

PROPOSAL FOR A  
WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM  
AT S.F.U.

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## WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

### I Rationale

The Royal Commission Report on the Status of Women in Canada has clearly documented that there are discrepancies in equality between men and women particularly when occupation, education, income, political power and authority are taken as indicators of status. These inequities have occurred in other societies and other periods of history, and programs investigating this phenomenon and examining it in a systematic and academically rigorous manner are developing in a number of places.

The first women's studies course in North America was offered in 1965 at the Free University of Seattle. The first attempt to influence traditional curricula at established universities occurred after the 1969 Cornell Conference on Women when a group of female faculty members devised a course entitled "The Evolution of Female Personality" in order to examine the history of women, to present various theories on socialization and sexual development and to ask questions about the nature and role of women. Adequate treatment of these topics necessitated going outside the bounds of traditional academic disciplines. (For example History largely deals with public figures and events. Unless this context is changed, the experience and lives of women inevitably remain invisible).

The Clearing House Press reports that more than one thousand colleges now offer women's studies courses and that more than eighty colleges and universities have women's studies programs. These range from minor or major programs to fully developed graduate level studies leading to a Master's degree. Many programs have been incorporated into traditional departments; others have developed interdisciplinary structures. (See Appendix A on pg. 13)

Such a rapid proliferation of programs indicates a recognition of the inequities inherent in the curriculum of higher education. This imbalance is inevitable as long as academic disciplines unquestioningly accept and reflect the prevailing social attitudes about the roles of men and women. A consistent, in depth, and accurate understanding of the experiences and achievements of women in past and present societies is necessary to rectify this discrimination.

The proposed Women's Studies program for Simon Fraser University has been designed to make a significant contribution both to the university and to the larger community. The status of women is a major current social concern to most Canadians and its improvement calls for increased understanding, knowledge and problem solving skills.

An integration of the major disciplines would be used to investigate the development of this status, the institutions which maintain it, and mechanisms available for generating needed social change.

A women's studies program would be both corrective and supplemental to the disciplines as presently taught. Current theoretical frameworks would be examined, to discover and document the ways in which they are inadequate for the study of women. Where necessary new frames of reference would be presented in order to provide a more accurate understanding and interpretation. There is a continuously expanding body of theory and research available for this task.

II The S.F.U. Women's Studies Program and Its Relation to the Rest of the University

After carefully studying the structure of women's studies programs at other institutions, the curriculum committee proposes that Simon Fraser

University offer an integrated program, (interdisciplinary in nature and sufficiently comprehensive to offer a minor program. The complexity and scope of women's experience require the combined skills of many disciplines in order to avoid the fragmentation of isolated studies of the one hand and the superficiality of occasionally offered courses on the other.)

At this time, no provincial institution offers upper levels courses in Women's Studies. The proposed minor program which follows would correct this situation and provide a place for students, particularly from Community Colleges, wishing to pursue advanced work in this field. Since S.F.U. has a Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, the program would fit well into this structure and complement already existing study programs. Simon Fraser is the only provincial institution already equipped to offer such a fully interdisciplinary course of study. The program would also offer an integrated set of courses (See Section IV) which have a coherent philosophical basis and follow a progression from introductory work to advanced studies.

Supplemental to this core program would be designated courses from other departments. (Thus, like other programs in the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Women's Studies would contribute to co-operation among disciplines and would offer new perspectives and methodologies.)

Finally, the scope of the program allows for the possibility of developing theories and research projects of interest to the larger intellectual community.

### III Background to Women's Studies at S.F.U.

The group presenting this proposal has been meeting since December 1973, but interest in women's studies at Simon Fraser goes back much further.

Since the founding of the women's caucus in 1968, students, staff and faculty have shown a growing concern with analyzing the experiences of university women and with relating these to the experience of other women.

The planners of Geography 404 responded to this interest by taking the study of women as the course topic for Fall Semester 1971. Recognizing the broader demand for such courses, the Student Society and the Counselling Service co-sponsored a non-credit course at Burnaby's McGill Library in the Summer of 1972. Half of the participants in this course were Simon Fraser students and half were from the community. The expected enrollment was exceeded by 50 per cent. The following Fall the Counselling Service in conjunction with Continuing Education offered a similar series entitled "Images of Women".

The success of the McGill Library course and the increasing numbers of reading courses on women, led the Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies to suggest that the organizers of the McGill course submit a proposal for women's studies at S.F.U. It was acknowledged that if students were to integrate the diverse material on women, a systematic, theoretical framework was necessary. The group approached Continuing Education with a proposal in the Spring Semester of 1973. Although reception was favourable, administrative and financial difficulties prevented Continuing Education from mounting any new courses at that time.

Nonetheless, interest in women's studies continued to rise. An "Ad Hoc Students' Committee for Women's Studies", was formed in the Fall of 1973; courses related to women were offered (for example, English 411); more and more students initiated directed readings and submitted papers on women; and the Counselling Service continued to offer lectures and programs on women. A recent survey designed and carried out by the Ad Hoc Students'

Committee, shows that a very high proportion of both female and male students are interested in a Women's Studies Program. A summary of the results of this study is to be found in Appendix B on pg. 25.

IV Description of the Program

A General Organization

1. Orientation

The W.S. Program will be interdisciplinary in approach and content. The rationale behind this recommendation is contained in Section I and II above.

2. Programs

The initial program will begin at the undergraduate level. The first stage of the program will offer a minor in W.S. Potential for expansion into a major and graduate program will be investigated once the minor program is established, operating and evaluated.

3. Organizational Structure with the University

a) Initial Minor Program

The nucleus of the program will be a core of interdisciplinary courses (see below, Section IV, B) at both the lower and upper division. These will largely be taught by faculty with appointments in W.S. either half or full time, or by faculty on release time or on stipend. Five full time faculty (or their equivalent) will be needed to mount the initial program.

The success of the program will also depend on qualified T.A.'s; the number of these will be determined on a 15 to 1 basis once enrollment figures are received.

b) Administration of the Program

The administration will consist of a co-ordinating committee, the voting members to be made up of faculty teaching either the interdisciplinary or designated courses (see Sec. A4, a & b) in consultation with other faculty and students who have been part of the program. The voting members of the co-ordinating committee will nominate a chairperson to act as co-ordinator for the program and will forward the nomination to the Dean for approval. The chairperson will serve a one year term with the possibility of reappointment for a maximum of three consecutive terms.

c) Responsibilities of the Co-ordinating Committee

- i administration of the existing program and development of new courses
- ii designation of courses outside the program which will be accepted for credit toward the W.S. minor
- iii exploration and possible development of a major and graduate program
- iv identification of transfer credits acceptable for the minor
- v search committee for recommending new fulltime appointments to W.S. Participation on search committees for recommending joint appointments with other departments



- vi liason with departments and their curriculum committees
- vii liason with continuind education in developing community programs for women
- viii recommendations on library acquisitions

4. Kinds of Courses Allowed for Credit toward the Minor in W.S.

a) Interdisciplinary courses taught within the program.

These are described in Section IV, B, 2.

b) Standing courses within departments which are designated by the W.S. co-ordinating committee as having sufficient W.S. content. Few such courses exist at this

time and one of the goals of the program will be to encourage their development within existing departments.

c) Courses which in any given semester have a high W.S. content. The co-ordinating committee will consider student applications for designating such courses as generally applicable for W.S. credit for that semester. Such one semester offerings have been given rather more often at S.F.U. than those described in (b) above (see Section III). The existence of a W.S. program will provide a framework within which the student would obtain greater benefit from these hitherto isolated courses. Both categories (b) and (c) of offerings in specific departments will serve to provide additional choices for students in the Women's Studies program.

B Details of the Program

1. Requirements for the minor in W.S.

a) Lower Division: Nine semester hour credits of which three must be in W.S. 100-3. The remaining six to be fulfilled by choosing two courses from W.S. 200-3, 201-3, 202-3, 203-3. Upon application by the student, courses outside the program and/or the university may be approved as substitutions for the 200 division courses. All students in the minor program must complete W.S. 100-3 or an approved equivalent.

b) Upper Division: Fifteen semester hour credits of which five must be in W.S. 400-5. Minor students must fulfill lower level requirements before enrolling in 400 numbered courses for use on the minor except with permission of the Co-ordinating Committee.

2. Interdisciplinary Courses in Women's Studies

a) Lower division:

W.S. 100-3: Introduction to Women's Studies (2-1-0)

An interdisciplinary study of the development of female roles.

The course will focus on the work of women in the home, the labour force and the arts. It will concentrate on Europe and North America from 1800 to the present.

W.S. 200-3: Women's Roles: A Comparative Study (2-1-0)

This course will follow from W.S. 100-3 and will take up in more detail a variety of the issues raised there. The focus will be on the situation of women in cross-cultural perspective using literary, historical, anthropological and other appropriate sources.

Prerequisite - W.S. 100-3

W.S. 201-3: *Women in Canada 1600-1920* (2-1-0)

*The course will investigate the lives of women who did not achieve public fame. Primary data will be collected from the diaries, memoirs, letters and literary works of Canadian women.*

W.S. 202-3: *Women in Canada 1920 to the Present* (2-1-0)

*The course will focus on the unpaid work of women in the home in conjunction with their increasing entry into wage work throughout this period. The effect of this change on family structure, women's roles and education and on ideas of women's place will be examined, using memoirs and literary sources plus sociological, historical and economic material.*

W.S. 203-3: *Female Roles in Contemporary Society* (2-1-0)

*An interdisciplinary study of definition of self/other as derived from sexual roles and the psychological mechanisms by which such definitions are acquired and maintained.*

*Prerequisite - W.S. 100-3.*

*b) Upper division:*

W.S. 400-5: *Advanced Women's Studies* (2-3-0)

*A study and critique of the assumptions of existing disciplines as they refer to the study of women. This course is designed as corrective and supplemental to the various disciplines as they are currently taught.*

*Prerequisite - W.S. 100-3, and any two of W.S. 200-3, 201-3, 202-3, 203-3.*

W.S. 401-5: *Research Project* (0-1-4)

*Individual or small group studies of community problems.*

*The student(s) will submit a prospectus for the project at least*

two months before the study is undertaken. The project will be directed by one of the faculty members of the program.

Prerequisite - W.S. 100-3 and any two of W.S. 200-3, 201-3, 202-3, 203-3.

W.S. 402-5 through 410-5: Advanced Seminar

Specialized seminars offered within the program or designated from courses outside the department.

(No approval is sought for any of these at present. Appendix D contains sample outlines and/or calendar descriptions of possible advanced seminars which could be added as the program develops.

These are included only to show the potential scope of the program)

W.S. 411-5 through 414-5: Directed Reading

(No approval is sought for these at present)

### 3. Core Courses

The core program is based on the following courses: W.S. 100-3, 201-3, 202-3, 203-3, 400-5 and 401-5. These form the nucleus of the proposed program and the committee which prepared this proposal will seek approval of these seven courses as soon as possible after initial approval of the program. Course outlines and bibliographies for these are given in Appendix C on pg. 26.

### 4. Scheduling

W.S. 100-3 will be offered every semester. At least two of the 200 numbered courses will be offered in each of the Fall and Spring semesters. At least one of the 200 numbered courses will be offered in the Summer semester.

W.S. 400-5 will be offered in at least two semesters a year.

At least one other 400 division course will be offered each semester.

C Faculty Resources

1. General Comments

The experimental, interdisciplinary nature of the program will require several kinds of appointments: (1) three full time appointments, (2) joint appointments with existing departments, (3) S.F.U. faculty who teach the interdisciplinary courses on release time from their own department or on stipend and (4) sessional lecturers. This combination of teaching personnel will provide both continuity and a continued input of new ideas and new approaches. In Canada and in a number of other countries there are scholars now doing important work in Women's Studies who could be brought in as special sessional lecturers to give additional depth to the program. The special flexibility of the trimester system would allow us to exploit this resource fully.

2. Resources at S.F.U.

There are already a sufficient number of interested and qualified faculty at S.F.U. to mount several courses in the core interdisciplinary program.

D Implementation

1. January 1976. Appointment of interim co-ordinating committee to consist of representatives from each faculty plus a representative from the student society, one from the staff, the Co-ordinator of Continuing Education Programs for Women

and any faculty who become eligible for the regular co-ordinating committee. This committee will carry out the duties given in Section IV, A, 3, c of the regular co-ordinating committee. In particular, it will be responsible for (1) implementing the program (2) being a search committee for faculty appointments (3) nomination of an interim chairperson to serve until January, 1976, (4) establishment of a general office and a secretarial staff.

2. January 1976. W.S. 100-3 offered for the first time. Beginning of designation of courses in departments as suitable for women's studies credit. First full time appointment.
3. May 1976. W.S. 100-3, W.S. 200-3 and W.S. 400-5 offered. New appointments. Regular co-ordinating committee assumes office.