Women's & Gender Studies Program                                                                             May 21, 2010

**Progress on Assessment**

**Program Mission**

Women's and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary program that examines the role of gender in the construction of lives, cultures, community norms, meaning systems, and systems of representation. All of the key areas of study within the program use cross-cultural or multicultural investigations to understand the dynamics and differences in the operation of gender. Within specific contexts but also across differences, the program also focuses on the lives of women--on women's past and present active involvement in the making of the world. Each of the two tracks also emphasizes the ongoing interplay of theory and practice.

**Goals/outcomes**

The two tracks of the majors were developed around the following goals/outcomes first approved in the fall of 2005:   
1. Knowledge of the foundational concepts and issues in the discipline of Women's Studies or Gender Studies.  
2. Knowledge of the historical positioning and social construction of women or gender.  
3. Knowledge of the systemic nature of gender.  
4. Knowledge of women or a gender system outside the student's cultural and national experience.  
5. Knowledge of the complexities of the categories "women" and "men," including differences in class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexuality.  
6. Knowledge of the theories and methods central to the discipline of Women's Studies or Gender Studies.  
7. Knowledge of upper level work in the other track within the program.  
8. The ability to analyze representations--mass media, literature, histories, politics, etc.--from the frameworks within Women's Studies or Gender Studies.  
9. The ability to make connections among three elected courses.  
10. The ability to bring a Women's Studies or Gender Studies perspective to an upper-level course outside the program.  
11. The ability to construct a focused bibliography and to summarize and critique a piece of literature within the bibliography.  
12. The ability to develop a research or scholarship proposal in Women's Studies or Gender Studies.

**Identify program components**

**The requirements for the major are built around the outcomes.** This major was approved by the faculty in the spring of 2007 (outsiders viewing the major for the first time, might think of it has having four pieces, labeled A. B. C. and D below).

A. For Outcome #1, **Each track requires a foundational course**: WGS 106 Introduction to Women's Studies or WGS 116 Introduction to Gender Studies.

B. For Outcomes # 3, # 6 and #11, **Each track requires a theory course**: WGS 360 Feminist Theory for Women's Studies or WGS 360 or A&S 332 or 333 for Gender Studies.  
or .

C. In addition, majors in each track are required to take **at least one course from each of the following emphases**. The six courses must be selected in consultation with the program director or the faculty member in the program. (See the college catalog for the listing of courses)

Institutions or Knowledge Systems(Outcome #3)**.** This requirement emphasizes the study of the systemic nature of gender or of the critical perspectives brought to a discipline by feminist theory or gender theory.

Representations(Outcomes #5 and #8). This requirement emphasizes feminist approaches or gender study approaches to the examination of gender in representation; this requirement also can involve the recovery and examination of representations that previously had been invisible due to gender bias.

Global Perspectives(Outcome #4). This requirement emphasizes the importance of gaining knowledge far from one's own subject position. For this unit, students must choose a course outside their own cultural and geographical experience.

Historical Contexts(Outcomes #2 and #5). This requirement emphasizes the study of women or gender in specific and detailed historical context(s) or the study of the methodology of women's or gender history.

Self Making.(Outcomes #3 and #5). This requirement emphasizes the feminist and gender studies examinations of processes and narratives that transform beings into gendered humans.

D. Finally, **the major includes a capstone experience** of at least one of the following: directed study, Honors thesis, practicum, or internship. This integrative experience is also likely to address outcome #12, especially since the major was developed, in part, to respond to the fact that students (at Albion and elsewhere) interested in women's or gender studies were moving away from concentrations, with their integrative requirement of an internship, and towards majors, with their integrative requirement of a directed study or a thesis.

During the advising process required for the selection of courses for the emphasis, outcome #7 is addressed, and during that same advising process and during the final interview (mentioned below), outcome #9 is addressed.

**Methods/data sources and instruments**

Because no assessment was carried out during the years of self-designed majors and concentrations, the obvious place to begin assessment of the new W&GS majors and minors is to evaluate the effectiveness of the introductory courses in the Women's Studies [W&GS 106] and Gender Studies [W&GS 116] tracks.  During the fall semester, 2009 Dr. Trisha Franzen piloted a Gender Category assessment tool prepared by and being tested by the Gender Category Committee.

May 2010 graduating seniors participated in exit interviews with Drs. Trisha Franzen and Ruth Schmitter. Each student responded to a suite of nine questions about their required courses, about the options of choosing was to fill the emphases, their capstone experiences, about advising within the program and about career choices, and about future plans.

**Outcomes of Assessment**

**Analyze and interpret the data**

1)I have not been able to obtain any data from the pilot test in W&GS 106.   Trisha Franzen reports that there was improvement in students' understanding of the social construction of gender comparing 'pre-test' with 'post-test' responses.  I do not know when the data might become available. The data will be analyzed by a means unknown to me, as will the data from the other courses participating in the pilot study.

2) All three graduating seniors from the W&GS Program were Gender Studies majors. Although the sample size is small, there are commonalities among many of the responses.

One of the students knew that gender studies existed before coming to Albion. He consciously applied to colleges which had a W&GS program. The other two students did not know about the majors in W&GS.

Two of the students had planned to major in psychology but found they were not “passionate” about it. After taking WGS 116 they found their niches. Paraphrases of comments about WGS 116 ( or other first course): ‘I loved it…some important theoretical information…very content dense for a 100-level class’ ‘exposure to different ways of thinking…had not thought of gender as an institution until then’ ‘I liked the openness to different points of view… ‘the lack of rigidity’

The three students did not fulfill the 300-level theory course requirement in the same way. Their comments indicated that the courses they chose were ‘in depth…showed how theory works across cultures’ ‘material good… professor good at expressing complicated theory’ ‘overwhelmed by it, but one of the most beneficial classes I had’ Two of these students thought that a 200-level theory class might be helpful, in part because some of the other people in their 300-level theory class had no background at all in W&GS, and so dragged the conversation down.

All three students liked the fact that there were many ways to fill a particular emphasis. This diversity allowed them to examine gender issues using different methods of study. There was a feeling that planning was somewhat difficult, because they did not know when a particular class would next be offered.

All three students stated that what they have learned has made them think in new and different ways. One of them expressed it in this way (summarizing her major): ‘I love it. I feel it’s made me a better person. It gets you thinking about all different kinds of people.’ This is a direct quotation.

All three students want to make a difference: ‘I want to leave an impact…see things happening’ A student who is beginning law school and will then pursue graduate work in Gender, Sexuality, and Society at the University of Amsterdam ‘wants to **do** something with it,’ perhaps focusing on women’s rights or human trafficking at the international level.

Advising is an area which requires improvement. None of the students felt that they were well advised about career opportunities. They all also admitted that they had not sought advising. In response to a question about advising within the Program, it is clear that the information available at the website is inadequate, not for example, giving clear guidelines about what the capstones should look like. This is an area that is being studied campus wide at the moment, at least as far as internships and practica are concerned.