The Philosophy of UW-Platteville's Approach to General Education

UW-Platteville's educational philosophy is rooted in four ideas: first, that students are capable of and responsible for making choices; second, that the quality of choice is largely dependent upon the nature and extent of their experience and the degree to which they understand the experiences of others; third, that understanding of the self and others becomes more meaningful and constructive when it is informed by knowledge; and fourth, that while there are kinds of knowledge that people need in order to practice their particular professions, there are other kinds of knowledge that people need in order to live in a world larger than the purely professional.

The development of these latter kinds of knowledge is the essential purpose of a liberal education. Such an education empowers persons to live thoughtful lives, concerned about a universe much larger than their immediate environment and about a public realm that reaches far beyond their professional circle, local community, or nation. More specifically, this central part of education promotes the ability to think and communicate coherently, critically, creatively, and empathetically about:

- the thoughts and actions of women and men from one's own culture, as well as from different cultures;
- the processes of nature, both animate and inanimate;
- the interrelations among people and between nature and humankind; and
- the possibilities for each person to enhance or detract from the goodness and beauty of life.

This philosophy of education is compatible with the opening statement of the Select Mission of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, which states: “the University enables each student to become broader in perspective, more literate, intellectually more astute, ethically more sensitive, and to participate more wisely in society as a competent professional and a knowledgeable citizen.”

The Connection Between the Women’s Studies Program and UW-P’s Approach to General Education

Women’s Studies courses provide students with the necessary knowledge, socialization, community experience, and cultural competency to understand women and gender roles; they help to facilitate students’ understanding of the centrality of gender in their lives as educated individuals, professionals, and citizens; they create awareness of the ways in which women’s concerns and societal concerns labeled “feminine” have often been distorted when viewed through the lens of a male-centered culture; and they develop the ability to communicate effectively these ideas to others.
GOALS OF THE WOMEN’S STUDIES MINOR:

1. To encourage and facilitate student learning and awareness of the vital concerns and contributions of women throughout history, society, philosophy, and the arts and sciences, so as to promote greater knowledge and competency in students’ lives as professionals and citizens.

2. To help students investigate the ways in which societal misconceptions of both sexes have been reflected in traditional curricula, bodies of knowledge, and social structures.

3. To facilitate coherent, logical, and empathetic thinking and to help students develop effective communication skills.

Student Learning Outcome # 1:

Student will acquire and demonstrate competence and increasing proficiency in the requisite skills of critical thinking, reading, writing, and oral expression in communicating about women and gender in cross-cultural perspectives.

Assessment Tools\(^1\) for SLO # 1:

- Grades in WS courses as reflecting competency in critical skills
- Review of WS syllabi (including cross-listed courses) by WS Curriculum Committee
- Evaluation of student’s co-operative field experience by WS Director and student’s placement supervisor
- Senior exit survey

Student Learning Outcome # 2:

Student will acquire diverse course work across the curriculum for gaining knowledge of women’s experiences and contributions throughout history and for understanding the changing constructions of gender both historically and contemporarily, in local and global society. Student will gain knowledge of historical and contemporary issues concerning women by studying different academic fields; she/he will learn to apply Women’s Studies coursework as it pertains and contributes to her/his own life and respective field of work. Student will learn about gender issues and the changing interpretations and varying

\(^1\) For a more detailed description of these assessment tools, please see Appendix A.
experiences of women by choosing different women’s studies courses, including cooperative field experience.

Assessment Tools for SLO # 2:

- Grades in WS courses as reflecting mastery of material
- Evaluation of student’s co-operative field experience by WS Director and student’s placement supervisor
- Senior exit survey

Student Learning Outcome # 3:

Student will acquire knowledge of gender as a social construction and how it affects identity; she/he will investigate and understand the social, political, and cultural structures that support and promote sexism and the effect of those structures on the student as an individual; and she/he will learn ways to create and promote justice for women.

Assessment Tools for SLO # 3:

- Pre-class and post-class survey of students in WS 1130 (Introduction to WS) to determine changes in knowledge and attitudes of students
- Senior exit survey
- Grades in WS courses as reflecting mastery of material
- Review of WS Syllabi (including cross-listed courses) by WS Curriculum Committee

Student Learning Outcome # 4:

Student will participate in campus life and local community activities as they pertain to issues concerning women. She/he will contribute to campus and local community life by sharing her/his experiences and expertise with other students and community members by means of presentations, discussion panels, conferences, essays, and workshops.

Assessment Tools for SLO # 4:

- Review of WS Syllabi by WS Curriculum Committee for event participation requirements
- Senior exit survey
- Evaluation of student’s co-operative field experience by WS Director and student’s placement supervisor
APPENDIX A: Description of Assessment Tools

1. Senior Exit Survey. (This will be given to all students graduating with a WS minor.) It will include questions on competency skills and how WS courses helped build those skills; it will include a section that assesses how well the student can apply critical paradigms from WS courses to their own lives and experiences; it will ask about participation in campus and local community life through the auspices of Women’s Studies courses.

2. Evaluation of Cooperative Field Experience by Student, WS Director, and Placement Supervisor. (This applies to all students taking co-operative field experience.) Director’s evaluation of student’s portfolio from the co-op; meeting between student, WS Director, and placement supervisor discussing the internship; meetings and discussions between the WS Director and the placement supervisor regarding the student and the placement.

3. Review of WS Course Syllabi by WS Curriculum Committee. On a regular basis, the WS Curriculum Committee will meet and review all syllabi listed or cross-listed in WS by checking how well the SLO’s for each correspond to the SLO’s for the WS minor.

4. Pre- and Post-Survey of Students Enrolled in WS 1130. Every semester, instructors of WS 1130, Introduction to WS, will give the same “pre” and “post” course survey. The goal of this survey is to measure knowledge gained and attitudes changed by this course.

5. Grades in WS Courses. A student’s acquisition of course knowledge will be measured by the grades she or he earned in WS courses.
APPENDIX B: Assessment Plan for WS Minor (Table Form)

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<th>SLO #</th>
<th>Senior Exit Survey</th>
<th>Evaluation of Co-op</th>
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