

**To: Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC)**

**From: Nelson M. Rodriguez**

**Date: 19 December 2013**

**Re: Women's and Gender Studies Department Assessment Report for Fiscal Year 2012-13**

For the academic year 2012-13, the Women's and Gender Studies faculty agreed to assess two of its program learning outcomes by way of its capstones courses. According to Stephen Hundley, a capstone is defined as "a set of learning experiences toward the end of a degree program that: (1) encapsulates and demonstrates significant program-level learning outcomes; (2) promotes higher-order thinking and integrative learning; (3) prepares students for post-degree roles and expectations; (4) engages students in intentional reflection on and use of their prior learning; (5) connects to and models other high impact educational practices; (6) involves a holistic, team approach; (7) reinforces general education themes; and (8) provides evidence of learning for both improvement and accountability purposes" (from Stephen Hundley's Capstone Workshop at the 2011 Assessment Institute).

In the spring 2013 term, the Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) program learning outcomes #4 and #7 were assessed utilizing the direct measure of the senior capstone papers produced for WGS 495 ("Senior Seminar: Methods and Theory") taught by Dr. Ann Marie Nicolosi and WGS 496 ("Women's Leadership and Social Change") taught by Mary Lynn Hopps. Utilizing a 0 to 5 point scale, the "Senior Seminar Assessment Rubric" (see Appendix A) was applied to measure individual students on the two learning outcomes, and thus the extent to which the WGS program learning outcomes #4 and #7 are successfully being met. (Please note: A separate grading rubric was utilized in these courses by the instructors to assess the students' level of achievement in the capstone papers in other areas, specifically in "mechanics," "research," "use/integration of theory," and "argument/coherence/support." See Appendix B.)

For reference, program learning outcome #4 reads as follows: "Undertake original conceptual/theoretical and/or empirical research; demonstrate an ability to analyze/understand feminist theories and subsets across a range of academic disciplines." Program learning outcome #7 reads as follows: "Formulate their own theoretical positions, demonstrating a firm grasp of

opposing positions and construct a cogent oral and/or written argument.” (A full list of the WGS program learning outcomes can be found in Appendix C of this report.)

Enrolling a total of 10 students, and utilizing a 0 to 5 point scale, 8 students in WGS 495 met the skill sets associated with learning outcome #4 by receiving a “4” or higher, and 7 students met the skill sets associated with learning outcome #7 by receiving a “4” or higher. Enrolling a total of 14 students, and utilizing a 0 to 5 point scale, fourteen students in WGS 496 met the skill sets associated with learning outcome #4 by receiving a “4” or higher, and 14 students met the skill sets associated with learning outcome #7 by receiving a “4” or higher.

The data indicate that most students from these two sample groups are meeting the skill sets associated with both learning outcomes with a grade of “B” or higher. In order to further strengthen meeting both program learning outcomes, the WGS faculty intends to embark on a series of discussions during the current academic year about the possibility of offering two to three “themed” senior capstone seminars a year. Specific-themed capstones might prove very useful in further meeting program learning outcomes #4 and #7 by enabling students to hone the skill sets associated with these outcomes (e.g. by honing their knowledge and understanding of concepts, theories, and debates in a *specific* area within the broader fields of women’s, gender, and/or sexuality studies). After a series of such discussions, the WGS faculty might elect to reassess learning outcomes #4 and #7 within the context of “themed” capstones in future academic years.

In addition, given its usefulness as a direct assessment method in measuring most, if not all, of the program learning outcomes, the WGS faculty might elect to measure the other five program learning outcomes (see Appendix C) by way of the senior capstone as well. Such an approach would also provide the benefit of collecting capstone papers across several years in order to increase sample size.

## APPENDIX A

### SENIOR SEMINAR ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

#### WGS 495

STUDENT	LG #4 Undertake original conceptual/theoretical and/or empirical research; demonstrate an ability to analyze/understand feminist theories and subsets across a range of academic disciplines.	LG #7Formulate their own theoretical positions, demonstrating a firm grasp of opposing positions and construct a cogent oral and/or written argument
Range	2 to 5	2 to 5
Average	4.25	4.20
Percent Scoring 4 or 5	80%	70%

#### WGS 496

STUDENT	LG #4 Undertake original conceptual/theoretical and/or empirical research; demonstrate an ability to analyze/understand feminist theories and subsets across a range of academic disciplines.	LG #7Formulate their own theoretical positions, demonstrating a firm grasp of opposing positions and construct a cogent oral and/or written argument
Range	4 to 5	4 to 5
Average	4.82	4.68
Percent Scoring 4 or 5	100%	100%

#### SCALE:

A: 5  
 B: 4  
 C: 3  
 D: 2  
 F: 0-1

## APPENDIX B

### **Grading Rubric for WGS 495/496 (utilized spring semester 2013):**

	A	B	C	D
Mechanics (grammar, citations, structure etc.)	Paper has 0-1 errors and paper has excellent structure/flow	Paper has 2-4 errors and paper has good structure/flow	Paper has 5-6 errors and paper has adequate structure/flow	Paper has more than 6 errors and paper has poor structure/flow
Research	Paper is extensively researched, sources are scholarly and	Paper is well- researched, sources are scholarly and are integrated	Paper is adequately researched, sources are scholarly and	Paper is poorly researched, sources are poor and are poorly integrated into

	smoothly integrated into narrative	into narrative	are adequately integrated into narrative	narrative
Use/Integration of Theory	Superior integration reveals a sophisticated understanding and application of theory	Strong integration reveals a good understanding and application of theory	Adequate integration reveals an understanding and application of theory	Weak integration reveals a poor understanding and application of theory
Argument/Coherence /support	Argument/thesis is original, sophisticated, coherent and excellently supported in paper	Argument/thesis is original, coherent and strongly supported in paper	Argument/thesis is clear, and supported in paper	Argument/thesis is unclear, and poorly supported in paper

Mechanics (grammar, citations, structure etc.)

Research

Use/Integration of Theory

Argument/Coherence /support

## APPENDIX C

### **TCNJ Department of Women's and Gender Studies Program Learning Outcomes:**

Students who complete the Women's and Gender Studies major at The College of New Jersey are expected to:

1. Demonstrate central concepts, terms, distinctions, questions, arguments, and theories in Women's and Gender Studies; and articulate multiple points of view on a range of questions within the discipline, exhibiting an understanding of their strengths, limitations, and implications.
2. Exhibit knowledge of, including the history of feminist theories on a transnational scale, central questions, arguments, theories, and movements in the history of Women's and Gender Studies.
3. Explicate the concept of intersectionality, specifically within the context of the complex ways gender intersects with other social categories of difference, e.g., race, ethnicity, class, nation-state, age, geography, religion, sexuality, etc.
4. Undertake original conceptual/theoretical and/or empirical research; demonstrate an ability to analyze/understand feminist theories and subsets across a range of academic disciplines.
5. Demonstrate an ability to critically analyze cultural assumptions, social norms, and the systems that structure societies within the context and concerns of Women's and Gender Studies; and explain how gender and sexuality are shaped by, as well as shape, a broad range of institutions.

6. Engage in theoretically informed civic engagement in the context and concerns of gender, race and social justice.
7. Formulate their own theoretical positions, demonstrating a firm grasp of opposing positions and construct a cogent oral and/or written argument.