WGSS Senior Project Guidelines

- The WGSS senior project is required of all majors and minors. It is a one-semester, one credit capstone project, typically done in the Spring semester of senior year after completion of WGSS 190 Doing Feminist Research during the Fall semester.

- Project topics are developed from the student’s elective course cluster. In WGSS 190 students begin to formulate their specific topics and create their proposals for the project. The WGSS Director is available to discuss topic ideas.

- Students will be responsible for forming a committee of two faculty mentors (a first and second reader) who must be from two different departments. In general both mentors should be full-time Tufts faculty members. At least one must be a full-time Tufts faculty member.

- A project can take many forms. It can be a research paper at least 30 pages or a creative project in a visual or performing arts medium with a written component of at least ten pages explaining the critical or theoretical context for the project and providing an analysis of its content. It could also be an activist project, with required 10-page written component as stated above. All projects require a critical bibliography.

- A WGSS Senior Honors Thesis option is available for eligible students. To do the Thesis option students should consult with the Director of the WGSS Program during junior year.

- All graduating seniors are required to present their projects at a public event at the end of the Spring semester.

Timeline

- **Student begins to formulate a specific project topic** as part of WGSS 190 Doing Feminist Research during the Fall semester. As the specific topic is developed the student considers appropriate faculty mentors with the advice and approval of the WGSS director. Students should identify and contact two mentors by the end of fall term. The WGSS Director can assist in this process and must approve the choices.

- **Student registers for WGSS 193 Senior Project** (or WGSS Senior Thesis 198 fall/199 spring for a Senior Honors Thesis option).

- **During the first week of Spring semester** (or the second week at the absolute latest) the student arranges an organizational meeting with faculty mentors to develop goals for the project and to establish a specific timeline for completion, including due dates for handing in drafts, completing the final version of the project, and meeting for an oral defense. At this organizational meeting the student submits a research proposal with a working title, thesis statement, and description of proposed research, including the specific feminist questions the project will address.

- **At this time the WGSS Senior Project/Thesis Mentor Agreement Form** must be submitted to the WGSS office. Be sure that the due dates are established to allow enough time for mentors to read and comment on the draft, for the student to revise the draft in response to their comments, and for the student to have the finished project handed in one week before the oral defense meeting.

  - **First Mentor:** The student should stay in contact with the first mentor throughout the semester. At least 3-4 meetings or substantive email communications are expected.

  - **Second Mentor:** The student should consult with and keep the second mentor informed of progress throughout the semester. At least one meeting at the start of the term is expected, in addition to the defense meeting at the end of the semester.

- **No later than the 10th week of the spring semester the student hands in a draft of the project** to both mentors for comments and recommended changes or additions.

- **Mentors return the draft with** comments and recommended changes or additions by the date agreed upon at their organizational meeting, usually at the end of one week.
• The student revises the draft in response to both mentors’ comments and hands in this final version of the project one week before the scheduled oral defense.

• **The Oral Defense meeting must take place by the last day of reading period.** This one-hour meeting is an opportunity for student and mentors together to discuss and assess achievements and reflect on areas for improvement. The faculty mentors jointly grade the project at that time and complete the Senior Project Grade Sheet, which must be turned into the WGSS Office by one of the faculty mentors as soon as possible after the meeting. Each Faculty Mentor must also turn in a separate Direct Assessment Form at that time.

• The student must submit a copy of the final version of the project to the WGSS office at this time. The student must also complete a Student Assessment Form and return it to the WGSS Office.

• The Director of WGSS will enter the WS 193 Senior Project grade into ISIS.

**Public Project Presentations**

The public presentation of projects is a requirement for successful completion of WGSS 193. This event is open to faculty, friends, and relatives and usually scheduled for the last of classes. The specific date and time can vary. Students are expected to attend the entire presentation portion of the event and are invited to a reception afterwards.

Students must be able to explain the ideas and approaches at stake in the project in abstract form. If appropriate, students are encouraged to display parts of the project as illustration.

Presentation advice:

- Introduce your project and identify/explain what part you will be presenting. Explain how the piece of your work you are presenting relates to the whole finished project. What questions did you ask? What did you learn from your research? Did the final project turn out as you had conceptualized it? What is meaningful to you about the ideas you explored and what you accomplished?

- Explain how your project is interdisciplinary (which disciplines does it integrate) and what methods you used in doing the work. Think about next steps or how you would take your research further in the field of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

- Plan to take questions.

**Important Note: The Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

If you are conducting surveys or doing research with human subjects, you must get approval or exemption from the Tufts Institutional Review Board. Research with human subjects can include surveys, interviewing, focus groups, and participant observation. The Tufts IRB is a panel of faculty and staff that reviews all research involving human subjects conducted by Tufts community members. The job of the committee is to ensure that research is carried out in a way that assures the protection and privacy of participants. Getting an exemption or an expedited review requires filling in forms provided on the IRB website, and we recommend you contact the IRB office first to describe your project and ask what kind of review they recommend you request (i.e. what kind of paperwork you need to fill out). Receiving approval or exemption from the IRB is an essential part of conducting research with human subjects; without it you will not be permitted to begin your research. The process is straightforward and painless, however, and will help you develop and enrich your sense of ethical research practice and study design. More information is available at http://www.tufts.edu/central/research/IRB/index.htm.