

WOMEN'S STUDIES AT UNBC: FAQs

What is Women's Studies anyway?

Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary field dedicated to the study of the historical, cultural, and societal role of women and gender. Women's Studies at UNBC has two major goals:

- to foster the appreciation and production of knowledge by, for, and about women; and
- to study the workings of gender in our own society, in other cultures, and in the past.

Why is the work of Women's Studies different from that of other programs? Simply because Women's Studies draws from multiple perspectives and disciplines while remaining focused on questions related to women and gender. For example, in a Women's Studies course on women's health, you might discuss such topics as medieval views of women's bodies (history); the development of various treatment options for breast cancer (medicine); and representations of women within the media (communications).

Is Women's Studies just for women?

Throughout history, many men have been interested in understanding women and their roles. Such men are welcome in all Women's Studies classes. Furthermore, because Women's Studies is dedicated to the study of gender, we interrogate masculinity as much as we do femininity. The questions we ask are of interest to both sexes.

- What is the difference between men and women?
- What roles have both sexes played in history? What roles do they play now?
- What roles should they play in the future?
- What is the relationship between gender and sexuality?

These examples demonstrate that Women's Studies pose questions that are fundamentally about being human.

How does UNBC's program work?

Students may enroll in a major (48 credits) or a minor (18 credits). The program is interdisciplinary. Students complete core and optional courses in Women's Studies in addition to ancillary courses. The latter are drawn from a number of other disciplines such as: Anthropology, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, First Nations Studies, History, International Studies, and Political Science.

All courses in the Women's Studies program share a focus on women and/or gender as a category of analysis.

The Women's Studies program also offers a number of joint majors in partnership with other university programs. Students may complete joint majors in Women's Studies and History, Women's Studies and English, Women's Studies and First Nations Studies, and Women's Studies and Political Science.

What skills does the program teach?

An awareness of the importance of gender in society is increasingly critical to a variety of workplaces and to responsible citizenship. But in addition to learning about gender and women, students in Women's Studies develop the following highly translatable skills:

- critical analysis and cross-cultural understanding
- competence in varying modes of expression ranging from formal essays to annotated journals and oral presentations
- conveying complex ideas succinctly to others whose backgrounds and preparation may be quite different from their own
- Flexible thinking: the ability to understand and draw from a variety of perspectives.

In addition, Women's Studies majors also complete methodological training broadly applicable to research in the social sciences and humanities.

What can I do with a Women's Studies degree?

Because of the wide applicability of the skills we teach and the breadth of knowledge gained, students will find a Women's Studies major or minor an ideal preparation for careers or further training in:

- government agencies dealing with human rights, women, and the family
- law
- health care (e.g., delivery of women's and rainbow health care services)
- business
- education
- social work
- community leadership and activism
- international development (e.g., CIDA, UN)
- communications/media