

Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies **Senior Work Guidelines and Deadlines** (rev. 10/31/18)

Overview

Majors, including joint majors, are required to complete senior work that is scaffolded by insights from previous GSFS courses. The project may be either a one-semester senior essay or other creative work (GSFS 0700), or a two-semester senior thesis or creative project (GSFS 0710).

GSFS majors (including joint and double majors) will submit the senior work proposal form by March 1. Immediately after spring break, the program chair will notify you of your thesis advisor and will clarify whether you will undertake a one-semester or two-semester project. Please note, senior work advisors are assigned by the program to ensure an even distribution of advisees (and faculty workload). However, this should not prevent you from consulting your advisor or any other faculty member as you work on your project. In conjunction with your advisor you will select a second reader.

Senior work must contain new research, reflect a synthesis of the ideas about gender and/or sexuality developed over a variety of courses, and offer an articulate understanding of how feminist-queer theories have informed the arguments developed. The GSFS senior project provides students the flexibility to produce a formal written document, produce a multi-media project such as a podcast or a movie which is supplemented by an explanatory essay.

The GSFS major is designed to provide students competency in critical race and transnational/national feminisms. Senior work should demonstrate an engagement with these concerns and the ability to communicate complex ideas effectively and persuasively. In addition, senior work should showcase your critical thinking skills as well as your awareness of interdisciplinary knowledge production and methodologies.

All majors will present their findings in a public forum, Senior Work Presentations. The forum provides students with one more opportunity to mobilize the connections between the experiential and theoretical aspects of feminist-queer studies.

Prerequisites for all Senior Work:

All students are expected to have completed GSFS 0320 (theory) and GSFS 0435 (engaged research).

One-Semester Senior Work

The one-semester project is designed to demonstrate your capacity to synthesize and think critically about a topic in a sustained manner. Choose a topic that interests you and that will continue to interest you over the course of the semester. We advise you to consider a topic which has been addressed in at least one of your classes. You can choose to take up a completely new topic, such as sex ed in Zimbabwe, but be aware that you will need to undertake considerable research on your own to familiarize yourself with the topic, scholarship, and the context – all of this work before you start to write a single word.

Think of the one-semester project primarily as all-but data collection. Most students adopt a thematic approach, say studying media images, or focus on a theorist or a person. The single

semester project requires you to conduct research, map out the terrain of existing scholarship, consider methodological issues, and above all situate your ideas through a feminist-queer studies lens. Think of your senior essay as engaging in an ongoing conversation with published work done on your topic as well as ideas generated in the broader field of feminist-queer studies in your GSFS classes.

Portfolio

A key element of feminist knowledge production is to think reflexively and reflectively about your ideas. Toward this end, all senior work will include a portfolio review. The course work in Feminist Engaged Research (GSFS 0435) will include a draft of the portfolio review. Students will assess all the GSFS courses they have taken, scan the syllabi, read essays submitted and think through how the senior work topic has been shaped by and grounded in prior course work. The portfolio review should comprise at least two pages of writing which knits together theories, concerns, insights from various courses and develops how they shape your senior work. This writing could be incorporated in the formal document, either in its entirety or elements used throughout the work to support arguments.

Length: Formal document 20-25 pages; creative project, please consult your advisor.

Two-semester Senior Project

The two-semester project is designed to conduct new and original research and situate it within existing scholarship. It is designed to demonstrate your capacity to synthesize and think critically about a topic in a sustained manner. Be ambitious but wise in choosing your topic and approach to this project. Choose a topic that interests you and that will continue to interest you over the course of two semesters. We advise you to consider a topic which has been addressed in at least one of your classes. You can choose to take up a completely new topic, such as sex ed in Zimbabwe, but be aware that you will need to undertake considerable research on your own to familiarize yourself with the topic, scholarship, and the context – all of this work before you start to write a single word.

Most students adopt a thematic approach, say studying media images, or focus on a theorist or a person. The two-semester project requires you to conduct original research. In the final product you will map out the terrain of existing scholarship, consider methodological issues, and above all situate your ideas through a feminist-queer studies lens.

Portfolio

A key element of feminist knowledge production is to think reflexively and reflectively about your ideas. Toward this end, all senior work will include a portfolio review. The course work in Feminist Engaged Research (GSFS 0435) will include a draft of the portfolio review. Students will assess all the GSFS courses they have taken, scan the syllabi, read essays submitted and think through how the senior work topic has been shaped by and grounded in prior course work. The portfolio review should comprise at least two pages of writing which knits together theories, concerns, insights from various courses and develops how they shape your senior work. This writing could be incorporated in the formal document, either in its entirety or elements used throughout the work to support arguments.

Length: Formal document 35-40 pages; creative project, please consult your advisor.

Defense:

Once you have submitted your senior project, you will work with your advisor and second reader to schedule your oral defense. This is a friendly, professional conversation that lasts about 45 minutes. The conversation centers on your project and provides you an opportunity to reflect on what worked and did not work, to make connections with ideas and concepts that help link your project to the broader arena of feminism and queer activism. Based on the suggestions made at the defense, you may have the opportunity to make one final set of revisions. Keep this in mind as you schedule your defense date.

Following the defense, your faculty readers will write an evaluative letter.

Criteria for Evaluation of Senior Work

1. Bibliography: how well has the student researched the topic? Does the student use appropriate primary and secondary sources? Does the student know where their argument fits into the conversation about the topic?
2. Scope and thoroughness: is the topic appropriately focused and thoroughly considered?
3. Thesis: is the argument clear and persuasive? Is it well supported by evidence?
4. Feminist-queer knowledge production: is the project attentive to interdisciplinary modes of knowledge production? Is the analysis simultaneously attentive to race, class, and other vectors of difference as well as location (local, global, national-rural)?
5. Style: are the ideas in the project well developed, clearly, and without distracting errors?
6. Validity: does the project make a defensible, convincing and illuminating contribution to the study of its topic? Are the interpretations valid?
7. Originality: does the project offer something new, original, creative?
8. Public presentation: how well does the student explain and elaborate their research in public.

Honors

Honors will be awarded to students with a GPA of 3.5 and a thesis grade of B+, high honors to students with a GPA of 3.7 and a thesis grade of A- or A, and highest honors to students with a GPA of 3.8 and a thesis grade of A.

Senior Work Proposal Form

Name

ID

Email

Month and Year of Graduation

Are you a Joint Major? If so, with which department?

Project type:

GSFS 0700 (one semester), critical essay

GSFS 0700 (one semester), creative project

GSFS 0710 (two semester), critical essay

GSFS 0710 (two semester), creative project

Description of proposed project (100 words)

We advise you to consider a topic which has been addressed in at least one of your classes. You can choose to take up completely new topic, such as sex ed in Zimbabwe, but be aware that you will need to undertake considerable research on your own to familiarize with yourself the topic, scholarship, and the context.

Option 1

Option 2

Proposed Advisor

Please take the time to consider which faculty members might be suitable advisors for your project. We will do our best to honor your preferences at the same time as trying to distribute advising fairly across the program.

Joint Majors: You must have one adviser from each department. Please list your top 2 choices for your GSFS advisor. You must also contact your other department to inquire about advisor selection in that department.

Option 1

First Choice

Second Choice.

Option 2

First Choice

Second Choice

Joint Major Senior Work Requirements

The senior work of joint majors must demonstrate in a single project an integration of the two majors that the student has selected. The project will be jointly advised by a faculty member from each of the two relevant program/department.

Joint majors are required to draw up in consultation with their advisors, a contract describing the requirements for their senior project. Such a contract will specify deadlines, citation form, and any other requirements for joint senior work that have been agreed upon by advisors and student.

It is the expectation of the GSFS program that at least one semester of senior work be devoted primarily to the concerns of feminist studies. You do not need to have a GSFS faculty member as a primary advisor, but one must be involved throughout the development of the project to make sure senior work is consistent with GSFS requirements.

Timeline for Senior Work

March 1 of junior year: You will be required to submit the senior work proposal form by March 1. This includes a summary of two potential projects and the names of potential advisors. All students, whether undertaking a senior project, one or two-semester, Fall or Spring, are required to submit the senior work proposal form. All students will be notified of their advisor assignments before Banner registration for the Fall begins.

April of junior year: Register in Banner for your advisor's section of GSFS 0700/0710. Talk with your advisor and develop a reading list for the summer.

November of senior year: If you are undertaking a single semester project in the Spring, register in Banner for your advisor's section of GSFS 0700. Talk with your advisor and develop a reading list for the winter.

Senior Work deadlines are not flexible. These deadlines have been designed to ensure that the faculty has time to schedule an oral defense.

Funding Sources (SRPS)

Up to \$1,200 (Oct. 1, Jan. 25, or Apr. 15 deadlines) and up to \$350 throughout the academic year as funding permits. Applications eligible for the [Hoskin Research Fund](#) (up to \$3,000) will also be reviewed at the three above deadlines.

Overview: SRPS is designed to support expenses associated with senior research projects in 500 or 700 level courses. For AY 2018-19, maximum reimbursement is \$1,200; the average expense request in AY 17-18 was \$1,125 with an average approved amount of \$650. Expenses are reimbursed or charged directly (see the app expense types below) and must occur after your application is submitted.

Selection: Funding will be awarded on the basis of the quality of the application and the availability of funds. Preference will be given to students who do not have access to funds in their major departments. **Please note: you may only be funded through SRPS once. If you have multiple senior work projects you must choose one.** Students who will have senior status during their project dates may apply. If you have questions about your eligibility please contact us.

Faculty Endorsement: Students must have a statement of support from the faculty advisor for the project and be enrolled in the appropriate independent study and/or thesis course during the relevant semester(s) of work. The online application submission is also sent to your project advisor, who can then reply to uro@middlebury.edu with their endorsement.

More information on the types of expenses approved and other details, see <http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/resources/uro/funding/srps> or go/srps

IRB Approval

If you are conducting research that involves working with living human beings (field work, ethnography, etc), you may need to get permission from the Institutional Review Board before you begin.

Research that involves interviewing other people, distributing surveys, conducting experiments on people, or even observing particular people in their daily lives is normally designated as "research on human subjects," and all such research requires some level of approval from the IRB.

The IRB process can take some time. As soon as your assigned an advisor, if your project engages with human subjects apply for IRB approval.

You can find more information at <http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/resources/irb> or [go/irb](#)

Faculty Advisors

Laurie Essig is interested in race and gender in the US, sexualities in the US and Russia (including heterosexualities), and the effects of economic systems, particularly neoliberal capitalism, on our bodies and our desires. She is trained as a sociologist and most of her research is based in fieldwork as well as cultural analysis, Laurie also has some experience with translating academic research into more public media such as blogs. Her latest book is here: <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520300491/love-inc>

Sujata Moorti's scholarship has focused on media as one of the key sites in which social formations and meanings are produced, contested, and negotiated. Trained in the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies her scholarship centers on the co-constitutive productions of gender, race, sexuality and caste. Her areas of expertise are sexual violence; transnational and postcolonial feminist formations; and cinema. For more information see: <https://sujatamoorti.wordpress.com/>

Carly Thomsen's scholarship focuses on liberal and leftist social movements and activism, particularly that of LGBTQ, reproductive justice, and food justice groups. She is especially concerned with how ideas become dominant among liberals, progressives, and leftists, including, for example, the metronormative production of rural place as anachronistic, simple, backwards. Trained in the interdisciplinary fields of feminist and queer studies and with a background in rhetoric, Thomsen engages with disability studies, critical race theory, queer Marxist theory, and critical geography. For more information, see: <http://www.carlythomsen.com/>

Affiliate Faculty

Cheryl Faraone

Kevin Moss

Baishakhi Taylor

Catharine Wright