Welcome, new and returning graduate students! We compiled this guide to give you, in one document, most of the basic information you will need at each stage of your graduate work. Please save it, and refer to it throughout your time at GW. Also be sure to bookmark or download the CCAS Graduate Handbook https://columbian.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs1971/f/downloads/Student%20Handbook%2018_19%20-%20Masters%20and%20Certs.pdf

Advisors
Before registering, incoming students should consult with their advisor to discuss courses and programs of study. Although there are no regular faculty office hours between May 31 and August 15, advisors are often available by email at various points during the summer. Advisors usually arrange office hours for walk-in visits or appointments the week before classes start; these are advertised via email.

**Liberal Arts Advisor:** Kavita Daiya kdaiya@gwu.edu

**Public Policy Advisor:** Cindy Deitch deitch@gwu.edu

As students proceed through their course work, they should feel free to find a mentor who will serve as a more in-depth source of intellectual and professional guidance, but remain in regular contact with their assigned academic advisor.

By their second semester, students are required to complete a *Program of Study* form. It must be signed by their advisor and submitted to the WGSS office before registration for the second semester. Revisions to the Program of Study form may be made as often as needed; each change requires the advisor's approval. Designing Your Program of Study

MA in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with a concentration in a discipline or topical area of interest:

3 theory/methods courses (9 credit hours):

- **WGSS 6220**: Fundamentals of Feminist Theory (Fall, usually first year)
- **WGSS 6221**: Research Issues in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (Fall, usually 2nd year)
- **WGSS 6225**: Contemporary Feminist Theory or approved alternative such as Global Feminisms. Confer with advisor for approved alternative.
6 credit hours from among the following three options: Alert: these options may change with the addition of a new 2nd year, Spring Capstone.

- **WGSS 6283**: Six-hour Practicum (Spring)
- **WGSS 6283** and **WGSS 6295**: Three-hour Practicum and a separate independent research project (6283 - Spring)
- **WGSS 6998-6999**: Thesis (6 credit hours)

In your first year, consider identifying an area of concentration; this can be a traditionally defined field, like “Sociology” or “Art History,” or a thematically designed field, like “Gender in Global Cultures.” Students take four graduate courses (12 credit hours) in their chosen discipline/field while in the program. Typical choices for a liberal arts concentration include disciplines such as Philosophy, History, Sociology, Anthropology, English, Religion, Political Science, or Economics. Most students create a topical concentration around an area of interest such as gender and health, women and international development, race and gender, LGBT studies, among many other possibilities. For this option, the student, in consultation with the advisor, must find and take four graduate level courses (12 credits) in courses that fit the chosen concentration topic.

In addition, students should take three courses (9 credit hours) of electives related to their program of study for a total of 36 credit hours. Students may take more than four courses in their discipline/field of choice. For advice about these courses, students should locate a mentor in the relevant department as early as possible.

A typical program of study for the MA in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with Anthropology as the chosen discipline and the thesis option, for example, might look like:

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<td><strong>WGSS 6221</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ANTH 6591</strong></td>
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<td><strong>WGSS 6999</strong> (or new capstone)</td>
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<td><strong>ANTH 6501</strong></td>
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**MA in Public Policy with a concentration in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies**

2 theory/methods courses (6 credit hours):

- **WGSS 6220**: Fundamentals of Feminist Theory (Fall, usually first year. Occasionally an alternative theory course might be approved.)
- **WGSS 6221**: Research Issues in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (Fall, usually 2nd year)

5 courses in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Public Policy core (15 credit hours):

- **WGSS 6240**: Gender and Public Policy (Spring)
- **PPPA 6003; PPPA 6002**: Research Methods in (Fall/Spring)
- **PPPA 6006**: Policy Analysis (Fall/Spring; PPPA 6011 is an alternative)
- And one of the following: an additional PPPA course, **PHIL 6230, PHIL 6242, WGSS 6265**, or **SOC 6265**.

6 credit hours from among the following three options: **Alert: these options may change with the addition of a new 2nd year, Spring Capstone.**

- **WGSS 6283**: Six-hour Practicum (Spring)
- **WGSS 6283** and **WGSS 6295**: Three-hour Practicum and a separate independent research project (283 - Spring)
- **WGSS 6998/WGSS 6999**: Thesis (6 credit hours)

In addition, students take three elective courses related to their program of study (9 credit hours) to complete the total of 36 credit hours. A typical program of study for the MA in Public Policy with a concentration in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies might look like:

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<td>WGSS 6221</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPPA 6002 or 6003 or 6006</td>
<td>WGSS 6240</td>
<td>PPPA 6002 or 6003 or 6006</td>
<td>New MA capstone (if offered)</td>
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<td>Elective</td>
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**Choosing Between the Public Policy and Liberal Arts Options**

The M.A. in Public Policy with a Concentration in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies was established in 1982 as a "first-of-its-kind" graduate degree option formally combining Women’s, Studies (as it was called at the time) and Public Policy. It remains a unique and distinctive feature of the GW program. Students take required core Women’s,
Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses and electives with other Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies graduate students and required core Public Policy courses with students in other public policy/public administration graduate programs. This program provides students with a professionally oriented degree, the M.A. in Public Policy, including training in the conventional social science components of that degree: economics, quantitative methods, policy analysis. This training makes our graduates competitive in the mainstream world of public policy. Most important, it also provides students with a feminist analysis and the tools to criticize conventional ways of thinking about and studying public policy that have traditionally excluded women. It offers opportunities to gain expertise in specific policy issues important to women, and to participate in Washington women’s policy networks and organizations.

**The M.A. in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies** with a concentration in a liberal arts discipline, or a topical focus, offers students the opportunity to craft an individualized program of study in close consultation with faculty advisors. Students are expected to develop intellectual depth and a degree of expertise through a four-course concentration in either (a) a specific discipline such as Anthropology, Sociology, English, History, Philosophy (other disciplines are also possible, with permission), or (b) a topical area such as women and health, women and international development, race and gender (other areas are possible). There are ample opportunities for students with policy interests to include policy courses (such as Gender and Public Policy, among others) in their program of study, either as part of their chosen discipline/field or as electives.

The disciplinary concentration works well for students interested in going on for a Ph.D. in a discipline and for those whose interests fit easily within disciplinary lines. Students are encouraged to find a faculty mentor in their disciplinary concentration. Alternatively, students may choose an M.A. in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies because their intellectual passions and career objectives are truly interdisciplinary. The topical focus option provides academic space for students with diverse interests.

**Choosing Between the Practicum & the Thesis Option. Alert: This section is probably changing to provide for a 3-credit MA Capstone and a 3-credit thesis, or 3-credit Practicum. Consult your advisor.**

Each MA student faces the choice of whether to write a thesis or to do one of the practicum options. Although it is possible to do both a thesis and a practicum, most students do one or the other.

**The Practicum & Independent Research**

The practicum provides students with professional level experience in a policy-related organization combined with weekly seminar meetings, readings and written work that integrates theory and practice. The practicum is offered only in the spring semester of each year. Most students take the practicum in their second year, but some do it earlier. Timing depends on what works best for the student's interests, needs, and schedule. Doing this practicum involves
finding a part-time internship (preferably paid) that relates to WGSS—please consult Dr. Cindy Deitch on appropriate opportunities that would count for this. The WGSS Program regularly circulates information on internship opportunities as part of our Weekly Digest.

Placement arrangements, including an application, interviews, and a contract, are completed in November-December of the preceding fall term. Thus, students who wish to take the practicum in the spring of their first year must decide before the end of their first semester. The Practicum instructor can provide individualized advice in finding a placement if the student begins the process by November or earlier. Students considering the Practicum are strongly urged to consult with the instructor (Spring, 2020 instructor, Janine Moussa, Janinemoussa@gmail.com) during the Fall semester. Dr. Cynthia Deitch, deitch@gwu.edu, is available for consulting.

The Practicum includes two options, both of which require attendance at the weekly seminar:

- **WGSS 6283** (3 credits): 60-hour placement and 3 credits of independent research (WGSS 6295) though not necessarily in the same semester.
- **WGSS 6283** (6 credits): 120-hour placement plus a case study, a major research paper that analyzes some aspect of the placement experience.

**WGSS 6295 and WGSS 6280**

All students taking **WGSS 6295** Independent Research or **WGSS 6280** Independent Study, whether for an elective, or a requirement, must submit a brief description of their proposed project and obtain written permission from a faculty sponsor who agrees to supervise the research prior to registering. Forms are available from the Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies office. **Warning: Students who register for WGSS 6295, 6280 or thesis credits without written permission, risk having the credits NOT COUNT toward the degree.**

**WGSS 6295 Independent Research**

For students taking **WGSS 6295** to fulfill the MA requirements under the non-thesis option, general expectations are that the student will:

- spend one full semester (or more) doing independent original research, that is, collecting original data or otherwise using primary sources and making an original scholarly contribution, rather than simply reviewing what others have already written;
- produce an article-length (25-35 pp.) professional paper—that is, a polished paper suitable for presentation at a professional conference and approaching publishable quality.

Students should anticipate one or more rounds of directed revision. Specific requirements will be worked out with the faculty sponsor.

**WGSS 6280 Independent Study** (elective)

Although it may take a variety of forms, **WGSS 6280** is typically a directed readings course, designed so that the student may gain command of the literature in a specific field of inquiry not
readily available through offered courses. Students and faculty sponsors may agree on a variety of written outcomes or final projects.

The Thesis
A student invites a faculty member to serve as thesis advisor. After a suitable topic has been agreed upon by the advisor and student, the student invites a second faculty member to serve as reader (the thesis advisor can help find a reader). A thesis topic approval form should be filled out and submitted to the Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program. Submit this form the first semester of registration for thesis credits. Most students need about two semesters to complete the thesis. It is unrealistic to expect to first start thesis research, with no prior work, the same semester you hope to graduate. **Warning:** Students who register for thesis credits without written approval risk having the credits not count.

The Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies website provides a list of Faculty and Affiliated Faculty to assist students in finding a faculty member with whom they would like to work, but generally the thesis advisor is someone with whom the student has already worked and established a rapport. This list is not exhaustive, and students are welcome to create links with other faculty. Students should also consult with the Director of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and/or their advisor.

Further details concerning the MA thesis:

- The length of a thesis varies. Suggested length is 40-50 double spaced pages.
- If the proposed director or reader is from outside GW, her/his curriculum vitae must be submitted to the Columbian School of Arts and Sciences (CCAS) by the Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program for approval.
- The final thesis, after being approved by reader and advisor, should be submitted electronically at [http://library.gwu.edu/etd](http://library.gwu.edu/etd). More detailed information about the submission process can be found on the above website.
- It is important to consult this website early on as it also contains important information about the submission requirements, as well as the final submission process and deadlines. It is helpful to set up a timeline in consultation with your advisor.
- In planning your schedule, keep in mind that most faculty are not on contract in summer and may be unavailable to work with you in June, July and August. Individual faculty may choose to make themselves available, but you should consult with your advisor early on to agree on deadlines.
- Once you have submitted the thesis electronically, the site will provide a paper approval form that needs to be signed by your advisor. This form goes to CCAS. A copy should also be submitted to Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.
- Accepted theses become the property of the University and are kept on file with Gelman Library.
Some general guidelines for writing a thesis:

- Define a research question.
- Contextualize the topic within existing literature, discussing how it relates to previous research and theory, and what it will contribute.
- Explain your methods and sources of information.
- Present your findings.
- Discuss the theoretical, policy, or other implications of the findings.
- Draw some conclusions.

**Human Subjects Permission**: See the Office of Human Research’s website humanresearch.gwu.edu. If your thesis involves research on living people (such as interviewing, observing, questionnaire, focus group, etc.), you must get IRB approval. The website provides additional details, required CITI training, and access to required forms. For student projects, they may try to process the forms quickly, in several weeks, but recently the process has taken several months in some cases. Your advisor and/or other WGSS faculty can help you figure out what to do. If you fail to obtain Human Research approval, the University may require you to start your thesis all over again, not use any of the data (interviews, etc.) you collected without permission, register and pay again for thesis credits, and other penalties.

**What happens if you need more time?**

If you have finished your coursework and have taken your 6 thesis credits but need more time to finish the thesis, beyond the Spring semester, current CCAS policy permits the following:

- If a student registers for “continuous enrollment” (CE) for the summer and finishes by August 15, the student pays a nominal fee and graduates in August.
- If a student registers for CE for the summer but does not finish by August 15, she/he may register and pay again for CE for Fall, finish within the first 3 weeks of the Fall semester, and graduate in January. Students are usually charged regular tuition rates for 1 credit of Fall or Spring CE.
- If the student needs more time (beyond the first 3 weeks of the Fall semester), she/he registers for “continuing registration” (CR) for the Fall and pays for one credit. The student must file by January 15, to graduate in January.

Be sure to consult your academic advisor and CCAS throughout the process.

**The Comprehensive Examination**  
*Alert: This may be changing. Consult your advisor.*

Each student needs to pass the comprehensive exam in order to complete the MA degree. The MA Comprehensive Exam is offered *twice* a year: in the fall and spring, near the end of each
semester. Students who plan to take the exam should notify the Program Coordinator (wgss@gwu.edu) at least one month (30 days) before the date that the exam is scheduled.

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies faculty and Executive Committee determine the format of the comprehensive exam. It may change, depending on periodic review. In the event of changes, a student may opt to follow either the format in effect when they entered the program or the revised format.

Format:

- It is an open-book, take-home exam.
- Students will be required to answer a total of three questions: one on feminist theory, one on feminist research methods, and one on the student's area of concentration (Public Policy, English, History, etc.).
- There will be a choice of one out of three questions in theory, and one out of three questions in methods. There may not be a choice for the specialty question, but it will be broad enough for each student to answer it on the basis of her/his own program of study.
- There is a maximum length of 1,500 words for each essay. (Faculty readers will be instructed not to read more than that for any one essay.)
- Essays should be clearly typed, double-spaced, and carefully proofread.
- Because this is an open-book exam it is expected that references will include author, title, and date. Direct quotations should include page numbers.
- Direct quotation from sources is permitted, but excessive or lengthy use of direct quotation in a short essay is not advisable.
- Students may begin the exam on a Friday, any time after 9 am. The answers are due by 9:15 am the following Monday. The exam is usually administered via Blackboard.

Purpose and Scope:
The goal of the exam is to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the material. Therefore, essays should include discussion of several relevant sources, not just one or two authors. References to "classic" literature may be appropriate, but we also want to see inclusion of recent literature to demonstrate a grasp of the latest thinking. Specific authors and titles should be cited and discussed in all three essays.

When to Take Comps:
To qualify to take comps, a student must have completed all non-elective courses or be in the process of completing remaining non-elective courses the semester the exam is taken. It is permissible to take comps before finishing a thesis or independent research if all other non-elective courses have been taken, but it is advisable to have completed as many courses as possible, including electives. Students should consult an advisor if they have any questions about when to take the exam.

Academic Integrity:
For comps, as well as all written work for courses, thesis, and independent research, students must comply with the University's Academic Integrity Code. For comps, this means answers must be written in your own words and must represent original responses to the questions. "Re-cycling" your own writing from other sources (previous papers, exams, assignments, etc.) is not allowed.

For Review:
Copies of selected past exam questions are available for your review once you have declared your intention to take the exam in a given semester.

Passing
Students must receive a satisfactory grade on all three questions in order to pass the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies MA comprehensive exam requirement. At the discretion of the faculty, a student may be permitted to re-write one question without officially failing the entire exam. As stipulated in the Bulletin, a student who fails the MA comprehensive exam may apply to the Dean for permission to repeat the exam at the next regularly offered time. Superior achievement is noted (in the student's file in WGSS) when a student earns a "pass with honors" on one or more questions.
Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies MA Thesis Information Sheet
(Revised: August 2019)

The University holds students responsible for following the guidelines and meeting the deadlines specified in the documents listed below. Be sure to read and understand the requirements registration, thesis credits, graduation, etc.

1. Resource documents you should be sure to consult:
   " GW CCAS Graduate Student Handbook for Master’s & Certificate (online link at https://columbian.gwu.edu/graduate-resources)
   " GW Thesis and Dissertations style guide (online at https://library.gwu.edu/etd).
   " See WGSS’s own Guide to Graduate Study in Women’s Studies on what is typically expected in WGSS theses. Some of the information here is also in the Guide.
   " Previous MA theses are available electronically via Gelman Library.

2. Example of Typical CCAS Deadlines: The final copy of the MA thesis, formatted according to GW guidelines, officially approved by the Thesis Advisor and the Reader, usually is due for electronic submission by the following dates (but be sure to verify the dates for the year you are graduating):
   " January 15 for Winter graduation
   " May 15 for Spring graduation.
   " August 15 for Summer graduation.

3. Some Tips for Avoiding Major Headaches:
   " Read the GW guidelines so you don’t miss deadlines, or have to retype/reformat at the last minute.
   " Almost everyone underestimates the time it takes to do the research and write the thesis. Try to be realistic in your planning.
   " In planning your schedule, keep in mind that WGSS faculty, as well as most other GW faculty, are not paid to work with students over the summer (though some may be willing to give students some of their time).
   " If you run into a writing block, feel isolated or overwhelmed, get help by going to the Writing Center and/or getting together with other students working on theses or independent research for feedback and support.

4. Typically, in writing a thesis in the social sciences (humanities may be different), one would:
   " Define a research question.
   " Locate the topic within the existing literature, discussing how it relates to previous research and theory, and what it will contribute.
   " Explain your methods and sources of information.
   " Present your findings.
   " Discuss the theoretical, policy, or other implications of the findings.
   " Draw some conclusions.

5. Human Subjects Permission: See the Graduate Student Handbook and the Office of Human Research website (below). As explained in the GW Graduate Student Handbook, if your thesis involves research on living people (such as interviewing, observing, questionnaire, focus
group, etc.) you must get what is called IRB approval. For more details, required CITI training, and access to forms, go to https://humanresearch.gwu.edu/ and follow instructions. For student projects, they usually try to in a few weeks, but it may take longer. Your advisor and/or other WGSS faculty can help you figure out what to do. As indicated in the Handbook and on the website, if you fail to obtain Human Research approval, the University may require you to start your thesis all over again, not use any of the data (interviews, etc.) you collected without permission, register and pay again for thesis credits, and other penalties. In other words, this is serious!

6. Example of a time line (subject to negotiation with your thesis advisor and reader):

Note: For students taking the new MA Capstone in Spring 2020, Prof. Strader may have a revised timeline for everyone’s drafts.

- Spring, first year: Begin defining a general topic and finding an advisor
- Summer, first year: Background reading; secondary sources; literature search. Usually this would be independent work by the student.
- September-October, second year: In consultation with your thesis advisor, finalize your topic and research strategy. Submit to WGSS the “Thesis Topic Approval” form signed by your thesis advisor and DGS (academic advisor). Initiate IRB review if necessary. (IRB will not approve any research done before submission to the IRB.) Although the IRB tries to process most student applications within 2-3 weeks, some proposals may take 2 months or longer. Allow enough time.
- November - March, second year: Conduct research and begin writing (schedule will vary).
- January – February: Write first draft and submit to advisor. (Alternatively, your thesis advisor might prefer that you submit chapters or sections rather than a full draft)
- March: Revise thesis in response to advisor’s comments.
- April 1: Give second draft to both advisor and reader (Alternatively, your Reader might be involved in reading earlier drafts or may prefer to read only the final draft after it is approved by the thesis advisor.)
- April - Revise second draft. Give revised thesis to advisor & reader.
- May 1 – May 15: Get final approval for any additional revisions. Format and electronically submit thesis https://library.gwu.edu/etd and https://library.gwu.edu/etd/ccas. CCAS requests that you submit before May 15 so that any formatting problems can be fixed. If you wait until May 15 to submit electronically, you risk not graduating until August for any minor problem.
- Modifications to this timeline should be made in negotiation with one's advisor.

7. What happens if you need more time?

If you have finished your coursework and taken your 6 thesis credits but need more time to finish the thesis, beyond the Spring semester, in the past, CCAS policy has permitted the following:

- If a student registers for “continuous enrollment (CE) for the summer and finishes by August 15, the student pays only $35 (amount may change) and graduates in August.
- If a student registers for CE for the summer but does not finish by August 15, she/he may register and pay again for CE for Fall, finish within first 3 weeks of the Fall semester, and graduate in January (policy may change).
If the student needs more time (than the first 3 weeks of the fall semester), she/he registers for “continuing registration” (CR) for the fall semester and pays for one credit. The student must file by January 15, to graduate in January.

These rules can be confusing, so be sure to consult your academic advisor and CCAS. Policies may change so it is always important to check.