

GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES

Department Description

The Saint Mary's College department in Gender and Women's Studies encourages students to examine and analyze women's lives and constructions and performativities of genders. The program applies an inclusive and interdisciplinary approach to the study of women, gender identities, and sexualities. It is guided by feminist activism and feminist theoretical insight into different forms of power, inequality, and privilege. Students investigate the intersectionalities of gender, race, class, sexualities, and other identity categories from historical and contemporary transnational perspectives. The Gender and Women's Studies department embodies a commitment to women in all their diversities and reflects our conviction that women must actively define themselves and create knowledge.

Program Description

Students who major or minor enroll both in courses housed in the Gender and Women's Studies department and in courses offered in other disciplines. A major or minor supports career choices in human services, activism and advocacy, education, law and public policy, business, and other fields calling for social and historical awareness, critical thinking, and engagement with social and cultural diversity.

Faculty who teach in Gender and Women's Studies represent departments throughout the College. They share a commitment to helping students in our women's college develop the skills to interpret and to analyze systems of oppression and ultimately, to work toward a more just society.

Study Abroad

Saint Mary's has a long history of providing quality international programs as an essential part of our educational mission—forming women leaders who will make a difference in the world. As this world becomes increasingly interdependent, the College offers an expanding range of semester, year, semester break, and summer study and service programs in a wide variety of countries, and encourages students to take advantage of them. Learn more about the various Study Abroad opportunities (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/undergraduate/academic-life/international-programs/>).

Programs

- Gender and Women's Studies, Bachelor of Arts - GWS (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/undergraduate/programs/gender-womens-studies/gender-womens-studies-bachelor-arts/>)
- Gender and Women's Studies, Minor - GWS (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/undergraduate/programs/gender-womens-studies/gender-womens-studies-minor/>)

Department Chair

Jamie Wagman
228 Spes Unica Hall
574-284-4476

Faculty

S. Choi, J. Wagman

Student Learning Outcomes

Knowledge—students will recognize and explain:

- The history of feminist movements and women's contributions to knowledge and achievement.
- The intersectionalities of gender, race, class, sexualities, and other identity categories from historical and contemporary transnational perspectives.
- Feminist terminology, and theoretical concepts
- About the social constructions and performativities of genders, sexualities, and race.

Skills—students will:

- Evaluate sources or cultural representations, analyze discourse, and consider context from a feminist perspective.
- Use feminist methodologies to conduct research about women, gender identities,
- and sexualities.
- Apply a feminist analysis in more than one discipline.

Agency—students will:

- Recognize the necessity of informed feminist advocacy for transformative change.
- Discern when and how to act as an ally on issues regarding women, gender identities, and sexualities.
- Work to resist oppression with regard to issues of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and ethnicity.

Gender and Women's Studies Courses

Topics courses in various departments and other courses may be included when appropriate. A current list of Gender and Women's Studies courses is available from the department chair.

GWS 180 FYS: Intersectional Leadership and Empowerment (3)

This FYS will explore the complexities of gender, leadership, and the challenges leaders face navigating power structures. Students will analyze how norms and stereotypes related to gender, race, class, and sexuality affect leadership while focusing on developing strategies for overcoming barriers and creating more just and inclusive leadership environments. Using a strengths-based approach, students will develop a personalized leadership plan that fosters confidence, self-efficacy, and resilience. Students will engage with diverse readings, personal reflection, and leadership development exercises to cultivate a contemporary understanding of leadership.

GWS 204 Women Leading Change: Lessons from Brazil (3)

This course explores women's leadership in Brazil through an immersive one-week study abroad experience in São Paulo. Students will engage with the Sisters of the Holy Cross, who lead educational and healthcare initiatives rooted in Holy Cross values and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. By exploring the sisters' work in grassroots organizing, community empowerment, and education, students will analyze how leadership, gender, and social justice function across international and cultural boundaries. Through experiential learning, readings, class discussions, and digital storytelling, students will gain a deeper understanding of multicultural women's leadership and service in a global context.

GWS 207 Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies (3)

This interdisciplinary course introduces students to the field of gender and women's studies. The course will enable students to understand how gender impacts their everyday lives, social institutions, and cultural practices both locally and globally. Additionally, students will examine the significance and meaning of one's gender identity in different historical periods, the history of feminist movements, and transnational perspectives on feminism. Students will also discuss how gender intersects with other identity categories such as socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, geography, and generational location. Lastly, students will examine and critique cultural representations and claims about women and gender identities.

GWS 220 Introduction to Queer Studies (3)

This course will provide an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer studies. The course will investigate the academic foundations of LGBTQ studies and the emergence and transformation of LGBTQ identities, cultural practices, and political movements, and the ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, and class have shaped same-sex sexuality in different historical periods, with an emphasis on the United States. (also listed as SOC 220)

GWS 275 Global Women's Leadership (6)

The main goal of this class is to examine global women's leadership and contemporary transnational feminism in a variety of areas, ranging from political representation to violence against women, peace and security, and other such concerns. The course is designed to help you have a clearer understanding of women's leadership in diverse cultures and contexts and help you acquire the knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to develop your own leadership capacity. The seminar is designed for students to connect readings, assignments, and discussion to their experiential learning experiences, as well as their course requirements.

GWS 290 Special Topics (1-3)

Introductory level course in topics in Gender and Women's Studies not covered in the regular department offerings. May be repeated for credit with a different topic.

GWS 333 Transnational Feminisms (3)

In this course, we will discuss feminist analyses of gender, colonialism, and economic globalization. The first part of this course will consider a variety of feminist theoretical perspectives on the gendered, classed, and racialized dynamics of colonialism and globalization. Next, we will examine the particularities of women's lives globally and their different histories and social histories. Finally, we will look at some of the feminist transnational activism and mobilization around issues of conflict, environment, capitalism, and labor. Some of the questions we will consider are: How does globalization impacted existing (gender) inequalities? How does globalization trouble the "North-South" divide? What political, social, and economic ramifications does the outsourcing of reproductive labor have?

GWS 350 Feminist Theory (3)

This course teaches a broad range of feminist theoretical approaches, including black feminist thought and critical race feminism, intersectionality, standpoint theory, queer theory, and transnational feminist theory. Prerequisite: GWS 207.

GWS 360 Doing Feminism: Issues in Research and Practice (3)

This course explores how feminist scholars challenge dominant theories of knowledge and methodologies employed in the social sciences and humanities. Some issues we will discuss in the course include subjectivity, intersectionality, reflexivity, definitions of sex and gender, and the place of gender, race, class, and citizenship in feminist research. Finally, we will analyze how feminist politics shape the kinds of questions we ask, the types of methods we use, and how we engage in ethical research partnerships with our informants. Class will include lecture, group activities, guest speakers, and student presentations to assist us in exploring, understanding, and practicing feminist methods used within Gender and Women's Studies. Prerequisite: GWS 207 and GWS 350 or permission of instructor.

GWS 389 Practicum in Teaching Gender Studies (1-3)

Qualified students take responsibility for leading class discussions and preparing instructional materials for selected Gender & Women's Studies courses in collaboration with the instructor. Prerequisite: GWS 207 or permission of instructor.

GWS 390 Special Topics (1-3)

Upper level course in topics in Gender and Women's Studies not covered in the regular department offerings. May be repeated for credit with a different topic.

GWS 485 Independent Research in Gender Studies (1-3)

This course is designed to give students hands-on experience in the research of gender studies. We will concentrate on the theoretical approaches to methodology as well as the specific mechanics of various research styles. Students will have an opportunity to perform an independent research project under direct supervision of a faculty member. Prerequisite: permission of instructor.

GWS 497 Independent Study (1-3)

An opportunity for students to do independent study. Content dependent on student interests and background. Approval of Gender and Women's Studies Chair required.

GWS 499 Internship (1-3)

Practical off-campus experience in a Gender and Women's Studies-related field at an approved site. Jointly supervised by a faculty member and a representative from the sponsoring agency. Open to junior or senior Gender and Women's Studies majors or minors who have taken at least two Gender and Women's Studies courses. Must be approved by the Gender and Women's Studies department chair. A reflection paper appropriate to the nature of the internship will be required. Graded S/U. May be repeated for up to three hours.

Four Year Plan for Gender Women's Studies Major

This is a sample 4-year path, and you may contact GWS chair Jamie Wagman at jwagman@saintmarys.edu for individualized advising in the major. While GWS 207 Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies, GWS 350 Feminist Theory, GWS 360 Doing Feminism: Issues in Research and Practice, and GWS 497 Independent Study OR GWS 499 Internship are core requirements, we also require 1 course each in our three categories of electives: Transnational Perspectives on Gender, Intersectionalities of Gender, Race, Class, Sexuality, and the Gendered

Body, in addition to three other electives in any of these categories. We offer electives in each category every term.

If you decide to study abroad, you would want to note that GWS 350: Feminist Theory is currently offered only every fall, and GWS 360: Doing Feminism is offered every spring. Students may take 350 and 360 courses at any time, as long as they have already taken GWS 207: Introduction to GWS.

Course	Title	Credits
First Year		
First Semester		
Gen Ed Language I		
W		
Gen Ed		
AVE 101	College in Practice	1
Gen Ed		
Elective		
Credits		1
Second Semester		
Gen Ed Language II		
Gen Ed		
Gen Ed		
Gen Ed		
Credits		0
Second Year		
First Semester		
Gen Ed		
Gen Ed		
GWS 207	Introduction to Gender and Women's Studies ¹	3
Credits		3
Second Semester		
Gen Ed		
Gen Ed		
Credits		0
Third Year		
First Semester		
Gen Ed		
GWS 350	Feminist Theory	3
GWS elective in Transnational Perspectives on Gender		3
GWS elective in Intersectionalities of Gender, Race, Class, Sexuality		3
Credits		9
Second Semester		
Gen Ed		
GWS 360	Doing Feminism: Issues in Research and Practice	3
GWS elective in Gendered Body		3
Credits		6
Fourth Year		
First Semester		
GWS 497 or GWS 499	Independent Study or Internship	1-3

GWS elective	3
Credits	4-6
Second Semester	
GWS elective	3
GWS elective	3
Credits	6
Total Credits	29-31

¹ GWS 207 satisfies LO1: Historical Perspectives, LO2: Women's Voices, LO3: Social Responsibility A and LO3: Global Learning B. Many of our electives are also certified as LO1, LO2 and LO3 courses.