WOMEN’S STUDIES MINOR

Mission and Structure

The Monmouth College Women’s Studies minor is a multi-disciplinary minor that considers gender and feminist theories and feminist perspectives in courses across the curriculum and in many different topics. The staff currently come from seven different disciplines, and all are committed to the ideals of liberal arts and the importance of serious feminist criticism in the academy. The Women’s Studies minor is intellectually challenging and studies diverse cultures within the liberal arts tradition. Women’s Studies courses are often small, promoting a close relation between faculty and students. The minor stresses the skills of critical thinking, analytical and synthetic thinking, clear and organized prose writing, discussion strategies, and making wide-ranging connections across traditionally conceived boundaries. There is no expectation that the student is preparing for a graduate program in women’s studies. Instead, this minor was created to be flexible, to enhance all majors, and to consider and question human assumptions about gender. All courses beside the introduction, independent study, and capstone are within departments or under the Issues and Ideas rubric. All of the Women’s Studies faculty believe that “there are many feminisms and that there is room for diversity of feminist thought.” (C. Tyirin Kirk)

The curriculum has a course structure containing three mandatory components:

a. an introductory course (WOST 201--Feminism),

b. a total of 15 to 17 hours of Women’s Studies course work,

c. a capstone course (WOST 401--Women, Justice and Equality).

The minor uniquely complements mission and purposes of the college as well as the general education curriculum by providing:

a. the only multidisciplinary, systematic and in-depth investigation of feminist criticism and gender inequalities,

b. a connection among all disciplines and all majors, demonstrating the uses of feminist perspectives and criticism,

c. the opportunity for a student to study the world through the lens and with the critical tools of gender analysis and/or feminism to the topic of their choice in an independent study.
Assessment of Program Goals

Goals of the Women’s Studies Minor:

1. To introduce students to definitions of feminist thought, feminism, or feminist criticism.
   Assessment: exams, quizzes, journals, research papers

2. To provide a history of feminist thought, definitions of feminism, or feminist criticism.
   Assessment: exams, quizzes, journals, research papers

3. To heighten awareness of gender inequalities.
   Assessment: discussion, presentations, exams, quizzes, journals, research papers—and in WOST 201 the “Women’s Project”

4. To introduce students to marginalized, overlooked, underappreciated women and their works.
   Assessment: exams, quizzes, journals, research papers

5. To apply feminist criticism in their writings and research.
   Assessment: journals, short papers, research papers

6. To understand the major works of feminist scholarship and/or the major feminist intellectual or artistic creations.
   Assessment: exams, quizzes, research papers

7. To discuss persuasively or speak publicly.
   Assessment: class presentations, class discussions

8. To write coherently, logically, and correctly.
   Assessment: essay questions, journals, short papers, research papers.

9. To understand how feminisms and feminist critiques enable persons to make informed judgments which strengthen the community, build public policy, and reconfigure sexist institutions.
   Assessment: in WOST 201 the “Women’s Project,” quizzes, exams, class discussions, short papers, research papers.

10. To understand how feminist thinking and feminist criticism can infuse traditional liberal arts disciplines.
    Assessment: class discussions, journals, research papers, exams
Application of Women’s Studies Minor Goals to Specific Courses:

WOST 201: Goals number 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10
Art 306 (Women, Art, and Feminism): Goals number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10
Classics 210 (Ancient Literature): Goals number 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10
Classics 240 (Ancient Society): Goals number 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10
English 260 (Literature of Feminism): Goals number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10
English 348 (English Novel--when appropriate):
   Depending upon the topic, goals number 1, 2, 3, 5; certainly goals number 4, 7, 8, 10
Government 244 (The Politics of Islam): Goals number 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10
History 330 (Biography and U.S. History): Goals number 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10
History 370 (Women in U.S. History): Goals number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Issues and Ideas 426 (Feminist Approaches to Literature and Society): Goals number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10
Psychology 272 (The Psychology of Women): Goals number 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
jSociology 343 (Population): Goals number 3, 8, 9, 10
Sociology 345 (Gender, Race, and Ethnicity) Goals number 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10
Sociology 355 (Social Movements): Goals number 3, 4, 7, 8, 10
WOST 401: Goals number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Assessment of Student Learning in the Program

The program's achievement of these goals is assessed by the women's studies faculty in their normal teaching activities. This is facilitated by small classes and close relations between students and faculty. Many women's studies minors also take WOST 320 (Independent Study). This course provides a closer monitoring of their progress on many potential different topics and in several potential different means. The capstone course is a culmination and measure of the education Women’s Studies provides in feminist thought and the understanding of gender. The capstone class is an endpoint assessment tool, because students are expected to show facility in various topics covered in previous WOST classes and to synthesize their knowledge in a formal research paper, broadly conceived, that demonstrates their command of the field.