Gender and women’s studies at Bowdoin is an interdisciplinary program that incorporates into the curriculum recent research on women and gender. The program combines the scholarly traditions of a variety of disciplines to explore the myriad ways in which gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, and nationality—historically and in contemporary life. Courses in gender and women’s studies investigate the experiences of women and men in light of the social construction of gender and its meaning across cultures and historical periods. Gender construction—the making of men/masculinity and women/femininity—is explored as an institutionalized means of structuring inequality and dominance. In addition to developing skills in critical reading, thinking, and writing, students in gender and women’s studies courses often report acquiring the means to name and give voice to life experiences that have previously gone unacknowledged.

The Gender and Women’s Studies Program offers a range of program courses as well as an extensive list of associated courses, offered by other departments and programs, that have a central focus on gender or women. Among the many programs and departments whose courses “count” for gender and women’s studies requirements are history, English, religion, sociology and anthropology, Russian, Romance languages, classics, education, gay and lesbian studies, theater and dance, Africana studies, Asian studies, and film studies.

The Major and Minor

The major in gender and women’s studies consists of ten courses, including three required core courses: Introduction to Gender and Women’s Studies, Feminist Theory, and Capstone Seminar: Doing Gender Studies: Research Methodologies and Social Change. These courses are designed to illuminate the diverse realities of women’s lives and of the workings of gender, while making available some of the main currents of feminist thought.

The seven remaining courses for the major may be chosen from the set of gender and women’s studies courses, or from a broad set of courses in other disciplines that have been approved by the Gender and Women’s Studies Program Committee to count towards the major (at least two must be listed in the College Catalogue as “same as” gender and women’s studies courses). No more than three of the seven elective courses may be from the same department.

The minor consists of Introduction to Gender and Women’s Studies, Feminist Theory, and three additional approved courses. Students may count courses in their major toward the gender and women’s studies minor, but may count only two courses from any given discipline.

Honors Projects

During the spring of the junior year, a student who wishes to undertake an honors project must secure the agreement of a faculty member to supervise the independent studies project. The honors project supervisor must have taught gender and women’s studies courses and served on the Gender and Women’s Studies Program Committee. If the student’s chosen supervisor has not fulfilled these requirements, the student may appeal to the committee for permission to go forward with the project. Two semesters of advanced independent study are required for an honors project in gender and women’s studies. No more than two independent studies courses may count toward the major.

After Bowdoin

The interdisciplinary nature of gender and women’s studies, firmly grounded in the liberal arts tradition, prepares students for a variety of occupations. This field of study offers practical applications in the world of business, where employees are increasingly attempting to define and create “gender-friendly” and “family-friendly” work environments.

The development of international, national, and local governmental and nonprofit organizations addressing women’s issues provides additional opportunities for graduates who both understand the workings of gender and wish to make changes in their own communities and in the world.

Gender and women’s studies graduates have pursued careers in law, medicine, education, library science, and human resources, among others. Many of our graduates state that their education in gender and women’s studies has given them confidence to enter and succeed in fields they might not otherwise have considered.

Program Faculty

The program is administered by the Gender and Women’s Studies Program Committee. Courses are taught by faculty members drawn from across the College.

Kristen Ghodsee*, associate professor of gender and women’s studies, B.A. (California–Santa Cruz), M.A., Ph.D. (California–Berkeley), specializes in women’s and economic development issues, particularly in relation to post-socialist nations in Central and Eastern Europe.

Jennifer Scanlon*, professor of gender and women’s studies, B.S. (SUNY–Oneonta), M.A. (Delaware), M.A., Ph.D. (Binghamton), specializes in the study of gender and consumer culture from a historical perspective, with special attention on the historical development of female consumers, women’s magazines, and advertising. She is chair of the program.
Gender and Women’s Studies

Affiliated Faculty

Susan E. Bell, A. Myrick Freeman Professor of Social Sciences, A.B. (Haverford), A.M., Ph.D. (Brandeis), teaches courses in the cultural interpretation of medicine, and the evolution of society’s views of the body.


Aviva Breslow, associate professor of English, B.A. (Brown), M.A., Ph.D. (Harvard), teaches a course on the depictions of women in the literature of various periods and genres.


Sarah O’Brien Conly, assistant professor of philosophy, A.B. (Princeton), M.A., Ph.D. (Cornell), teaches on the philosophy of sex and love.

Rachel E. Connelly, Bion R. Cram Professor of Economics, A.B. (Brandeis), A.M., Ph.D. (Michigan), teaches about family- and gender-related economics.


Sara A. Dickey, professor of anthropology, B.A. (Washington), M.A., Ph.D. (California-San Diego), teaches a course on social and political activism and gender inequality in India.

John M. Fitzgerald, William D. Shipman Professor of Economics, A.B. (Montana), M.S., Ph.D. (Wisconsin), teaches a course on poverty and economic redistribution.

Pamela M. Fletcher*, associate professor of art history, A.B. (Bowdoin), M.A., Ph.D. (Columbia), teaches about gender and sexuality in contemporary art.

Guy Mark Foster, assistant professor of English, B.A. (Wheaton), M.A., Ph.D. (Brown), teaches courses about the presentation of gender and racial identity, and love in American literature.


Jane E. Knox-Voina, professor of Russian, A.B. (Wheaton), A.M. (Michigan State), Ph.D. (Texas-Austin), teaches a course on Soviet film, including its portrayal of women.


Sarah McMahon*, associate professor of history, A.B. (Wellesley), Ph.D. (Brandeis), teaches about the history of women in the U.S.

Elizabeth Muther, associate professor of English, B.A. (Wellesley), Ph.D. (California–Berkeley), teaches African American women’s literature.

H. Roy Partridge Jr., visiting assistant professor of sociology, B.A. (Oberlin), M.S.W., M.A., Ph.D. (Michigan), teaches a course in racism.

Elizabeth Pritchard, assistant professor of religion, A.B. (Boston College), M.T.S., M.A., Ph.D. (Harvard), teaches about women in religion.


Jill S. Smith, assistant professor of German, B.A. (Amherst), M.A., Ph.D. (Indiana–Bloomington), teaches a course in gender roles and female sexuality in modern German culture.

Rachel Sturman, assistant professor of history and Asian studies, B.A. (Chicago), M.A., Ph.D (California–Davis), teaches about sexuality, gender, and the body in South Asia.

Susan L. Taran, assistant professor of history, B.A. (Trinity), M.A., M.A., Ph.D. (Brandeis), teaches about the history of women’s health.

Shu-chin Tsui, associate professor of Asian studies, B.A. (Kian Foreign Language Institute, China), M.A. (Wisconsin), M.A., Ph.D. (Michigan), teaches a course about women and writing in modern China.

June Vail, professor of dance, A.B. (Connecticut), M.A.L.S. (Wesleyan), teaches a course on the global phenomena of dance, with consideration of gender and the body.

Krista Van Vleet, associate professor of anthropology, B.S. (Beloit), M.A., Ph.D. (Michigan), teaches a course on family, gender, and sexuality in Latin America.


*Member of the Gender and Women’s Studies Program Committee

Independent Study and Honors Projects

Recent independent study projects in the program include:

• Career-Oriented Women and Conflicts over Motherhood
• From Geisha Girl to Suzie Wong: Exoticization and Cultural Colonization of East Asian Women in U.S. Film Culture
• African American Women in U.S. History
• A Year in the Life of Glamour Magazine
• Liberating the Student Subject: The Possibility of a Feminist Pedagogy
• You See Us as You Want to See Us: Feminist Film Theory and 1980s Teenpics

Bowdoin

For more information about Bowdoin, please write or call Dean of Admissions

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In its employment and admissions practices Bowdoin is in conformity with all applicable federal and state statutes and regulations. It does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, creed, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, or physical or mental handicap.

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For more information, visit:
http://www.bowdoin.edu/gender-women/

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