

## WGS Thesis

As a Bates student majoring in an interdisciplinary program, your thesis will immerse you in methodologies drawn from multiple fields of study. The following guidelines are designed to help you navigate this often-confusing process, and we urge you to read them thoroughly. You are also encouraged to consult early and often with the Program chair and/or relevant Program faculty for further assistance.

In order to produce a successful thesis, you must begin the prescribed process during the semester *prior* to your initial enrollment in WGST 457 or WGST 458. Please refer to the specific work schedule printed below. It is designed to ensure that you consult with the Program Chair, secure a thesis advisor, and choose a reasonable topic *before* the semester in which you plan to write. Such advance planning will enable you to polish your thesis proposal before submitting it to the Women and Gender Studies (WGS) Program Committee at the beginning of the semester in which you plan to write.

A strong proposal will reflect all the criteria set forth in these guidelines (discussed in detail below). It clearly identifies your research topic and indicates the relevance of your research to other scholarly literature in Women and Gender Studies. A proposal considered “accepted” must have been submitted and reviewed by the WGS Program Committee before the end of the “add” period of the semester in which you write your thesis (or, in the case of a full year project, begin to write). Early and frequent consultation with your advisor is the best route to a successful and rewarding thesis experience.

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## Schedule and Deadlines

### FALL One-Semester Theses or FALL – WINTER Two-Semester Theses

- **Winter Semester Preceding Thesis:** Conceive topic and begin to develop research question. Consult with Women and Gender Studies major advisor. Choose thesis advisor.
- **Short Term Preceding Thesis:** Work on preliminary research and development of thesis proposal with thesis advisor.
- **Second Friday of the Fall Thesis Semester:** Deadline for fall and two-semester thesis proposals. Submit your carefully revised and edited thesis proposal to the WGS Academic Administrative Assistant in Pettengill Hall (Room 253) by NOON.  
Note: the Thesis Proposal Cover Sheet must be signed by your advisor.
- **Friday, Last Day of Classes, Fall Semester:** Fall semester thesis deadline.

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### WINTER One-Semester Theses

- **September Preceding Thesis:** Conceive topic and begin to develop research question. Consult with Women and Gender Studies major advisor. Choose thesis advisor.
- **Fall Semester Preceding Thesis:** Work on preliminary research and develop thesis proposal in consultation with advisor.
- **First Friday of the Winter Thesis Semester:** Deadline for winter semester thesis proposals. Submit your carefully revised and edited thesis proposal to the WGS Academic Administrative Assistant by NOON. Note: the Thesis Proposal Cover Sheet must be signed by your advisor.
- **Last day of Classes, Winter Semester:** Winter semester thesis deadline.

*We cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of timeliness in the preparation of all thesis materials. Should problems with timeliness prove to be an issue with any particular student, the Committee and the advisor together may reduce the final grade for WGST 457 or WGST 458. Due to the Registrar's scheduling of the drop/add period and mandatory grade submission, all deadlines are firm.*

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# **INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING A WGS PROPOSAL and THESIS**

## **Preparation**

You may approach any member of the faculty who is familiar with the study of gender in the relevant scholarly field(s) about advising your thesis; the advisor does not have to be a current member of the WGS Program Committee. Your advisor will help guide the development of your thesis, set a schedule for completion of the work, and determine an appropriate citation format. A WGS thesis requires participation in a collaborative process with the thesis advisor. Thesis writing is a challenging process. Students are expected to meet regularly with the advisor, to provide and discuss drafts, to keep appointments, and to meet agreed-upon deadlines. Students should reflect critically on the comments they receive from their advisor, and should demonstrate initiative and independence during the project. Your thesis advisor will also evaluate your efforts and grade your final project. Approach, process, and thesis product all are important factors in the grading of thesis.

*It is imperative that you work with your advisor to develop your topic and proposal.* To facilitate this process, we suggest preparing a typed Topic Statement that identifies the subject of your investigation and a preliminary Research Question. (In the case of a literary or artistic project, this statement might take the form of a brief description.) Early in the process, your question is likely to be tentative and may change as you become more familiar with scholarship in the field. Also prepare an Annotated Bibliography, consisting of careful summaries of four to six *scholarly* reference works, books, articles, and/or primary documents pertinent to your specific topic. Be sure to provide full bibliographic citations for each source, and to indicate the relevance of each work to your project. Your advisor can then better offer suggestions for next steps.

## **Writing the Proposal**

A strong proposal identifies the value of the project as a Women and Gender Studies thesis, reflects the program's three core guidelines for research in the field (below), and provides a "road map" for your research and writing. Proposals for one-semester theses should be roughly four to six pages in length, excluding notes and bibliographies.

Proposals for two-semester theses should be between six and ten pages in length, excluding notes and bibliographies. What follows are specific instructions regarding content of a thesis proposal. Please attend carefully to each of them.

The thesis proposal should include:

- A clear statement of the problem proposed for study and the specific research question(s) to be addressed.
- Discussion of relevant scholarly literatures. The proposal should demonstrate clearly that germane scholarship has been reviewed (by inclusion of major disagreements or outstanding questions in the literature, and/or how your questions fit into the existing literature).
- Detailed discussion of the methodology, which both explains the suitability of your methods to your research problem and articulates your understanding of the complexities of the methods to be employed.
- Description of the materials to be used in the research (e.g., texts, documents, empirical data, interviews and interview subjects, etc.), as well as the locations and/or availability of these materials. Include a rough timetable for research (and budget, if applying for research funds).

The proposal must reflect your grasp of the following core themes:

**Women and Gender Studies theses use gender as a category of analysis.** This criterion is indispensable. Your research and analysis must be informed by an understanding of how gender shapes human experience (labor practices, for example). Simply writing about “women” does not qualify a thesis as using gender as a category of analysis.

**Women and Gender Studies theses approach people as social agents whose gendered identities and experiences are shaped by race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, sexuality, (dis)ability, and national power.**

*Gender identity and gendered experience must be considered in terms of their intersection with the other particularities of people’s lives.* For example, research about the work experience of college-aged white women cannot be generalized as the experience of all women. Research that focuses on a particular group must consider the impact of that group’s specific social location (racial, sexual, socioeconomic, national, occupational, etc.). Where research is confined to the experience of one group of women, it is imperative that you, as investigator, understand and communicate the boundaries within which your findings apply.

## **Women and Gender Studies theses are interdisciplinary in methodology.**

Given that our majors take most of their courses in “traditional” disciplines, what exactly do we expect of you in the way of an interdisciplinary thesis? We expect that you will use your training in Women and Gender Studies to enlarge or transform the perspective that a traditional discipline might bring to bear on a problem. It is also possible to use one of the traditional disciplines to expand upon or recast the perspective(s) that Women and Gender Studies might use to analyze a problem. The methodology section of your thesis should as detailed as possible; it may help to draw on notes and reference material from INDS250 (“Methods and Modes of Inquiry”).

*Note: all students planning research involving human subjects or participants must submit their work to the Bates College Institutional Review Board unless their research plan meets the criteria for exemption outlined on the Bates IRB website.*

<http://abacus.bates.edu/acad/depts/psychology/irb/index.html>

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## **Honors Theses**

Receipt of Honors in Women and Gender Studies is a special distinction reserved for those students who have completed a thesis project with certain distinguishing characteristics and features. The student must demonstrate a high level of self-motivation, independence, and continuous engagement in the project over the entire two semesters, and the thesis project should be exemplary in its design, methodological rigor, and creativity. The thesis and oral examination should use scholarship in the field of women and gender studies to advance our understanding of an important topic. The final thesis must develop the necessary background, theory and/or methodology for the project and the thesis should include a thorough discussion and citation of relevant, published literature. Students must exhibit comprehension of the debates related to their topic and successfully articulate how their work contributes to the scholarly conversation. Approach, process, thesis product, and oral examination all are important factors in a decision of whether to award Honors. The oral examination panel members, who may consult with the advisor, have final authority for judging whether the student has satisfactorily met the criteria for receipt of Honors.

Each academic program at Bates maintains its own policies and procedures for determining

Students' candidacy for honors in the major. In Women and Gender Studies, students seeking to apply for honors candidacy must clearly indicate this intention after consultation with their major advisor in the semester before beginning the thesis. Students must also have preliminary support at that time from their planned thesis advisor. Students are responsible for submitting the completed Honors Thesis Intention Form to the Program Chair by noon on **the Friday of the last day of classes in the winter term of the junior year.** (December graduates must submit the Honors Thesis Intention Form by the second Friday of the fall semester prior to their final year).

Students will also indicate the intention to pursue honors when submitting a proposal for a two-semester thesis proposal by the September deadline listed above.

The Faculty Program Committee studies the proposal submitted with honors candidacy in mind, and returns a formal letter of review to the student applicant. That letter of review will either:

- reject the proposal for honors consideration;
- provide the student with the opportunity to revise and resubmit the proposal for honors consideration;
- preliminarily accept the proposal for honors consideration, pending approval of two chapters submitted to the committee in the first semester;
- or preliminarily accept the proposal, pending approval of the student's advisor in January.

Students should pay careful attention to the letters of review provided by the Program Committee when preparing this work. Students must have made considerable progress on the thesis in the fall semester to be put forward for honors in January. The thesis advisor, in consultation with the Program Committee, has the authority to withdraw the student from the Honors program at any time prior to the submission deadline for the written thesis.

Students seeking to apply for honors in two majors must adhere to the honors policies and procedures of *both* WGS and the other department or program. Further information about College-wide honors guidelines may be found at <http://www.bates.edu/honors-program.xml>. Further questions about honors candidacy and the honors process in Women and Gender Studies may be directed to the Program Chair.

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## **Women and Gender Studies Thesis Writers' Group**

The Program Committee recognizes the myriad challenges of producing an effective interdisciplinary thesis. To help you address some of these challenges, the Program Committee holds regular discussion meetings for thesis writers to gather together and share concerns. In these meetings, facilitated by Program faculty, thesis writers discuss the content and process of their work, providing constructive feedback to one another in the form of questions, comments, and suggestions. They bring work-in-progress in the form of questions, outlines, or chapter drafts, and share recommendations for source collection, content organization, writing process, and prose style. Previous thesis writers have responded positively to these working meetings, confirming the Program Committee's belief that they help majors to develop and maintain the Women and Gender Studies focus of their work.

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