

GWSS SENIOR PROJECT COMPLETION GUIDELINES

Project Overview & Frequently Asked Questions

The GWSS Senior Project is the capstone of your studies in the department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies (GWSS) and in the College of Liberal Arts (CLA). A CLA requirement for graduation, the senior project provides you with the opportunity to conduct independent research with the assistance of a faculty mentor or to reflect on an internship you are completing, while part of a writing community composed of your peers. The project serves as an opportunity for you to demonstrate analytic and conceptual skills gleaned over the course of your GWSS education, as well an understanding of the modes of inquiry and feminist thought that are characteristic of the field.

The project is open in focus and medium (to some extent; see more below) in terms of what you might produce to satisfy the GWSS Senior Project requirements, which includes a 3/4/5-level 3-credit course **AND** the 1-credit course, GWSS 4108. Your project might take on one of the following forms:

- A substantial research paper of approximately 20-25 pages that makes an independent contribution to scholarship. The paper will demonstrate mastery of the conventions of academic writing that are relevant to the topic, including bibliography and footnotes or endnotes. Most students choose this option.
- A written account of a semester-long internship or service learning experience explaining what it involved, your part in it, and what you learned from the experience. Your paper must include a substantial analytic section linking your internship or service learning experience to your academic study in GWSS.
- An original, substantive creative project with a sound, cohesive accompanying paper explaining your intention and process in creating that project. The accompanying paper should explain why the creative option was chosen, what your objectives were in producing it, and how the project contributes to GWSS scholarship. The length of the accompanying paper will be determined by your faculty instructor in consultation with you.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What's the process for completing the requirements for the GWSS Senior Project?

In GWSS, we believe that students benefit from a senior project that allows them to conduct independent research on a topic they're passionate about within a community of faculty mentors and peer-scholars that will support and elevate their work. We think of the process for completion of the GWSS Senior Project as having four main arms:

1. Registration and successful completion of a 3/4/5xxx-level GWSS course (or a 3-credit Independent Study) which is topically aligned with your senior project scope;
2. Registration and successful completion of GWSS 4108, a 1-credit course which provides a writing community to majors completing their projects;
3. A signed contract between you and a faculty mentor who has agreed to give feedback on your project's progress and completion; and
4. A rich, thoughtful, and analytical senior project that has been completed to GWSS and CLA standards.

Students will often choose their faculty member to be the instructor leading the 3/4/5xxx-level class that they register for as part of the senior project requirements or, if choosing to do an Independent Study, select a faculty member whose research interests mirror the students'

topic area. Check out our website for information on faculty members' interests or make an appointment with the GWSS Academic Advisor to get some suggestions. You can obtain a copy of the student/instructor contract here (<http://bit.ly/1WAWk3R>), from the GWSS 4108 instructor, or the GWSS Academic Advisor. **All completed contracts must be returned to your GWSS 4108 instructor by the end of the third week of the semester in which you are completing the project; September 18 (Fall 2015), February 5 (Spring 2016).** For further information, please contact your GWSS 4108 instructor or the Academic Advisor (gwssadv@umn.edu).

2. How will GWSS 4108 be structured and how will it contribute to my research and writing process?

GWSS 4108 will allow you to work among your peers in a research and writing community as you progress through the multiple stages of your senior project. The class will meet approximately one hour per week and will be led by a GWSS instructor (separate from your faculty mentor) who will help guide you through the logistics of the senior project from start to finish. In GWSS 4108, you can expect to engage in writing workshops with your peers, conversations around your own positionality and social location within your site of study, and to attain general assistance and encouragement in achieving project goals along the way.

3. I'm double majoring in GWSS and another program within CLA. Do I need to complete senior projects in both majors?

No. If you opt to complete a senior project in your second major, you do not need to complete one in GWSS. Please inform the GWSS Academic Advisor (gwssadv@umn.edu) as soon as possible if you choose this route. If your senior project in your second major has a strong emphasis in GWSS, you are welcome to join GWSS 4108 for the writing community of academically-aligned students working on their own senior projects. We encourage it!

4. I'm completing a Bachelor of Individualized Studies (BIS), an Individually Designed Interdepartmental Major (IDIM), or an Inter-College Program (ICP) with a strong concentration in GWSS. Can I join GWSS 4108?

Yes! BIS, IDIM, and ICP students whose work is located within the realm of GWSS are welcome to join GWSS 4108.

5. When should I complete my senior project requirement?

Most students complete the senior project during their last year of coursework. You should have completed most of the requirements for the GWSS major before registering for GWSS 4108. In order to register for the course, you must be either a junior or senior. If you have further questions about your eligibility, please contact the GWSS Academic Advisor (gwssadv@umn.edu) or the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Tracey Deutsch (tdeutsch@umn.edu).

6. What does the timeline of a typical senior project look like?

Before the start of the semester:

- Start thinking about your potential project ideas and consider how your GWSS coursework to date may influence its evolution. You might also consider talking with a favorite faculty member, the GWSS Academic Advisor, or the GWSS Director of Undergraduate Studies for guidance.

- Register for the 3/4/5xxx-level 3-credit course in which you will write your senior project, as well as GWSS 4108.

By the first two weeks of the semester:

- Meet with your faculty mentor to discuss your vision for the senior project and confirm they would like to work alongside you.
- Discuss preliminary ideas for your project with your faculty mentor and, if necessary, do some research to further develop your potential topic.
- Start meeting with your 4108 class and outline a direction for the project, including what goals you'd like to achieve, what questions you are asking, what your sources will be, what findings you expect to uncover, what you foresee its contribution being to the field.

By the third week of the semester:

- You and your faculty mentor should both sign the instructor-student contract (<http://bit.ly/1WAWk3R>) and return it to your GWSS 4108 instructor by the end of the third week of the semester.
- You should have a clearly defined and focused topic at this point.
- Consider early on in your 4108 process whether or not your project might include research on human subjects (i.e. interviews, observation, etc.) and meet with your instructor to discuss the possibility of requiring approval and training from the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Throughout the semester:

- Work with your faculty mentor, 4108 instructor, and peers to better hone and focus both your research and writing.
- Workshop your drafts with your peers in 4108 and meet regularly with your faculty mentor so that the project evolves with their assistance.
- Notify your faculty mentor and 4108 instructor if your research is pulling you in any direction that might be different than your original topic. This can sometimes occur and it might be worth pursuing or it might not be a possibility due to time constraints. Keep communication open with your mentor and your instructor so that you know you're on the right path.

In the last weeks of the semester & into the finals period:

- Present your work in a final 4108-themed event that includes your peers and invited guests from GWSS.
- Submit your final project to your faculty mentor and electronic copies to your GWSS 4108 instructor, the GWSS Academic Advisor (gwssadv@umn.edu) and to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Tracey Deutsch (tdeutsch@umn.edu).
- Complete the [permission form](#) to have your project added to the GWSS Digital Archive and return it with a copy of your final paper to gwss@umn.edu or 425 Ford Hall. As a part of the archive, your project will inspire and inform future generations of GWSS majors and learners!

7. How do I prepare for the senior project?

The process for the GWSS senior project provides a structure for students to follow in order to complete large-scale research projects over the course of a semester. While it's not

required that you come to the course knowing what your project will cover, it doesn't hurt to attend your first classes, as well as the first meeting with your faculty mentor, with some initial ideas so that you can hit the ground running. Consider the following tips:

- Get some research experience.
 - Take courses that introduce you to interdisciplinary feminist research skills and methods at the 4xxx & 5xxx levels.
 - Consult the Course Guide, speak with one of your GWSS instructors, and/or consult the Undergraduate Studies Office to seek out research-based classes of interest.
- Consider potential topics in advance.
 - Create a list of GWSS topics that have resonated with you over your coursework or that you wished you could further pursue.
 - Think about GWSS-related topics or fields of study that you haven't been able to really engage in coursework (due to scheduling issues or not having a course covering that topic here at the U), but that you're interested in.
 - Talk to a current or past instructor who taught a class you enjoyed or whose research mirrors your own interests. Attend this meeting prepared to discuss potential areas you're curious about pursuing for your senior project. Chances are, they'll be able to go off your initial ideas and help you better hone a focus.
 - Ask a research librarian about available resources related to potential topics.
 - Look to events you enjoy or your favorite news and information sources that cover topics that excite or inspire you.
- Identify good examples of feminist scholarly writings or projects/events happening in your communities that might lead you down different roads of inquiry.
 - Take note of essays and books that you find especially well researched and written. Refer to these examples as you develop your paper or project.
 - Look at examples of successful senior projects completed here at the U. Previous years' papers are available in the Undergraduate Studies Office and will soon be available online through a GWSS Digital Archive.
 - Keep an eye out for events, community actions, and professional opportunities that might inspire you to pursue a creative or internship-based project.

8. When do I need to have a clear topic identified for my project?

When you and your faculty mentor sign the student/instructor contract, you should have a clear topic in place. We recommend that students decide on a specific focus no later than the third week of the semester; September 18 (Fall 2015), February 5 (Spring 2016).

9. How is the Senior Project evaluated?

The project and the 3-credit 3/4/5xxx-level course will be evaluated by your faculty mentor. Your grade for 4108 will be based on your participation and engagement in the class, as well as the process and final product of the project itself. If you are a summa student, please see the guidelines for writing a summa thesis for further information.

10. Still have questions? Make an appointment!

The GWSS Academic Advisor is waiting to hear from you to respond to any further questions. This is a significant requirement for the major, so make sure you're clear on the process and

have the answers you need. There's no question too small! Contact the GWSS Academic Advisor at gwssadv@umn.edu or 612-624-6006.