

October 30, 2017

Dear Meg,

The Arts and Humanities Panel met on October 24, 2017 and reviewed the revisions to the WGSS Ph.D., MA, and Graduate Minor programs. After meeting with two representatives of the program (Prof. Shannon Winnubst and Jackie Stotlar) in order to clarify some issues, the proposal was unanimously approved.

The OSU WGSS program is one of the oldest in the world. It is a fast-growing field and the department is eager to remain a leader in the field. The current core coursework requires students to take a Feminist Theory course (WGSST 7700), a Feminist Pedagogy course (7702) and a one-credit Teaching Practicum course (8163), a Feminist Inquiry: Methods course (7760), and two gateway courses out of four choices (gateway courses reflect the tracks students choose that best reflect their research and intellectual interests).

The new coursework and programming deemphasizes the current use of a themed track-based graduate curriculum in favor of core courses designed to target outcome-based learning and the development of superior and rigorous analytic, research, and writing skills. The emphasis on themed tracks has increasingly stymied the program, particularly as they continue to articulate disciplinary divides (e.g., Humanities and Social Sciences) that are no longer a part of this interdisciplinary field of scholarship and teaching. They have also found that students often organize their choice of track emphasis not based on content, but on course scheduling and availability, resulting in a loss of track identity over time. With changes in faculty research and expertise since the implementation of the themed track-based graduate curriculum, they also find that keeping apace of changing topics and identities within the faculty is impossible to maintain in the current curriculum. The themed-based tracks need constant adjustment and tinkering to stay current and relevant and do not allow flexibility for course scheduling, particularly when faculty go on research leave.

The proposed core coursework does away with the four gateway courses to the tracks and emphasizes a smaller set of courses including a two semester sequence combining theory and methods and a research writing seminar. The pedagogy courses remain unchanged, and an advanced methods course is required for PhD students but not for MA students. Students round out their required credits with electives, independent studies, seminars, thesis credits, etc. It used to be that electives built off of required courses/gateway courses and the dissertation field. In the revised program students work with an advisor to select appropriate elective courses. Ph.D. student take 9 elective hours in WGSS and MA students take 6.

In order to accommodate the shift from track-bound courses to an open elective plan, the existing 8000-level topics course, WGSST 8800: Topics in Feminist Studies, will be used as the course number for all WGSS elective courses moving forward. To improve legibility with students, they will request the creation of six 8800.XX course numbers (8800.01-8800.06) and increase the number of repeatable credits for each course. This will enable students to enroll in several WGSST 8800 courses on a simultaneous and ongoing basis without confusion. Each semester, specific topics will be noted in the “free format topic” line in the SIS course scheduling function, as well as reiterated through the “free format text” section, providing detailed information to students during scheduling. They will also articulate the topics offered each semester in great detail on their website and via course advertisements.

The learning goals and expected outcomes remain unchanged, and the assessment plan will continue its current configuration, with WGSST 7702: Feminist Pedagogy remaining the only individual course that is considered part of the broader departmental assessment plan, along with milestones, such as candidacy and the final oral examination, serving as the other assessment points.

Other changes include: 1) removing the exam option from the MA and replacing it with a portfolio option; 2) changing the options for the candidacy exams to give students the opportunity to write a publishable paper; 3) removing tracks from the Graduate Minor, which now has one required course and three electives.

Sincerely,

Janice M. Aski