2007-08 Assessment Report

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1. What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in AY 2007-08?

A primary learning objective of the Women’s studies Program is to read and apply feminist scholarship to the study of social, political and economic systems. This learning objective emerges from our mission statement, and informs the structure of all the core courses offered by our program. There are two core areas in which the learning competency of students majoring in Women’s Studies was assessed: Content Mastery and Skills.

2. How did we assess these learning outcomes?

Following were the measures used to assess students’ competency in WOMS 110 and 115:
- In-class surprise quizzes to test student’s knowledge/familiarity with the materials.
- In-class Oral Report
- Short Essays
- Final in-depth Essays
- Self-Reflection Questionnaires

Following were the measures used to assess students’ competency in WOMS 180:
- In-class Seminar Presentations
- Short Essays
- Final in-depth Research Paper
- Active contribution to in-class discussions on theoretical materials
- Self-Reflection Questionnaires

3. What were the conclusions from the above measures?

The in-depth writing assignments in all three courses were constructed to assess student’s overall knowledge and mastery of scholarly materials in Women’s Studies, their application to lived experiences, and their skill at successfully organizing and engaging with the materials and communicating effectively.
Student papers not only revealed a good grasp of course materials, they also reflected critical understanding of the implications of the social, political and economic structures impacting women’s lives, and their contribution to discourses of race, class, gender and culture. The papers reflected students’ attempts to incorporate the language of Women’s Studies scholarship, their efforts at critical thinking, their ability to make significant connections between sources, and to construct meaningful debates and arguments on the topics discussed.

Other measures used in the courses, including short essays, quizzes and group and class discussions, revealed similar outcomes.

The comprehensive Self-Reflection Questionnaires completed by Women’s Studies majors and minors towards the end of the semesters for all three required courses revealed the following results:

- Students were able to effectively use the language of Women’s Studies scholarship to articulate what they had learnt in each course.
- They were able to comprehend to a large extend the complexity of the issues examined.
- They could put this knowledge into perspective, and analyze it in relation to larger socio-political, economic, and global issues, as well as to issues pertaining to the war and militarization.

4. What is the Faculty’s Reflection regarding these outcomes?

Our student’s ability to successfully engage in critical scholarship and address gender from an institutional and academic perspective, as demonstrated by their essays, is the best measure of their learning outcomes. We recognize that in-class quizzes, short essays, group and class discussions are effective strategies for students’ persistent engagement with course materials, and this is in turn reflected in their performance in the final essays.

However, given the nature of the materials dealt with in WOMS 110 (Women’s Movement) and WOMS 180 (the advanced Seminar in Feminist Theory), we feel the need for students to bring their academic knowledge of feminist theory to women’s lived experiences, struggles, and/or engagement with various institutions and organizations. To this end, we have come to the conclusion that these courses should include additional requirements that necessitate students to reach out beyond the classroom and develop independent research projects.

The events organized by the department in 2007-08, such as the exhibits held in the University library on “Women and Violence” and “Women in Art”; the lecture series on South Africa; and the screening of the film, Provoked, preceded by a presentation on domestic violence, all contributed to expanding students’ exposure to materials in Women’s Studies beyond the classroom. The department will continue with its efforts in this direction.
5. What assessment strategies are planned for the upcoming academic year?

- The updated revised version of the Women’s Studies textbook is almost complete and ready for publication. The textbook will be a welcome addition to the existing syllabi which are frequently being updated in light of current scholarship within the discipline.

- In addition to the existing measures for assessing learning outcomes, students will be required to complete independent research projects in WOMS 110 and WOMS 180.

- In Spring 2009 the department is planning to organize Writing Workshops for Women’s Studies majors and minors. These workshops will be geared to help students improve their research and academic writing skills with the intent of applying the language of women’s studies scholarship to women’s engagement with social, political and economic structures and institutions.