Mission / Purpose

Women's Studies at Georgia State University contributes to the university's broader mission of encouraging critical thinking through a focus on feminist and womanist interdisciplinary scholarship, teaching, and community participation. Women's Studies began by recognizing how sex and gender inform academic disciplines and impact the politics of knowledge production. We therefore make explicit the ways in which gender and sexuality, in connection with other categories such as race, class, ability, and age, construct our understandings of the world. Furthermore, we analyze the ways public discourse relies on gender and sexuality to conceptualize such issues as war and militarism, policy, the environment, education, healthcare, economics, the media, and popular culture. In order to explore these issues, we emphasize the following: race, globalization, sexuality, and social change. We promote transformative thinking and activism toward ending oppression and working for freedom and justice.

Goals

G 1: New and innovative ideas
To develop innovative approaches to relevant issues and debates within the field.

G 2: Critical Thinking through Writing
To be able to display critical thinking through writing skills, such as organizing material clearly, developing ideas clearly and carefully, and providing sufficient evidence for claims.

G 3: Demonstrate knowledge of field
Demonstrate the knowledge of and ability to use appropriate interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives within the fields of feminist/womanist scholarship.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

SLO 1: Research Questions (G: 1) (M: 5)
Students should demonstrate their ability to formulate new research questions, providing innovative approaches to existing feminist/womanist scholarship.

SLO 2: Evidence (G: 2) (M: 4, 5)
Students should demonstrate their critical thinking through writing skills by providing sufficient evidence for claims and developing their arguments clearly and carefully.

SLO 3: Organization (G: 2) (M: 2, 5)
Students should demonstrate their critical thinking through writing skills by organizing their
papers, both in terms of structuring their paragraphs as well as structuring the entire paper in a clear and coherent fashion.

**SLO 4: Theoretical Perspectives (G: 3) (M: 1, 2, 4, 5)**
Students should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of appropriate interdisciplinary feminist/womanist theoretical perspectives in their written work.

**SLO 5: Application of skills (G: 3) (M: 1, 2)**
Students should be able to demonstrate their ability to apply the theoretical perspectives and interdisciplinary skills that they have learned in the field, in both written and other types of work.

**SLO 6: Critical thinking through writing skills (G: 2) (M: 1, 4, 5)**
This outcome measures general writing skills, syntax, grammar, punctuation; it focuses on the clear and coherent expression of ideas.

**Measures, Targets, and Findings**

**M 1: Final Exam (O: 4, 5, 6)**
In this final exam, students should demonstrate their knowledge of and ability to use feminist/womanist theoretical perspectives. Furthermore, we scored sample exams on their ability to develop and argue their responses, as well as their ability to express ideas clearly and coherently.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

**Target for O4: Theoretical Perspectives**
We hope that all students will achieve at least a 3 on our rubric, and over 1/2 will receive a 2 or higher (the rubric runs from 1-5, with 1 as excellent and 5 as poor). In the 2010-2011 assessment year, we switched the 1-5 of the scale, because the committee said it was clearer that better scores should be represented by higher numbers.

Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Partially Met
For this academic year, we found that 87% scored at least a 3, and 63% scored a 4 or 5, which shows that we almost met our target in terms of basic competence and did meet our target in terms of excellence.

**Target for O5: Application of skills**
We hope that all students will achieve at least a 3 on our rubric, and over 1/2 will receive a 2 or higher (the rubric runs from 1-5, with 1 as excellent and 5 as poor). In the 2010-2011 assessment year, we switched the 1-5 of the scale, because the committee said it was clearer that better scores should be represented by higher numbers.

Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Met
In terms of application of skills, we found that all students received at least a 3, and 63% received a 4 or 5, so that we did meet our target here.
Target for O6: Critical thinking through writing skills

We hope that all students will achieve at least a 3 on our rubric, and over 3/4 will receive a 2 or higher (the rubric runs from 1-5, with 1 as excellent and 5 as poor). In the 2010-2011 assessment year, we switched the 1-5 of the scale, because the committee said it was clearer that better scores should be represented by higher numbers.

Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Partially Met

For the writing aspect of exams, we found that all students received at least a 3, and 50% received a 4 or 5. In terms of writing, we then found that students did better in terms of achieving basic competence than they did in terms of achieving excellence. In part, this may be because we focused our assessment on providing evidence for their conclusions, as that is the main reason for having exams, but our target may be high for that part.

M 2: Creative Project (O: 3, 4, 5)

The basic idea is for you to further develop an idea from class that you want to in a creative fashion. Presenting the creative project is an important point of the project; be sure you can talk about why you chose what you did in a way that makes sense in terms of the class. 1) Be sure to consult with me about your individual topic! 2) You may use any variety of artistic or creative means to present the project; however, be sure you can communicate clearly their relevance to the class. 3) I am not qualified to grade you on artistic merit; therefore the grade will focus mainly on organization and contribution to the ideas of the class. 4) Be sure to include an analysis of the complexity of these ideas. It should be approximately 5-7 pages. 5) Be sure that your analysis is focused and coherent.

Source of Evidence: Academic direct measure of learning - other

Target for O3: Organization

We hope that all students will achieve at least a 3 on our rubric, and over 3/4 will receive a 2 or higher (the rubric runs from 1-5, with 1 as excellent and 5 as poor).

Target for O4: Theoretical Perspectives

We hope that all students will achieve at least a 3 on our rubric, and over 3/4 will receive a 2 or higher (the rubric runs from 1-5, with 1 as excellent and 5 as poor).

Target for O5: Application of skills

We hope that all students will achieve at least a 3 on our rubric, and over 3/4 will receive a 2 or higher (the rubric runs from 1-5, with 1 as excellent and 5 as poor).

M 4: interview/film critique (O: 2, 4, 6)

I'm not sure if I should even include this assignment, because I didn't get a copy of the actual assignment. I'll try to fix this as soon as I can.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Target for O2: Evidence

We hope that all students will achieve at least a 3 on our rubric, and over 3/4 will receive a 4 or higher (the rubric runs from 1-5, with 1 as poor and 5 as excellent)
**Target for O4: Theoretical Perspectives**
We hope that all students will achieve at least a 3 on our rubric, and over 3/4 will receive a 4 or higher (the rubric runs from 1-5, with 1 as poor and 5 as excellent).

**Target for O6: Critical thinking through writing skills**
We hope that all students will achieve at least a 3 on our rubric, and over 3/4 will receive a 4 or higher (the rubric runs from 1-5, with 1 as poor and 5 as excellent).

**M 5: Research Paper (O: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)**
Students shall write a final paper, on a topic that they will determine that is relevant to the class and approved by the professor, that utilizes the knowledge and applies the skills learned in the class in order to develop an innovative approach to a particular question in the interdisciplinary fields of feminist/womanist scholarship. Additionally, students will demonstrate their critical thinking through writing skills in this assignment; these skills include thesis development, organization, support for claims, and clear, concise writing, following appropriate grammar and syntax. We are including in this measure not only final seminar papers, but senior research papers as well. The senior research papers have similar requirements, although the standards are higher since they involve a semester long project. Here, I will distinguish between those papers which require revision, and those that do not, so that we can more clearly assess the revision aspect of the papers.

Source of Evidence: Capstone course assignments measuring mastery

**Target for O1: Research Questions**
For this measure, we would like 75% of students to receive at least a 3, and 50% of students to receive a 4 or 5.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Met**
For students whose papers did not undergo substantial revision: 82% received at least a 3, and 50% received a 4 or 5. For those who did: Draft: 75% received at least a 3, and 13% received a 4 or 5. Revised Paper: 100% received at least a 3, and 75% received a 4 or 5. The results here suggest that revision allows us to exceed our targets, but students do not do as well on drafts when they know they will be required to revise than they do when they are turning in their final paper without the draft.

**Target for O2: Evidence**
For this measure, we would like 75% of students to receive at least a 3, and 50% of students to receive a 4 or 5.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Partially Met**
For those papers which did not have a revision component: 82% received at least a 3, and 57% received a 4 or 5. For those papers which did have a revision component: Draft: 100% received at least a 3, and 13% received a 4 or 5. Final: 100% received at least a 3, and 67% received a 4 or 5. Here, we find that we pretty much met our targets, but it is striking that the revision component allowed for a significant improvement from competence to excellence, although, once again, the improvement is less striking from the final revised to the final unrevised.
**Target for O3: Organization**

For this measure, we would like 75% of students to receive at least a 3, and 50% of students to receive a 4 or 5.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Partially Met**

For those papers which did not have a substantial revision required: 75% received at least a 3, and 25% received a 4 or 5. For those that did, Drafts: 25% received at least a 3, and 0% received a 4 or 5. Final: 100% received at least a 3, and 67% received a 4 or 5. The results here suggest that students really wait to work on organization until their papers are being revised! The results suggest that revision is especially helpful in terms of students improving the organization of their papers.

**Target for O4: Theoretical Perspectives**

For this measure, we would like 75% of students to receive at least a 3, and 50% of students to receive a 4 or 5.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Met**

In terms of the papers that did not require a substantial revision component: 94% received at least a 3, and 68% received a 4 or 5. For those papers that were revised: Drafts: 100% received at least a 3, and 75% received a 4 or 5. Final: 100% received at least a 3, and 100% received a 4 or 5. Students exceed the targets in this respect, showing that, as has been consistent with previous years, their ability to utilize feminist theoretical perspectives is strong.

**Target for O6: Critical thinking through writing skills**

For this measure, we would like 75% of students to receive at least a 3, and 50% of students to receive a 4 or 5.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Partially Met**

For those papers that did not undergo substantial assessed revision: 87% received at least a 3, and 43% received a 4 or 5. For those papers that were revised: Draft: 100% received at least a 3, and 67% received a 4 or 5. Final: 100% received at least a 3, and 75% received a 4 or 5. In these papers, the revision component does not seem to have helped as much as it has on other objectives, although the scores on the revised papers were quite a bit higher than those that did not undergo revision.

**Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)**

**Improve rubrics**

Consider implementing more explicit criteria to define rubrics for student assignments. To do so, we should collectively decide as a faculty what rubrics we would use to evaluate student assignments.

- **Established in Cycle:** 2005-2006
- **Implementation Status:** Finished
- **Priority:** Medium
Modify assessment
Departmental Conversation about evaluators` interpretations of measures and/or the measures themselves. We are continuing to hold these conversations and to think about the targets at this point.

- **Established in Cycle:** 2005-2006
- **Implementation Status:** Planned
- **Priority:** Medium

**Implementation Description:** Ongoing
**Projected Completion Date:** 05/2010
**Responsible Person/Group:** Core faculty
**Additional Resources:** Time

Early intervention
We are designating our 3010 course, Feminist Theories, as a Critical Thinking Through Writing Course, which should focus attention on student writing earlier in the program.

- **Established in Cycle:** 2006-2007
- **Implementation Status:** In-Progress
- **Priority:** Medium

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
- **Measure:** Research Paper | **Outcome/Objective:** Evidence

**Implementation Description:** Fall 2007
**Projected Completion Date:** 05/2011
**Responsible Person/Group:** Core faculty (Many of us teach WSt 3010)

Increase critical thinking through writing skills
Given that our assessment targets were not met in two particular areas: organization and evidence, it appears that our students are having the most difficulty in terms of critical thinking through writing skills. Hopefully, given that students will need to take a CTW course earlier in their careers, that will help students improve in these areas. Until the CTW is fully operational, we can work to increase writing instruction throughout our upper-level courses.

- **Established in Cycle:** 2008-2009
- **Implementation Status:** In-Progress
- **Priority:** Low

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
- **Measure:** Research Paper | **Outcome/Objective:** Critical thinking through writing skills

**Projected Completion Date:** 05/2011
**Responsible Person/Group:** Core Faculty

Increased writing instruction
We need to develop a plan that will implement early intervention (perhaps a professor approval) of research questions. In 2012-2013, some professors are doing this, and others are collecting drafts of papers. We are still working on implementing this action plan.
**Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers**

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM QUESTION 1:** What changes in the assessment process has your degree program made since last year's assessment report? (e.g. revised learning outcomes, measures, targets, etc.) Why were these changes made? What changes and improvements in the assessment process will you make in the coming academic year?

We have not substantially revised our assessment process, but we have revised who performs the assessment. We used to have the undergraduate committee look at the papers, along with the Director of Undergraduate Studies, but we have decided to move to having individual instructors assess student performance by utilizing the rubric to score the papers alongside their grading. The process used to be incredibly labor intensive, especially for faculty who are not in the department, and so we are streamlining it. Furthermore, we decided to drop the outcome, Application of Skills, from the research paper, since it continually mapped exactly on the "Demonstrates appropriate feminist theoretical perspectives" outcome, so we dropped it due to redundancy. We decided not to drop it altogether, and so we are still using it in the assessment of final exams. We want to drop the measure, Interview/Film Critique, as the professor who used that is no longer with us. We will continue to assess the major assignments from the upper level courses, but, as of now, most professors assign either seminar papers, exams, or both.

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM QUESTION 2:** What is the impact of the data obtained from assessment findings on your educational degree program? What changes and improvements to your educational program will be made based on this year's assessment data? (e.g., revised curriculum, courses, sequence, etc.) If changes to curriculum or courses are made for other reasons, please explain.

The most significant improvement that we analyzed this year involves the requirement, in some upper level courses, that students revise their papers. While we always encourage students to thoughtfully revise, we have instituted a pilot program where some faculty require students to...
submit a rough draft that can be evaluated by the professor before the student submits the final
draft. While the results from this program have not been quite as straightforward as we might
have expected, they have been clear. The general conclusion we have reached is that revision
significantly helps students with the writerly aspects of writing, particularly in terms of such factors
as strengthening the structure and organization of the paper. This conclusion suggests that
organization is often one of the later elements of writing, in other words, that students sometimes
put off organizational questions until the last minute. It also suggests that students have difficulty
organizing their papers because they are not quite sure what they are arguing yet, and having
revision build into the timeline really allows students the space to work on it. In terms of some of
the other findings, we found that in terms of providing sufficient evidence, those papers that were
revised were far more likely to move from basic competence to excellence. This finding suggests
that students are acquiring basic skills in terms of arguing their points, but the extra help of
evaluating a draft can really help them move beyond that basic competence to thoroughly support
their claims. In terms of two of the other objectives, demonstrating theoretical perspectives and
demonstrating basic sentence level writing skills, the revision process was not as significant as
we had hoped. In terms of demonstrating theoretical perspectives, it is probably because
students generally learn those throughout the program, and they tend to have less difficulty with
this aspect overall. In terms of sentence level writing, this finding suggests that revision does
help, but again, it suggests that students' writing skills are fairly set by the time they enter the
upper level courses. We also noted that the scores were, at times, lower on student drafts than
on papers that did not have the revision component. This finding suggests that students do not
always take the rough draft seriously, which means that the instructor is doing part of the
students' work for them. This finding is particularly important, given that the main reason we have
not instituted formal revision in all our upper-level courses is that it is too work intensive for the
instructor.