

Global Learning Initiative
Women's and Gender Studies

October 17, 2010

Learning Outcomes:

Our intent is to more clearly articulate the underlying connections between global engagement, environmental sustainability, and diversity, particularly since these kinds of intersections are central to the field of Women's and Gender Studies. We have found that it is impossible to truly study one without engaging the other. These issues are already at the core of what Women's and Gender Studies does, and they are at the core of our faculty expertise which makes us a leader at NAU in addressing NAU's commitment to diversity. Our outcome goals for this project include the following:

- 1) Graduating majors and minors in WGS who have a clear understanding of ways that gender, race, ethnicity, class, citizenship, sexuality, and environmental injustices are effected by one another. A parallel outcome for this is to have students taking WGS classes leave with an understanding of some of these issues—each class will have a different focus and emphasis—thus fostering an awareness amongst students across the university from a wide range of interdisciplinary backgrounds and interests.
- 2) Graduating majors and minors in WGS who can articulate current issues facing diverse people globally and the way these issues impact and are impacted by systems of globalization that exploit, denigrate, and disrupt sustainable, just, and equitable ways of life, the land, and all life forms living in that place.
- 3) Graduating majors and minors in WGS who have ideas about ways they can act in the world that will contribute to changes so that they can put what they learn about the importance of environmental sustainability and the voices and experiences of diverse people into practice in their careers, their activism, and their individual life choice as global citizens.
- 4) Graduating majors and minors in WGS who have an understanding of outcomes 1-3 in relation to histories of oppression and exploitation globally as well as in relation to current issues facing communities today both locally and globally.

Strategies:

In order to achieve these outcomes, the following strategies have been presented to the Steering Committee for WGS in October and dialogue will continue to ensure about the best way to strategize for these goals.

- 1) Encourage majors and minors to participate in study abroad programs that aid in an understanding of the above detailed goals/outcomes.
- 2) Encourage faculty to develop and market study abroad programs, such as the program Dr. Burford developed in Cuernavaca, that would nurture students' growth in understanding feminisms in a transnational arena.
- 3) Build a database of curriculum, from the reading list that we have compiled and attached below, that faculty can draw from to incorporate learning about these interconnected issues into their syllabi both for upper-division courses as well as introductory courses. This will affect not only majors and minors in WGS but students across the campus, thus supporting the university-wide emphasis on global learning.
- 4) Discuss the possibility of incorporating new assessments into courses such as a final narrative reflection on these issues, smaller assignments throughout the semester, and additional questions imbedded for students to reflect on in their course evaluations.
- 5) Consciously incorporate issues of environmental sustainability and global diversity into curriculum, drawing on knowledge of these issues from within our faculty and our own expertise, which includes a new faculty member, Dr. Julie Shutten, whose work on the environment, gender, and sexuality is central. Thus, dialogue and conversation about how to further these goals will continue within our community of instructors in WGS.

Assessment:

The following is a list of how we hope to articulate and demonstrate outcomes:

- 1) We propose that as part of the Senior capstone students have a project that addresses these issues so that they can apply what they have learned to a current issue. This project will be evaluated based on the criteria listed under outcomes and thus assessed in this way. It will be presented at the graduation SBS poster session, which would then engage other students across campus regarding these issues and foster dialogue.
- 2) The above mentioned project will be assessed according to rubrics that assess the students' ability to look at complex interconnections between global issues, diversity, and environment. It will include knowledge of history, current events, and current action and activism that is being done toward living in a more sustainable—which we define as an equal and just world.
- 3) We propose adding the following several questions to student evaluations for relevant courses. If these are not incorporated in the numeric format of

evaluations, we propose that they be part of a reflection where students can write about what they have learned anonymously:

---I have a better understanding of environmental injustices happening in the world today and how these impact diverse communities.

---I have gained knowledge about issues facing diverse people on a global scale.

---I have an understanding of what is being done to improve environmental sustainability and gender, economic justice for people locally and globally.

Programming Evaluation and Reflection

In addition to the fact that our courses already have a strong emphasis in global diversity, our current programming reveals us as a leader concerning this issues on campus.

River Trip—

Our program currently offers an annual 1 unit course, entitled “women on the river,” during which students have the opportunity to travel to the Salt or Colorado Rivers and learn how to experience and understand the local natural landscape. This is done all through the vantage point of a raft and camping. We have female students think about the ways that the land can be healing and empowering, and how, as women, we can connect with the land and each other without depending on the guidance or experience of men. The trip is usually accompanied by readings from Ann Walka’s poetry, which is fitting as she writes about this region.

Upon reflection on this programming as it relates to the Global Learning Initiative, we would like to propose that in addition to Walka’s poetry further context/curriculum be added to this trip so that Native women’s perspectives about the land will diversify the experience and knowledge that the students take from the trip. We find this particularly important because appreciation for the land and environment should really be accompanied by knowledge of the colonial histories of violence as well as current Indigenous perspectives about the land. Reading selected poems works by local Indigenous women such as Tohono Od’ham writer Ofelia Zepeda’s *Ocean Power*, Hopi writer Wendy Rose’s, *Itch Like Crazy* or *Going to War with All my Relations*, and/or Diné writer Luci Tapahonso’s *Blue Horses Rush In* would enrich the experience for students so that they may learn more about the relationship between their own identities and experiences and Native American women’s perspectives about the land, its history, and their relationships to it. Dr. Burford plans to collect poems from these works that would work well for this proposal and offer them as potential additions to the current curriculum.

National Coming Out Day—

Currently, the Women’s and Gender Studies Program organizes and puts together the programming for National Coming Out Day. Last year, in October of 2009, this event included a campus wide event in which we silk-screened t-shirts that stated

“True Blue Queer” or “True Blue Ally” as a way for people to come out and support either as queer students or as allies. We also had an open mic (where people shared their stories), music by queer musicians, and various tables set up by community members such as PFLAG (Parents of Lesbians and Gays). Later that night we screened a film (*Milk*). This day-long celebration includes participation and organizational leadership from a diverse student population both in terms of sexuality and ethnicity, and it emphasizes the importance of sustaining a campus climate that welcomes and provides support for students and faculty who are marginalized due to social constructions of heterosexuality.

Brief Review and Suggestions for WGS Curricular Revisions:

As part of our work for the Global Learning Initiative, we reviewed both our Undergraduate and Graduate curricular offerings. Having closely reviewed our curriculum, we are very pleased to report back that global and ethnic diversity are central philosophical pillars that hold together the intellectual and political work we do throughout our program. Our curricular offerings clearly speak to WGS’s commitment to diversity and equity issues. Using feminist pedagogy in all our classes we encourage our students to become aware of how power is created, reproduced, and exercised through the construction of gendered differences. In offering a wide range of courses on gender, we stress the importance of identifying cultural, social, sexual, and political nuances which shift over time and space, instead of presenting a simple homogeneity of women’s and men’s experiences. In short, we aim to expose students to a gendered world, even as we historicize gender as an analytical category, and this shall continue to be a thematic focus of our classes in the future.

Our curricular offerings foster a careful engagement with issues of diversity locally, nationally, regionally and globally. In suturing the global non-western, with the ethnically marginalized voices among the US based women of color, our course offerings at once speak to the equity concerns of the global and domestic constituencies identified within the diversity initiatives at NAU. A short summary of the curricular highlights will demonstrate the underlying commitment of WGS to diversity issues in its most comprehensive understanding.

Ethnic Diversity:

WGS 191: Women, Gender Identity and Ethnicity: This is one of our core classes required for all WGS majors and minors. The central focus of this class is on exploring how gender identities are centrally shaped through one’s ethnic locations. It is a class that is cross listed with Ethnic Studies Program. The class counts for Liberal Studies credit and Ethnic Diversity credit, therefore, we attract students from across the campus into this class. On an average we have more than students enroll in multiple sections of this course in a given academic year.

We revised the collective reading list for this class. Dr. Burford conducted a workshop with current WGS Instructors who regularly offer the class for us. We are pleased to report back that as part of this grant and to better ensure the coverage of environmental

sustainability. Drs. Burford and Ahluwalia have put together a short list of suggested readings that could be profitably added to the course readings.

Transnational/ Global Feminisms;

WGS 350w: History of Feminisms and Feminist Historiography: This course introduces students to numerous issues and debates that have animated feminist movements and activism across the globe from the nineteenth century to contemporary times. The course emphasizes the historical variations in feminist theorizing and organizing across time and space. In this class students learn to appreciate and understand how competing variables of race, class, ethnicity, sexual preference, nationality, and religion have differently determined women's locations within cultures. Instead of imposing models, blue-prints or templates borrowed from dominant histories, the course readings highlight the diversity of historical experiences that has shaped and continues to shape gendered structures of power and privilege around the world.

Graduate Courses: Students applying for the WGS certificate are required to complete TWO CORE classes that are constitutive of the graduate certificate requirement along with classes that focus on Ethnic Diversity, Global Diversity and Gender focused classes. The two core classes emphasize the importance of placing local understanding within a larger global context.

WGS 600: Introduction to Feminist Theory: This core class exposes students to the rich and vibrant scholarship on feminist theories from around the world. While the western feminist canon is closely covered through the readings and discussions. An equally important and foundational emphasis of this class is to introduce students to the many challenges to the mainstream western canonical feminist thinking, especially in the writings and works of women of color theorists from around the world. As a core class, diversity of gendered experiences are explored and studied carefully in this class.

In the future we plan to include a section on Eco-feminism, with the intention to more clearly include the focus on environmental sustainability, which is an important component of the Global Learning Initiative Grant. Faculty will be encouraged to draw upon the readings compiled on the topic. We also have Professor Shuten joining WGS faculty, and we will draw upon her expertise to ensure an up to date coverage of feminist issues as they relate to environment and gender politics.

WGS 601: Topics in Women's Studies: Given this is a topics class, it has been used also to highlight diverse gender and sexual experiences of people around the world. Dr. Ahluwalia's course, "Sex, Politics, and Reproduction," focused centrally on people's reproductive experiences in a largely racist and economically unequal world. Dr. Burford will offer her class with a focus on sexual minorities around the world. In this class too we tie together both the local and global component of diverse human experiences. Dr. Burford's class will be incorporating connections between queer theory and ecological justice and sustainability (see the attached list of resources for more on this).

Through the other classes that students take to complete their graduate certificate in

WGS, the appreciation of complex and different histories and experiences are centrally infused into the way our students and faculty think about women's issues.

Conclusion:

Given the protocol for curricular changes requires departmental review and discussion, the above summary and suggestions was presented to the WGS Steering Committee in the beginning of the Fall semester. Based on departmental review, efforts to infuse some of the suggested changes will be undertaken to implement the goal to embellish our strong commitment to issues of global and ethnic diversity along with promoting an understanding of environmental sustainability, especially in its gendered manifestations.

In addition to these titles which are being considered as part of our curriculum revisions, we have a file of resources on eco-feminism that we are working into our curriculum and our reserve file for teaching WGS 191.

Women as Australian Citizens: Underlying Histories (Sustainability & the Environment). Eds. Philippa Crawford and Philippa Maddern. University of Melbourne Press, 2001.

--deals with constructions of citizenship based on ethnicity.

Gopinath, Gayatri. *Impossible Desires: Queer Desires and South Asian Public Cultures*.

Mellor, Mary. *Feminism and Ecology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997.

Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism and Queer Times*. Duke, 2007.

Puri, Jyoti. *Woman, Body, and Desire in Postcolonial India*. Routledge, 1999.

Kapur, Ratna. *Erotic Justice: law and the politics of new postcolonialism*. Routledge, 2005.

--use this for grad class—immigration human trafficking, sexuality, global and sustaining of life—food, sustenance.

Sarker, Sonita. *Sustainable Feminisms*. JAI Press, 2007.

Sellers, Stephanie. *Native American Women's Studies*. Peter Lang, 2008.

Silliman, Jael. *Dangerous Intersections: Feminism, Population, and the Environment*. Zed Books, 2006.

Urban, Jessica LeAnn. *Nation, Immigration, and Environmental Security*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

"Foundational Texts"

Birkeland, J. (1993). Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice. In Gaard, G. (Ed.) *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (13-59). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Griffin, S. (1978). *Woman and nature: The roaring inside her*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Merchant, C. (1980). *The death of nature: Women, ecology and the scientific revolution*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Peterson, M. J. and Peterson, T. (1996). Ecology: Scientific, Deep and Feminist. *Environmental Values*, 5(2)123-146.

Warren, K. (2000). *Ecofeminist philosophy: A western perspective on what it is and why it matters*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.

Women/Nature and Animals

Adams, C. (2000). *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory (10th Anniversary Edition)*. New York: Continuum.

Adams, C. (1993). The feminist traffic in animals. In Gaard, G. (Ed.) *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (195-218). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Donovan, J. (1993). Animal rights and feminist theory. In Gaard, G. (Ed.) *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (167-194). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Gruen, L. (1993). Dismantling Oppression: An analysis of the connection between women and animals. In Gaard, G. (Ed.) *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (60-90). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Nature as Feminist Space

Alaimo, S. (2000). Undomesticated ground: Recasting nature as feminist space. (pp. 87-187) Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Gaard, G. (1997). Toward a Queer Ecofeminism. *Hypatia* 12(1).

Merchant, C. (1990). Ecofeminism and feminist theory. In I. Diamond & G. Orenstein (Eds.), *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (pp. 100-105). San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Plumwood, V. (1991). Nature, self, and gender: Feminism, environmental philosophy and the critique of rationalism. *Hypatia* 6(1).

Sandilands, C. (1997). Mother earth, the cyborg, and the queer: Ecofeminism and (more) questions of Identity. *NWSA Journal*, 9(2) 18-40.

Quinby, L. (1990). Ecofeminism and the politics of resistance. In I. Diamond & G. Orenstein (Eds.), *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (pp. 122-127). San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Ecofeminism and Earth Based Spirituality

Silko, L. M. (1977). Ceremony. New York: Penguin Books.

Starhawk (2005). *Earth path: Grounding your spirit in the rhythms of nature*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Starhawk (1990). Power, Authority, and Mastery: Ecofeminism and Earth-based Spirituality. In I. Diamond & G. Orenstein (Eds.), *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (pp. 73-86). San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

