

Women's and Gender Studies

UNDERGRADUATE FACT SHEET

Studies has its roots in the student, civil rights, and women's movements of the 1960s and '70s. In its early years the field's teachers and scholars principally asked, "Where are the women?" Today that question may seem an overly simple one, but at the time few scholars considered gender as a lens of analysis, and women's voices had little representation on campus, in the curriculum, and in social life.

Today the discipline asks questions about identity, power, and privilege to contribute to health practices, education, political systems, and social policy. It draws from U.S. and international feminist scholars and activists. Women's and gender studies explores the conceptual claims and theoretical practices of intersectionality, which examines how categories of identity (e.g., race, class, gender, nation, age, and ability, among others) and structures of inequality are mutually constituted and must continually be understood in relationship to one another.

Women's and gender studies provides you, as a student, with practical and integrative skills not readily available elsewhere in the University. It brings all women and men, regardless of race, into the heart of the educational process; promotes tolerance on campus; addresses issues of diversity and internationalism; and validates personal experience in academic pursuits. Its research and curricular content and methodology are multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. The only discipline in which these elements are brought together and explicitly examined, a women's and gender studies major offers you a course of study that speaks to the needs of international society and to the issues that women and other marginalized communities face in the 21st century.

Career Preparation

The women's and gender studies program provides unique skills and knowledge, and is also a complement to other curricula. Its focus on diversity leads to an integrated understanding of people and society, which will serve you well in any career you may choose. For instance, the field may assist you as a psychology major who wishes to pursue a career in counseling by demonstrating how human thoughts and behaviors are influenced by such sociocultural factors as gender. In addition, a background in women's and gender studies offers you greater self-understanding and self-esteem.

Various organizations are looking for people with expertise in gender and diversity-related issues. As a student of women's and gender studies, you can become a consultant in advertising, marketing, or research and take up a career in personnel management. You can work in one of the thousands of women-oriented social service agencies in the United States,

become attorneys or physicians, or work in a human relations field. A knowledge of women's and gender studies and a familiarity with the vital resources that are related to issues of gender, race, and class are helpful for a career in all of these areas.

Career Placement

Women's and gender studies graduates have entered any number of careers, including communications, law, medicine, psychology, management, social work, and teaching. Graduates have found positions with battered women's shelters, counseling agencies, legislative lobbying groups, music companies, and the WNBA.

Graduates also have gone on to advanced studies in women's and gender studies and related fields at the following institutions:

Michigan State University
New School for Social Research
New York University
Ohio University
Rutgers University
Temple University
University of Delaware

Undergraduate Programs

Bachelor of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies. A women's and gender studies major consists of 30 semester hours, no more than nine of which may be taken in any one academic department (excluding women's studies). At least six courses must be taken at the 300- or 400-level. The major allows room for those who wish to double major in women's studies and another discipline. Required courses include introduction to women's studies, intellectual roots of western feminism, and feminist theory.

Minor/Concentration

Minor in Women's Studies. A women's studies minor consists of 18 semester hours, no more than six of which can be taken in a single department (excluding women's studies). This program can serve as a complementary area of concentration that will enhance a number of major programs, such as psychology and political science, and will strengthen career areas such as human services or business.

Concentration. You also can take women's studies as a minor in the bachelor of arts or bachelor of science in liberal studies general degree program. This concentration is for students who wish to explore the emerging body of knowledge of women's studies and its ramifications for the future.

Learn More

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Typical Courses

Body Politics
Gender and Science
Latina Writers
Psychology of Women
Queer Theory
Sexual Identity and Culture
Sociology of Gender
Transnational Feminisms
Women Artists
Women and Politics
Women's Literature
Women of the Global South

Special Study Opportunities

The women's studies program has an internship that allows you to apply in the field the theoretical framework learned in your courses. Sites include Planned Parenthood, local businesses and agencies, and shelters for battered women.

Also available is a specialized career track in the liberal studies major, counseling women. This track will prepare you for a career in social services, especially with women clients.

Related Student Activities

The Gender Studies Club and Association for Women's Empowerment meet weekly in the Women's Center.

The Institute for Women is an independent body designed to represent the interests of women on campus. The institute sponsors a number of activities to enhance the self-esteem and career success of women: the Woman-in-Residence program, the Grace Cochran Research on Women Award, the Visiting Professor Program, and the Charlotte W. Newcombe Scholarship Grants for mature and second-career women.

The Women's Center, located in Lawrence Center, provides a lounge area, peer advising, and special interest programs, such as lectures and films as well as information on selected women's issues.

Faculty

You can obtain a complete listing of faculty and their academic qualifications for this program from the contact person listed below.

For More Information

Dr. Joan Woolfrey, Interim Director
Women's and Gender Studies
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About West Chester University

A comprehensive, public institution, West Chester University offers high-quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs in more than 100 subject areas, as well as certification and certificate programs. As one of the largest members of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, West Chester offers a full and rewarding educational experience as well as reasonable tuition.

With a rich heritage dating back to the 19th century, West Chester University was founded in 1871 as West Chester Normal School for the purpose of training teachers for the Commonwealth's newly established public schools. In 1960, West Chester State Teachers College expanded its programs to include liberal arts and graduate degrees and, as a result, dropped "Teachers" from its name. In 1983, West Chester State College became one of the 14 institutions in the State System of Higher Education. Along with its university status, the school acquired a new system of governance and the opportunity to expand its degree programs.

Today, more than 15,400 graduate and undergraduate students, along with 1,500 faculty and staff, study and work on the 406-acre campus. Situated in the Borough of West Chester, the campus is a picturesque mix of Gothic, Victorian, and modern architecture with pleasant, tree-shaded walks.

Strategically located at the center of the mid-Atlantic corridor between New York City and Washington, D.C., West Chester is just 25 miles west of Philadelphia and 17 miles north of Wilmington.

Information on Admission

Office of Admissions

Emil H. Messikomer Hall, 100 West Rosedale Ave.

West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383

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