ABOUT THE PROGRAM

In the women’s, gender and sexuality studies (WGS) program, students engage theories of feminism, gender and sexuality; the diversity of women’s experiences and representations, past and present; and social movements in the United States and around the globe. Classes address the extensive research on women, gender, sexuality and feminism that has grown during the past 50 years, as well as historical and cross-cultural knowledge that recognizes the intersections of gender and race, class, religion, sexuality, ethnicity, age, ability and nationality. Research and analysis, critical thinking, creative problem solving and leadership are all involved in the study of women, gender and sexuality.

What makes the program distinctive?

Brandeis’ women’s, gender and sexuality studies program brings together faculty and students from across the university. The range of disciplines represented by WGS professors reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the study of women, gender and sexuality from the humanities to the sciences, from the creative arts to public policy, and from the classroom to the community. Students draw on the program to make knowledge and create change through research projects, internships and community activism.

FAST FACTS

Current number of majors and minors: 31

Number of faculty: 20

Can you minor in this program? Yes

Emphasis within the major: interdisciplinary study

Popular second majors:
English, politics, sociology

Website:
brandeis.edu/programs/wgs
ACADEMICS AND RESEARCH

The research and teaching interests of WGS faculty combine the best aspects of disciplinary focus with interdisciplinary methodologies and insights. Faculty come from the disciplines of African and Afro-American studies, American studies, anthropology, classics, English, economics, German, health and social policy, Hispanic studies, history, Latin American and Latino studies, law and social policy, Near Eastern and Judaic studies, philosophy, politics, sociology and South Asian studies. All WGS faculty are committed to the study of women, gender and sexuality.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Internships
Students have the opportunity to do internships around the world. Locations have included Boston, Boulder, Colo., Costa Rica, the Sudan, India, Ghana and Haiti. Hailey M. ’15 spent 10 months as an intern and nine months as an employee of NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts, a grassroots advocacy organization that fights to expand access to reproductive rights and services in Massachusetts. “Working at NARAL taught me that all modes of political influence must work together to create an inclusive, effective social movement. After 10 months, my internship led to a full-time paid job as an organizer, and I learned how an advocacy organization works from the inside out. I learned things I could never have learned from a textbook.”

Senior thesis
For her senior thesis, Victoria J. ’15 conducted a historical analysis of institutional support for sexual violence, outlining best practices for the American college campus. “My research on college campus sexual violence was inspired and informed by my own participation in Brandeis’ vibrant community of student activists — many of whom I met in the WGS department! My peers and the dedicated faculty and staff of the department relentlessly supported my personal activism, my academic research and the ways they often intersected.”

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Distinguished faculty
Professor Bernadette Brooten, recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, is the founder and director of the Brandeis Feminist Sexual Ethics Project, and she heads a team of scholars, activists, artists and policy analysts who are disentangling the nexus of slavery, religion, women and sexuality. University Professor Anita Hill teaches courses on gender, race, social policy and legal history. Her book “Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race and Finding Home” (Beacon Press, 2011) combines the study of commercial and anti-discrimination law with an examination of culture and society to address the 2008 foreclosure crisis and its ongoing impact. Associate Professor Harleen Singh works on questions concerning history, politics and identity and their intersection with literary analysis, film and feminist theory while including source material as diverse as popular song and comics. Her book “The Rani of Jhansi: Gender, History and Fable in India” (Cambridge University Press, 2014) interprets the conflicting, mutable images of an historical icon as they change over time in literature, film, history and popular culture.

AFTER BRANDEIS

Diverse career fields
Recent WGS alumni have gone on to work as a community outreach specialist for a domestic violence shelter, a health care associate for Planned Parenthood, a legal associate for a New York law firm and a counselor at a Boston-area hospital. Many students also go on to pursue graduate-level degrees.

WGS and social justice
While at Brandeis, Supreetha Gubbala ’12 reviewed and oversaw all gender-specific HIV research and conducted a research study on the reproductive health needs of HIV-positive women in Congolese refugee camps in northern Rwanda. Now as a first-year medical student at University of Massachusetts Medical School, she applies her social justice focus to better understand the effects of trauma on local Worcester refugees and asylum children as a part of the specialized Global Health Pathway program. She reflected, “The women’s and gender studies program at Brandeis provided me with a strong foundation in the principles of social justice and inspired me to apply those principles when addressing health problems plaguing both underserved and vulnerable populations in the world around me.”

“It would be impossible to adequately articulate the profound impact that the WGS program at Brandeis had on me. My WGS courses were by far the most intellectually challenging and riveting and the ones in which I had the most growth. I was consistently blown away by professors who are brilliant, approachable and supportive. My learning undoubtedly extended beyond the classroom. The WGS faculty and staff tirelessly advocate for students, and I found in them mentors, activists and friends.”

Amalia B. ’14