About Women’s Studies at Purdue FW

Our campus was the first public university in Indiana to offer a Bachelor of Arts degree with a women’s studies major, and over the decades, the Women’s Studies Program has grown in size and expanded its mission to include a larger focus on gender and sexuality studies. Currently, Purdue FW offers a B.A., certificate, and minor in women’s studies, as well as a range of courses that meet college distribution and general education requirements.

Learning Women’s Studies

Emphasizing an interdisciplinary approach to learning, the Women’s Studies Program brings together the expertise of faculty from a broad range of traditional academic disciplines, including communication, English, and psychology, to name just a few. This approach reflects the core principle behind interdisciplinary studies: namely, that the problems and potential of society are best understood through study, dialogue, and research that draws upon and integrates multiple disciplinary perspectives and expertise. Just as important, the Women’s Studies Program offers small classes that emphasize a student-centered approach to learning, one that recognizes the value of self-exploration, collective investigation, community dialogue, and feminist methods of research.

Given all of this, it’s not surprising that many students find their women’s studies educations transformative. Indeed, women’s studies can open the door to new perspectives on both women and the world.

Living Women’s Studies

A women’s studies degree has all the practical applications of a traditional degree, if not more. Students in our courses have the opportunity to strengthen their critical thinking, speaking, writing, and research skills—which are all cornerstones of successful career preparation. They study the large issues that are of increasing importance to employers, from diversity and globalization to conflict resolution and problem-solving. Reflecting this versatility and expertise, Purdue FW graduates in women’s studies have gone on to successful careers in law, education, human services, business, government, and non-profit organizations, serving community needs and solving the problems of the 21st Century. They demonstrate firsthand that meaningful social transformation can come about only through the combination of knowledge, thought, and action.

Why Take a Women’s Studies Course?

Students who have previously taken a women’s studies course can perhaps answer this question best. Here is just a glimpse of what our students have to say about their women’s studies courses in recent years:

“i have found my feminist voice & won’t go back. [The instructor’s] understanding of so many things fostered a great experience.” (WOST 210: Intro to Women’s & Gender Studies)

“This was the most beneficial course I have ever taken. The discussions were amazing, the reading material was challenging in a good way, and the service learning project was a wonderful experience.” (WOST 240: Feminism and Food)

“I absolutely loved this course. I always left wanting to learn more!” (WOST 301: International Perspectives on Women)

“This course did open my mind into a new way of thinking.” (WOST 304: Feminist Theories)

Beyond these possibilities, women’s studies courses have very practical applications. Students can select from a wide range of women’s studies courses to fulfill multiple areas within the general education requirements. We also offer courses that meet the College of Arts and Sciences (COAS) distribution requirements for those students with majors in COAS.

Contact Information

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Follow us on social media:
facebook.com/purdue.fw.wost
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This interdisciplinary course explores and analyzes the position of women and the role of gender in the institutions of the United States, including the family, education, government, law, the economy, and religion. It includes an examination, through the lenses of feminism, of women's historic and contemporary status legally, politically, and economically, as well as women's struggles in identity, expression, sexuality, and lifestyle. Approved by the College of Arts and Sciences for the Social and Behavioral Sciences distribution requirement and for General Education Category BS: Social and Behavioral Ways of Knowing.

WOST 22500: GENDER, SEXUALITY, & POPULAR CULTURE
01 24572 TR 1:30-2:45 PM KT 242 Staff
02 24573 MW 4:30-5:45 PM KT 239 Aisha, P
03I 24508 Online* Beringer, L

Examination of popular cultural "makings" of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality through typical representation of gender within fiction, theatre, cinema, radio, music, television, journalism, and other secular mass media. Course will include the analysis of the developing international telecommunications "superhighway" and the struggles to secure increased representation of women and of feminist perspectives within existing culture industries. Approved by the College of Arts and Sciences for the Humanities distribution requirement and for General Education Category B6: Humanistic Ways of Knowing.

WOST 24000: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE
02 25003 TR 12:00-1:15 PM KT 239 Badia, J

Recent political, judicial, and legislative decisions are redefining people's access to reproductive health care, including their access to birth control and abortion. And as we've seen in the case of the separation of immigrant/refugee people of their right to parent their children. A model for theoretical inquiry and activism, the concept of reproductive justice highlights the interconnections between a wide-range of issues affecting people's reproductive lives, including the right to not have children, the right to have children, and the right to parent one's children in safe environments. This course will take up the topic of reproductive politics from a feminist perspective, focusing especially on the reproductive justice movement and its call for an examination of how the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability should shape (but haven't necessarily always shaped) our discussions about reproductive politics. As an introductory-level examination of the topic, this course will combine readings about the history of reproductive rights, the history of the reproductive justice movement specifically, the present state of reproductive politics, and the theoretical concepts that have framed this history and shape current politics. In addition, students will have the opportunity to develop a course project that examines reproductive justice in the context of our local community. Approved by the College of Arts and Sciences for the Social and Behavioral Sciences distribution requirement and for General Education Category B7: Interdisciplinary and Creative Ways of Knowing.

WOST 30100: BEYOND THE HAREM: WOMEN IN NORTH AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST
01 25054 MW 1:30-2:45 PM KT 239 Mannir, E
02I 24510 Online* Mannir, E

This course examines gender and sexuality in literature, film, art and historical documents produced by and about North Africans and Middle Easterners. As the cultural and geographic crossroads between these regions, Egypt will be emphasized. Course materials explore representations of the lives and social situations of women in the Arab and Islamic societies of the colonial and post-colonial period. Students will consider the idea of feminism from various cultural and historical perspectives, as well as topics ranging from Orientalism to the recent resurgence of voluntary veiling among the educated elite. Approved by the College of Arts and Sciences for the Cultural Studies (Non-Western Culture) requirement and General Education Capstone.

WOST 30100: TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER, SEX, AND POWER
03I 24511 Online* Womack, M

This course decenders Western perspectives in feminist theory and praxis. As a class we will consider in what ways systems of oppression shape people's lives throughout the world and transnationally. We will explore how power hierarchies impact women in a manner that relates to their geographical location and intersectional identities. We will also explore the impacts of diverse forms of prejudice which include but are not limited to sexism, racism, communalism, xenophobia, heterosexism, cisgenderism, and classism. Students will be prompted to consider what other systemic inequalities impact human beings. How have feminist scholars and activists challenged these structures of oppression and privilege? This course explores these questions and identifies ways feminist activists throughout the world have mobilized against colonialism, imperialism, hegemony, poverty, and global inequality. Through radical approaches to activism, feminists from the Global South have promoted human rights and compassion while troubling the concept of woman as a uniformly experienced collective identity. In this course students will problematize narrow understandings of womanhood and other collective identities by examining how identities are complex and intersectional. How does acknowledging the intricacy of subjectivities reveal that there is no simple solution to inequalities? Approved by the College of Arts and Sciences for the Cultural Studies (Non-Western Culture) requirement and General Education Capstone.

COM 42200: WOMEN, MEN, AND MEDIA
01 23337 TR 9:00-10:15 AM NF 135 Nass, A

This course will focus on the way in which the communication media, as the architects of mass culture, contribute to the social construction of race, gender, and sexuality. The main question that will be addressed is how various media documents masculinity and femininity and how these definitions intersect with social discourses of race and class. The course will look at a variety of media genres including films, television, popular music, video and advertising. Prerequisite: COM 25000 or instructor permission.

POL 32400: WOMEN IN AMERICAN POLITICS
01 25034 TR 1:30-2:45 PM LA 210 Warladstad-Ulmschneider, G

This course examines the evolution of women's political involvement in the United States. This course approaches gender differences from a political science perspective and responds to the growing research on gender differences by political scientists. It focuses, in particular, on the historical background of women in politics, women as voters, women as candidates, and women as office holders. Moreover, it also examines the way that gender interacts with race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation in the political arena. In so doing, the course addresses fundamental questions about the role of women in American politics: What is the nature of women's political involvement? Why are women “politically underrepresented”? And finally, does it matter?

*Internet required; access course through e-learning.*