident oral presentation
Determining the needs of others
Listening carefully
Strong critical thinking

Writing clearly
Explaining complex concepts
Interpreting data
Evaluating evidence
Gathering information
Organizing materials/information
Compiling/recording data
Understanding cultural diversity
Assessing needs
Weighing values

What Can I Do With This Major?

Women’s study majors and minors at Wheaton have a great opportunity to pursue almost any field after graduation. Students usually go on to further studies or employment in a wide variety of areas. Contacting or joining related professional organizations is a great way to network and learn about more potential employers of Women’s Studies Majors. Plus by reading professional organization newsletters and attending workshops is another good way to stay on top of trends in the field. These organizations and job titles are examples of some of the ways in which Women’s Study majors or minors have applied their skills and abilities.

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Women’s Studies Courses at Wheaton

The major in women's studies consists of at least nine courses, including Introduction to Women's Studies, Feminist Theory, and the Senior Seminar and the minor consists of five or more courses. Women's Studies majors who have taken a first-year seminar with a member of the Women's Studies faculty may petition the Women's Studies Coordinator to count that FYS towards credit for the major. Below is a brief overview of some of the courses in the Women's Studies major. For a full description of courses individuals should refer to the Women’s Studies website.

Wmst 101  Introduction to Women's Studies
An introduction to topics and themes in women's experiences from a cross-cultural, historical and interdisciplinary perspective.

Wmst 228  Transnational Feminisms
This course examines the challenges for feminist organizing across borders posed by the global capitalism, cultural difference and the legacy of imperialism.

Wmst 298  Experimental Courses
As a point of entry to discussions of gender, place and culture, this course will explore the diverse ways in which geographers have conceived of, analyzed and redefined gender as a contested spatial practice.

Wmst 312  Feminist Theory
This advanced-level course is designed to explore in depth many of the theoretical frameworks and methodological issues that are touched upon in women's studies and gender-balanced courses.

Wmst 315  Black Feminist Theory
The class will examine critical and theoretical issues in Black feminism from the 1960s to the present, focusing on the influential contemporary Black feminist intellectual tradition that emerged in the 1970s.

Wmst 398  Experimental Courses
This class explores the diverse ways in which food is a feminist issue, both within the U.S. and abroad.

Wmst 399  Independent Study
Advanced students, in consultation with an instructor, may arrange to pursue independent study on topics not covered by the regular course offerings.

Wmst 401  Senior Seminar
A semester of directed reading and research where students will examine significant issues at the forefront of feminist theory and research, as well as the principal theoretical debates within the field of women's studies.

Wmst 500  Individual Research
Open to senior majors by invitation of the Program. All other interested students should speak with the program coordinator or Women's Studies academic advisor.
Strategies to Prepare for a Career as a Women’s Studies Major

Women’s Studies majors and minors at Wheaton College have many opportunities available to them which will help them to prepare for their life after graduation. Students usually go on to further studies or employment in a wide variety of areas. Serious students of Women’s Studies are expected to do an internship to develop skills outside of the classroom.

Below are a few additional strategies to prepare for a career as a Women’s Studies Major.

- Students choosing to pursue Women’s Studies focusing on the health field are encouraged to maintain a high grade point average which is needed for graduate school and professional programs.
- Women’s Studies majors are highly encouraged to gain experience through internships, volunteer work or other forms of related employment.
- Studies should consider talking to professionals currently working in your field of interest and arrange a shadowing opportunity.
- Becoming a student leader is a great way to prepare for a role in the Women’s Studies field. Students in the Women’s Studies field should consider obtaining a position as a peer mentor, resident advisor, or orientation leader.
- Attend workshops and join professional organizations related to the field to build up a professional network and further improve your understanding of the Women’s Studies field.

Utilizing Career Services

All students are encouraged to seek out career assistance prior to graduation by contacting The Filene Center for Academic Advising and Career Services located in Kollett Hall. It is never too early to meet with a Career Advisor to discuss summer opportunities, internships, networking, mock interviews, part time jobs, and full time jobs search strategies. At Career Services you will find people who help students identify their values, interests and skills. Through on-going, one-on-one advising, students may then uncover and pursue experiences to explore potential careers. Students are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned about themselves and the workplace so that they may make informed decisions about academic and career choices. Resources that strengthen students' knowledge of career fields enhance their ability to create effective resumes and cover letters, and increase the likelihood of their success in the workplace. Programs and Workshops which enhance students' career development, including mock interviews, networking events and alumnae/i career panels. Students are encouraged to contact The Filene Center at (508) 286-8215 to schedule an appointment with a caring and professional Career Advisor.
Graduate School Options

Students choosing to continue their education in the Women’s Studies field by pursing a master degree have many graduate school opportunities. Below is a list of a few institutions that offer a master degree in the field of Women’s Studies.

- Emory University
- Smith College
- Brandeis University
- Simmons College
- Towson University
- St Louis University
- George Mason University
- Syracuse University
- George Washington University
- University of Florida
- Duke University
- Rutgers University
- University of California – Los Angeles
- University of Michigan – Flint
- Suffolk University
- DePaul University
- University of Alabama
- Colorado State University
- Florida Atlantic University
- Northwestern University
- Ohio State University
- San Diego State University
- Sarah Lawrence College

Related Extra-Curricular Activities for Women’s Students

Wheaton College has a thriving extracurricular community with numerous student organizations on campus which are open to all students to join. Student organizations are a great way for students to become involved with the Wheaton campus community and develop experience related to their major. Below are a few examples of student organizations on campus that Women’s Study majors should consider joining such as Distinguished Women of Color Collective (DWOCC) or Wheaton Organization for Women to name a few.

Wheaton Organization for Women

Wheaton’s Organization for Women’s purpose is to be a meeting place for women (and men if they so choose) to discuss issues that are of importance in the lives of women everywhere concerning primarily gender issues, health issues (including sexual, mental, physical), and social issues (with a focus on violence against women). Our vision is to bring more women’s issues (on campus, nationally, and internationally) into awareness for the campus, to provide a safe environment for women and men to meet and talk, and for there to be more participation on campus during national awareness months/weeks/days that concern women’s issues. We hope to be a place where everyone can bring their own ideas about issues of concern to all women and we can all discuss how to educate the campus about those issues and to organize events.
surrounding them. We also hope that this will be a place where we are able to discuss how these issues affect us in our personal lives.

**Intercultural Board (ICB):** The ICB is responsible for promoting multicultural events and awareness at Wheaton. The board also supports and coordinates the efforts of clubs and students to share their cultures and perspectives. Please contact the Intercultural Board Chair if you are interested in getting involved. This organization is part of the Student Government Association – Executive Board Sub Committees.

**Programming Council (PC):** “The Programming Council shall be responsible for social, cultural and recreational events held on campus.” (From the SGA Constitution.) Please contact the SGA Programming Council Chair if you are interested in serving on this committee. This organization is part of the Student Government Association – Executive Board Sub Committees.

**Wheatones**
The Wheatones, the oldest *a cappella* group on campus is a group of talented women, who work together as musicians to arrange, prepare and perform songs.

**Whims**
The Wheaton Whims are an all-female *a cappella* group that brings together women who love to sing. The group performs at least two major shows each year, as well as numerous smaller shows for special on-campus events and benefits.

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**Books and Publications in the Filene Center Library**
The Filene Center is located in Kollett Hall and is a great resource for all students. Below is a list of some of the books related to the Women’s Study major students can find available to them in the Filene Center Library.

- Real People Working in the Helping Professions, Blythe Camenson
- The Best Companies for Women, Adams
- The Black Women’s Career Guide, Beatryce Nivens
- Woman Sport: The Women’s Sports Bible, Kathleen Stauffer, Greg Cylkowski
- Women in Career & Life Transitions, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Black Working Women, University of California
- Guide to Your Career, The Princeton Review
Women’s Studies Online Resources

By utilizing online resources students are able to make connections to great opportunities such as internships, job opportunities, and professional organizations related to their major. Please see below for a few helpful online resources for Woman’s Study majors or minors.

World Wide Learn guide for Women’s Studies Major


National Women’s Studies Association

- http://www.nwsa.org/

Feminist Majority Foundation’s Career Site

- http://www.feminist.org/

Artemis Guide to Women’s Studies Programs in the US

- http://www.artemisguide.com/

Feminism & Women’s Studies

- http://feminism.eserver.org/

Center for the Study of Women in Society

- http://csws.uoregon.edu/

Global List of Women’s Organizations (listed by country)

- http://www.distel.ca/womlist/womlist.html

National Council on Women’s Organizations

- http://www.womensorganizations.org/

United States Department of Labor

- www.dol.gov/wb/

The Feminist Campus

- http://www.feministcampus.org/default.asp
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