

Report on the May 2008 retreat of the Program for the Study of Women & Gender

The Program Committee for the Program for the Study of Women & Gender met on May 8 & 9, 2008 in Newfane, Vermont to consider the questions about curricular mapping suggested by the CAP. What follows is a summary of discussions held by the entire group as well as by task groups that focused on:

1) Charting pathways through the SWG major.

Are the pathways through the major clear for prospective majors? We ask that you pay particular attention to the 200-level, where the majority of the work in the major is often accomplished. Is the department/program satisfied with the level of advanced work accomplished by its majors?

2) Developing student capacities and research opportunities by level throughout our courses

What capacities and research opportunities does the Program for the Study of Women & Gender seek to develop and offer to our majors? Where in our curriculum and major do we integrate the intellectual capacities we have agreed should be part of every student's Smith career? For instance, how do we address capacities such as writing, speaking or quantitative skills? Where do we seek to develop historical and comparative perspectives? How do we try to help students become informed global citizens?

3) Departments and programs allied with SWG

Who are the curricular neighbors of SWG? What impact is SWG planning likely to have on other departments and programs? What departments and programs have related interests to SWG? What departments and programs are allied with SWG and what alliances would we like to develop further?

4) Links with priority initiatives of the Smith Design for Learning, proposed Centers, and other College-wide programs

Links between SWG and the Centers for Community Collaboration, for International and Intercultural Studies, and for the Environment, Ecological Design and Sustainability; connections with Praxis, JYA, JY@Smith, First-Year Seminars, Orientation "intellectual exploration" initiatives, advising and the co-curriculum.

1) Charting Pathways through the SWG major

Pathways. Are the pathways through the major clear for prospective majors? We ask that you pay particular attention to the 200-level, where the majority of the work in the major is often accomplished. Is the department/program satisfied with the level of advanced work accomplished by its majors?

Requirements of the SWG major are stated clearly in the course catalogue, on the program website, and at the twice-yearly presentation of the major. All students begin their course of study with our introductory course, SWG 150 Introduction to the Study of Women and Gender, a prerequisite to all upper-level SWG courses. After completing SWG 150, students may choose from SWG prefix courses as well as department-based courses cross-listed in SWG (as listed on the program website). The Program requires that students choose three courses in one of the following six concentrations:

- 1) forms of literary or artistic expression;
- 2) historical perspectives;
- 3) forms of political/social/economic thought/action/organization;
- 4) modes of scientific inquiry;
- 5) queer studies; or
- 6) women, race and culture.

All majors must take courses that focus on sexuality and on race: one queer studies course and two courses designated as “women, race, and culture” (one course focused on the U.S. and the other on women outside of the U.S.). Students are also required to take three 300-level courses, including one in their area of concentration, ensuring that students accomplish advanced-level work in the major and in their concentration. In all, students must take ten semester courses, totaling 40 course hours.

At the retreat, we discussed how we could clarify pathways through the SWG program for prospective majors. The interdisciplinary nature of the SWG program allows students to choose from a broad array of courses in departments and programs across the college. The broad character of the major means that we need to guide students to choose classes that relate and build upon one other in order to craft coherent and productive courses of study in the SWG major that could also be linked to post-graduation outcomes, a source of anxiety for some students considering the major. We require three seminars to assure that students take on advanced work in the major. In addition, we want to encourage students to think beyond course offerings when developing their pathway through the major by taking advantage of related opportunities at Smith.

Proposals

The committee proposes developing new resources and links on our website:

- sample programs of thematically-related courses (such as women’s health, social activism, or comparative women’s literature);
- co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities related to these pathways, including Praxis internships, opportunities at the Sophia Smith Archives, the Poetry Center or *Meridians*, and various student organizations
- a select group of recommended study abroad opportunities whose rigorous coursework and internship opportunities would benefit our majors
- identifying faculty mentors with research and teaching interest in each pathway
- alumnae contacts whose work experience or graduate education provides examples for where these pathways could lead
- exemplary senior statements by past graduates to help guide students think through their programs of study.

Finally, we discussed the possibility of expanding the concentration requirement from three courses to four courses to increase depth in students’ concentrations.

Appendix A indicates several suggested pathways within the established concentrations. The new website design will highlight the integration of curricular and co-curricular planning, demonstrate the lived consequences of similar choices by alums, and identify potential mentors both inside and outside the College for our majors throughout their undergraduate careers and beyond.

- 2) **Developing student capacities and research opportunities by level throughout our courses**

Capacities and research opportunities. What capacities and research opportunities does the Program for the Study of Women & Gender seek to develop and offer to our majors? Where in our

curriculum and major do we integrate the intellectual capacities we have agreed should be part of every student's Smith career? For instance, how do we address capacities such as writing, speaking or quantitative skills? Where do we seek to develop historical and comparative perspectives? How do we try to help students become informed global citizens?

The ability to use materials and analytical frameworks from several disciplines is a primary goal of the SWG major and courses. Our major is distinctive in its commitment to teach interdisciplinarity critically—that is, to recognize that different disciplines use different methods that each has strengths and consequences in what questions are posed, what counts as evidence and how propositions and evidence are evaluated. We also share a primary commitment to teach intersectionality (the constitution of identities through the mutual and simultaneous interaction of categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and nation) from the introductory level through our advanced courses. Intersectionality also demonstrates that categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality and nation, are culturally and historically specific.

We ask students to interrogate texts, and to analyze their own perspectives reflexively, to recognize that each writer, including themselves has specific investments in a point of view, a way of analyzing data or situations; we ask students to identify the stakes in current and historical debates and to own their own positions more self-consciously. We repeatedly ask students to understand the context (social, political, cultural) of texts and of issues that they are studying. **See Appendix B for our definition of the study of women and gender and a statement of our curricular goals.**

Intellectual capacities: thinking critically and analytically to convey knowledge and understanding, developing a historical and comparative perspective, becoming an informed global citizen.

Introductory courses

SWG 100 level courses such as FYS 114, *Turning Points*, SWG 110, *Feminist Public Cultures*, and SWG 150, *Introduction to the Study of Women & Gender*, incorporate several kinds of writing, archival research, and oral assignments. Assignments include using Moodle as a forum for developing analytical skills (to identify the main point of a reading, to make simple compare and contrast connections or to reflect on their own learning at the end of the semester) and for reflecting on the learning process.

For more formal written and oral work students in FYS 114 are asked to write short analytical essays leading to a longer, compare and contrast paper; they pursue a research project in the Smith archives leading to an oral presentation and an expository essay; and they often elect to write a personal reflection at the end of the course relating what they have learned in the course to their own lives. SWG 110, offered for the first time this fall, asks students to integrate archival sources from college buildings to student zines, to develop a historical narrative of a specific group, and to place their investigations in a regional and global context. SWG 150 is more challenging than many 100 level courses because two critical essays ask students to demonstrate their grasp of analytical frameworks and methodologies by applying newly learned concepts to a new context or text. For example, they may be asked to compare arguments about social policy or to apply key concepts from film criticism to read a new film. Students participate in debates that teach them how to craft a persuasive argument and to identify the implications of their positions.

Intermediate level courses

SWG 200 level courses ask the students to think more analytically about their own writing in terms of posing more sophisticated questions, thesis development, and analysis and synthesis of course materials. Some courses ask students to focus on how debates are framed, to identify the grounds and stakes of different points of view and to analyze the consequences (intellectual and social) of different arguments. Students are asked to identify the politics that inform different arguments, to

pay attention to how questions (both those asked and those omitted) shape larger issues. At the intermediate level students use more secondary sources and write about materials not covered in class. Several intermediate courses incorporate community-based learning components that emphasize engagement and responsibility toward community and regional organizations. They may be asked to develop a short research topic of their own choosing. They are also asked to synthesize on a larger scale what they are learning in class, and to integrate their research findings with public policies and decisions.

For example, in a literature course students are asked to choose four readings from the syllabus to create a new anthology and they write the introduction (synthesizing the readings, identifying what each selection adds to the anthology). In another course, student work culminates in a poster session where students educate their peers about research they have done throughout the semester. The session requires them to identify their argument, to summarize the main points of their research and to make their argument concisely both verbally and visually. Their work is subject to peer assessment as well as evaluation by the instructor.

At the 200 level Moodle is used to foster more interaction among students. In several courses they post work-in-progress for peer comment, use Moodle to work collaboratively on presentations and writing, and to shape class discussion by identifying a common question or problem among several readings. Moodle continues to serve as a substantive, intellectual public forum for students to engage with readings and with each other and to reflect on their learning.

Seminars, advanced courses

SWG majors are required to take three seminars or 300-level courses, including at least one with a SWG designation; one of their seminars acts as a capstone to the concentration the student has elected to focus the major. As in other fields, seminars require students to take more responsibility for their own learning than in other courses. As an interdisciplinary field, however, SWG seminars are likely to bring together students with different disciplinary skills because of their concentrations. Collaborative learning is therefore encouraged. For example, students may stage “round table” discussions where a group of students leads discussion of a particular text or problem or where they present individual research and relate their projects to each other, often methodologically. Or an instructor may ask particular students to pose questions in advance of the class meeting to organize the class group discussion.

We try to move beyond student reports or student-led discussions to create a more interactive environment and to help students focus their analytical, oral and writing skills. Some seminars use Moodle to frame discussion and to encourage interaction among students to help prepare class discussion. In some seminars, poster sessions or public presentation of research done individually or collaboratively help students learn to present their work succinctly and persuasively and also create an opportunity to make connections with the larger community of other SWG students and faculty as their audience.

All seminars involve use of the library and we work closely with the SWG library liaison David Podboy to teach students how to create annotated bibliographies and how to take full advantage of databases and other library resources. Some seminars involve extensive use of the Smith archives and the Sophia Smith Collection.

See below for description of Quigley Fellowship Program for junior majors to have a one-on-one research experience with a SWG faculty member.

Overall goals

As the introduction to this section indicates, a comparative and historical perspective is integral to the goals of SWG courses and many courses cross-listed with SWG. Some courses incorporate community-based learning; an understanding of cultural diversity is a cornerstone of the field. SWG courses often emphasize both the differences and connections between global citizens in a transnational context. Students are asked to look at the flow of capital, labor, and culture across national boundaries and the effect these processes have on women's lives. Ideally an "informed global citizen" is the product of a SWG major.

3) Departments and programs allied with SWG

Who are the curricular neighbors of SWG? What impact is SWG planning likely to have on other departments and programs? What departments and programs have related interests to SWG? What departments and programs are allied with SWG and what alliances would we like to develop further?

As an interdisciplinary field, SWG depends on active alliances (intellectual and curricular) with departments in all three divisions of the College and with other interdisciplinary programs. From the beginning of Women's Studies at Smith in the 1980s, the Program has had twin goals: faculty development and oversight of the curriculum in the study of women & gender. We have realized these goals in several ways. The Program Committee, which sets policy and plans faculty development events, includes members of twelve departments in addition to SWG. We organize faculty development activities that include lunchtime discussions of pedagogy and syllabus design, January residencies for visiting scholars linked to seminars and public lectures, major conferences that bring scholars, activists and artists to campus to discuss issues such as interdisciplinarity, sexuality, civil liberties and freedom of expression, and a comprehensive definition of reproductive justice.

We regularly cross-list courses with over fifteen departments and programs. We have also had contractual joint arrangements with faculty members in AAS, GOV, PHI, and SPP. Currently our joint appointments are with members in AAS and GOV. Our strongest affiliations historically have been with AAS, CLT, ENG, GOV, LAS, PHI, SOC, and SPP. In more recent years we have developed closer ties to ARH, ARS, EALL, EGR and HST. We would like to develop stronger relationships with ANT, ECO and FLS and with departments in the sciences.

Proposals

We are especially interested in developing research methods courses with other departments and programs, quantitative skills courses and components. We can imagine a combined theory course that would serve professors in all three divisions. We would also like to think about team-taught courses on border migration, gender and the environment, among other topics.

4) Links with priority initiatives of the Smith Design for Learning, proposed Centers, and other College-wide programs

Links between SWG and the proposed Centers: Community Collaboration (CBL); International and Intercultural Studies (CIIS); and Environment, Ecological Design and Sustainability (CEEDS). Connections with Praxis, JYA, JY@Smith, First-Year Seminars, Presidential Seminars, Orientation "intellectual exploration" initiatives.

Centers

Several members of the SWG program committee are centrally involved with the newly proposed centers and a number of courses now offered or in planning could be linked to the centers.

Praxis

We have traditionally asked students who have had a Praxis internship to discuss their experiences at a SWG tea for students in the fall semester. We envision adding a link to our web site with descriptions of internships that our students have found valuable. In addition to Praxis internships almost all of our majors do internships with non-profit organizations in Northampton during the academic year and in many other cities during January and the summer months.

Proposal

We would like to work with the proposed Center for International and Intercultural Studies to develop a good resource for information on international internships.

JYA

Our students have participated in all of the Smith JYA programs and the consortial programs. Two SWG committee members have directed the Cordoba and Puebla programs. Students have also elected a semester or year in many of the approved programs, especially in the UK, the Netherlands, Ireland and Australia. We are reviewing the resources of programs they have been involved with or have shown an interest in to determine whether they are well suited for advanced work in the major. A committee member will visit several sites in Europe this fall and report back.

Proposal

We would very much like to develop a SWG course that has a study abroad component. One colleague developed a January course in Costa Rica on gender and sexuality with an environmental component, but it was proposed at a time when funding for Interterm study abroad was cut. We could imagine other January and spring break activities such as the Kahn-sponsored border tour of maquiladoras that three SWG faculty members participated in several years ago.

JY@Smith through Quigley fellowships

In 2007-08 SWG established the Quigley Fellows program to enhance the experience of juniors who choose to remain at Smith for the junior year. Rising junior majors compete for a limited number of Quigley research fellowships for their junior year (either semester or during interterm, depending on the faculty member's needs). The paid research fellowships enable qualified juniors to work one-on-one with a faculty member in the Program for the Study of Women and Gender on a research or curricular project.

FYS

SWG has offered a FYS since 2005. A number of other FYS will be offered by members of the program committee beginning in 2008.

Presidential Seminars

Two members of SWG will offer a Presidential Seminar during the inaugural year (spring 2009): PRS 305, Cultural Literacy.

Orientation "intellectual inquiry" initiatives

One member of SWG will offer an intellectual inquiry seminar for incoming students in fall 2008.

Appendix A. Pathways through the SWG major

The following are meant to suggest possible pathways within the six concentrations we now make available to students. Each identifies, in addition to a range of courses, co-curricular opportunities, faculty mentors, internship opportunities, and alumnae contacts.

FORMS OF LITERARY AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Comparative Women's Literature

Co-curricular Suggestion: study of a second language

Internship: *Meridians*, *The Poetry Center*, *Metamorphoses*, Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, Literacy Project

Extracurricular: Shout! and other student literary magazines

Faculty: Ambreen Hai, Kim Kono, Michelle Joffroy, Nancy Saporta Sternbach, Marilyn Schuster, Susan Van Dyne

Alumnae Mentors: Jenny Vander Weyden (MA English/Creative Writing), Maggie Sowell, (MFA Creative Writing)

Visual Arts, Performance, & Film

Internship: Smith College Art Museum, New Century Theatre, The New Festival, In the Life TV

Extracurricular: Arts and performing arts student groups (see http://www.smith.edu/stud_clubs.php)

Faculty: Marguerite Harrison, Nancy Sternbach

Alumnae Mentors: Bernadine Mellis (filmmaker), Kate Hardy (performance artist, zine maker), Megan McRobert (non-profit media/art/theater)

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Internship: Sophia Smith Archives, International Information Center and Archive

Faculty: Jennifer Guglielmo

Alumnae Mentors: Leslie Fields, (archivist, public history PhD) Ellen Zitani (PHD history), Joan Prusky (PhD HST and GOV, Director, Center for Global Studies, a magnet high school), Margy Avery (Acquisitions Editor, MIT; MA in History/Women's Political Participation)

FORMS OF POLITICAL/ SOCIAL/ ECONOMIC THOUGHT/ ACTION/ ORGANIZATION

Social Activism

Internship: Hampshire Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps (RRASC); Safe Passages (domestic violence shelter); Tapestry Health (reproductive health clinic; needle exchange clinic); Sophia Smith Archives; Curran & Berger (immigration law firm). Arise for Social Justice, Center for Anti-Violence Education, Threshold Seminars Inc, Boston Children's Hospital, division of Gynecology and the Center for Young Women's Health, Prison Policy Initiative, Women's Fund of W. Mass, The Feminist Press, Business & Professional Women's Foundation, UC Berkeley Initiative on Diversity, Germantown Community Farm, Foundation for Sustainable Development, Women's Inst for Freedom of the Press, Class Action, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Safe Horizon, American Friends Service Committee, Women's Campaign Fund

Extracurricular: Participation in social and political action groups or college and self-governance groups at Smith (see http://www.smith.edu/stud_clubs.php)

Faculty: Martha Ackelsberg, Lisa Armstrong, Carrie Baker, Ginetta Candelario

Alumnae Mentors: Erin Farrell (immigration law), Lisa Young Larance (multi-service domestic violence agency, Kitty Jerome (MS public policy), Jennifer Dryfoos (M.A. in Counseling, Harvard), Judi Selzer (VP Public Policy, Planned Parenthood); Sophie Godley (MA Public

Health); Laura Chrismer Edmonds (JD, criminal defense attorney); Sara Pic (JD, family law and homeless outreach)

Law and Public Policy

See internships, extracurricular activities, faculty, etc. above.

Other possible pathways for this concentration: gender and human rights; women and political economy; gender and work; environmental justice and gender; public culture.

SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

Women's Health

Internship: Tapestry Health, Boston Children's Hospital, division of Gynecology and the Center for Young Women's Health, Elizabeth Stone House

Extracurricular: Peer sexuality educators (see <http://sophia.smith.edu/pse/>)

Faculty: Donna Riley, Christine Shelton

Alumnae Mentors: Dr Carolyn Delk (ob/gyn), Dr. Laura Pompel Jordhen (family medicine), Erika Deraeau (ob/gyn), Jennifer Karon Flores (PhD in Naturopathic Medicine), Jessica Wilder (M.A. in midwifery), Alison Hodges (MS in Microbiology, MA in Science and Technology Studies), Sophie Godley (MA Public Health),

QUEER STUDIES

Internship: Hampshire Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps (RRASC); Sophia Smith Collection; Smith Resource Center for Gender and Sexuality

Extracurricular: Prism (<http://sophia.smith.edu/prism/>)

Faculty: Gary Lehring, Kevin Quashie, Daniel Rivers, Marilyn Schuster, Susan Van Dyne

WOMEN, RACE AND CULTURE

Women Transnationally

Co-curricular recommendations: study of a second language; Study Abroad

Internship/Praxis: *Meridians*, Foundation for Sustainable Development

Extracurricular: Cultural heritage groups (see http://www.smith.edu/stud_clubs.php)

Faculty: Lisa Armstrong, Ginetta Candelario, Ambreen Hai, Michelle Joffroy, Kim Kono

Alumnae Mentors: Ayako Takamori, (PhD Anthropology, National Council of Research on Women)

Africa

Latin America

Faculty: Ginetta Candelario, Marguerite Harrison, Michelle Joffroy, Nancy Sternbach,

East and South Asia

Faculty: Lisa Armstrong, Ambreen Hai, Kimberly Kono

U.S. Women

Faculty: Paula Giddings, Kevin Quashie, Susan Van Dyne

Appendix B. Curricular goals.

The Program for the Study of Women and Gender examines gender, race, class, and sexuality as important and simultaneous aspects of social worlds and human lives. This examination requires inquiry into the construction and operation of power relations, social inequalities, and resistances to them in both national and transnational contexts.

We understand women, gender, feminism, queer, masculinity and transgender as politicized terms. As categories of analysis they help reveal how subjects become racialized, sexualized, gendered and class-located.

Building on its origins in Women's Studies, our Program continues to examine the experiences, ideologies, works, and actions of women in a variety of national, cultural, historical, and political contexts. As an interdisciplinary endeavor, the Study of Women and Gender shows students how different academic disciplines view the operation of gender in the labor market, the family, political systems and cultural production. Research and theory emerge from these everyday realities and feminist theory, in turn, informs our analysis of political choices. The Study of Women and Gender is joined to an understanding of the forms of activism around the globe.

We have identified these broad shared areas of agreement to describe our practice and our syllabi for ourselves, our students, and for faculty who want to cross-list courses in the Program. Not every course will use each of these principles for organizing, yet students will, over the course, of the major become familiar with these concepts.

Social construction: the Program for the Study of Women and Gender interrogates and destabilizes familiar or naturalized categories; yet in questioning these categories, we also acknowledge that these constructions have real effects in subordinating groups and in marking bodies.

Agency, resistance: a counterpart to examining the social construction of institutions, ideologies, and identities.

Intersectionality: the mutual and simultaneous constitution of identities and categories such as gender, race, sexuality, and nation, understood as a historical process.

History: we intend to historicize, localize, and contextualize the experiences we study and the processes of social construction; we agree it's important to expose students to historical periods and beliefs unlike the current moment; often we use theories from the present to illuminate the past.

Social change: as a product of history and as an effect of agency and resistance.

Representation/ discourse and materiality/ structure are always in tension in shaping experience and explaining it, some courses may give more attention to some factors than to others but both realms are crucial to recognize.

Theory: our students should be able to think theoretically, to read and write about theoretical texts, and to recognize that theory emerges from different sites (different disciplinary locations as well as local knowledges).

Interdisciplinarity: a hallmark of the field whether in the materials we draw upon or the methods we use.

“Feminism” as social movements/collectivities/networks, and as a mode of critique.