

VASSAR COLLEGE  
Women's Studies Program  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12604

DATE: June 15, 2008  
TO: Women's Studies Majors, Class of '09  
FROM: Diane Harriford, Director of Women's Studies  
SUBJECT: Thesis guidelines and deadlines

Over the summer, you should have given some thought to a possible topic for your senior thesis. Please read the enclosed carefully and note that the procedures and deadlines are firm. Attached are the:

1. Description of the Senior Project
2. General guidelines for writing a thesis in Women's Studies
3. List of members of the Women's Studies Faculty 2008 - 2009.
4. Thesis planning form.

If you have any questions, please contact the Director at [diarriford@vassar.edu](mailto:diarriford@vassar.edu).

## Vassar College

### WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

The required Women's Studies senior essay or project is an opportunity to do independent research on a topic of your choice and to develop your own ideas in light of the information and evidence you discover. Your essay or project may grow out of work done in courses, seminars, or field work, or may integrate work from several sources.

More than simply a long paper, a senior essay is an argument built and sustained coherently over several chapters, each devoted to an aspect of your topic. Using the resources provided by the field of Women's Studies, you are expected to develop your position or point of view, and to offer an interpretation and analysis which can be defended or justified when confronted with possible criticism. While there are no formal page requirements, most theses are at least 50 pages.

Your initial task is to choose a manageable project that will engage your interest and attention and enable you to clarify your thinking on a particular topic. The Women's Studies Program accepts and encourages final projects other than the traditional thesis (e.g. film, tape, performance). Use your imagination and consult with your potential adviser or any other member of the program about such possibilities. Remember that Women's Studies is a multidisciplinary program and we expect to see at least two different disciplines brought to bear on the subject you choose to explore.

Finally: We have copies in the Women's Studies office of senior theses from previous years. You may want to take a look at them for inspiration and guidance. If you have any particular questions, please email the Director at [diharriford@vassar.edu](mailto:diharriford@vassar.edu).

Vassar College  
WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

Senior Thesis Schedule  
2008 - 2009

THE FOLLOWING IS THE SCHEDULE FOR THE SENIOR THESIS. THE SCHEDULE AND THE GUIDELINES COMMUNICATE THE PROGRAM'S EXPECTATIONS AT EACH STAGE OF THE PROJECT. STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OBSERVING THESE DEADLINES. PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SCHEDULE INCLUDES DEADLINES FOR FACULTY ADVISERS AS WELL AS DEADLINES FOR STUDENTS.

A SEMESTER

Thesis Deadlines:

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Friday, September 5    | All seniors submit form (page 8) states general area of interest, possible topic, and possible adviser to Sheila Stukes -NE 204.   |
| Monday, September 8-12 | Women's Studies Steering Committee to review thesis proposals  |
| Monday, September 15   | Students to make first appointment with advisers week of September 15th.   |
| Friday, October 3      | Thesis workshop, 6:30-8:00pm, meeting of all advisees and advisors, (WMST faculty). Each student will state the specific topic they are working on. Explain in a few words, how they will proceed. Provide (working bibliography). |

October 17- October 26 Mid-Semester Break

November 26 - November 30 Thanksgiving Recess

Thursday, December 4

Due to advisor, a 5 page proposal that includes a statement of the exact focus, a brief discussion of the literature on the subject already reviewed and a statement of what the research plan is for the next few months. In addition, students will provide an annotated bibliography of the materials read and listing of materials that remain to be researched. The latter might include interviews, other forms of research, etc.

Thursday, December 9

Advisers to return comments on the proposal and annotated bibliography.

### **B-SEMESTER**

Thursday, February 5

Outline of thesis due to advisor. (obviously, this is tentative, Research should be completed in February. Most of March would be devoted to writing.

Monday, March 30

Thesis draft due. After this date, no other written material will receive comments from adviser.

\*Tuesday, April 7

Faculty return thesis draft to students.

Thursday, April 16

Thesis presentation Dinner.

Tuesday, May 5

Submit 2 Copies of Final Thesis on Springboard Binder- Due In New England 204 by 4:00pm.

\*Monday, May 11

Faculty return thesis with comments and grade to program office by 4:00pm.

Wednesday, May 13

Thesis returned with comments to Seniors.

\*Italics reflect faculty deadlines

### **A SEMESTER**

**Below are Program deadlines. It is important that you meet these deadlines.**

#### **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 4 P.M.**

##### SUBMIT THESIS PLANNING FORM.

All seniors submit form (page 8), you should state general area of interest, with possible thesis topic, and possible adviser to Sheila Stukes NE 204, or email (shstukes@vassar.edu) . The email should consist of a general title for your thesis project.

A list of people who could be potential advisers is included in this packet. You are also free to consider people not on the list if they are knowledgeable about your topic.

By September 16, you need to have settled on two faculty members who will act as your thesis advisers; the faculty members should represent two disciplines and at least one should be chosen from the faculty listed on page 9.

#### **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15**

Students are to make their first appointment with advisers, week of September 15<sup>th</sup>.

##### ADVISEE MEETING WITH TWO ADVISERS

Ideally all three of you will have already met. If not, be sure that you do so now. It is important that the three of you share the same set of expectations about your thesis and what you need to be doing in the weeks and months to come. It is very important that you and your advisers do this, even if it requires some negotiations, because it will clarify your tasks, challenge the advisers to be clear about what it is they expect, and set out how much you need to do starting now. If you are conscientious in doing this, it will avoid potential problems later on in the project. You should view the detailed outline, and chapter summaries as a written statement of these negotiated expectations.

### FACULTY REVIEW THESIS PROPOSAL

During this week, the Steering Committee will collectively review your proposal. The result of that review may entail one of the following responses: a) enthusiastic acceptance of the proposal; b) acceptance of proposal with some reservations; c) tentative acceptance of proposal pending a rewrite and resubmit of the proposal; d) rejection of the proposal and request for a new proposal. In every case, the Steering Committee will respond in writing with advice and suggestions about how you might better focus, improve, broaden, or alter your investigation. Among the factors taken into consideration when reviewing the proposals (which you should go over with your possible thesis advisers) are these questions:

1. Does the student have the academic background (supporting course work in both method and subject matter) to undertake this particular topic? Is the student adequately prepared in the two disciplines in which she/he plans to write the thesis. That is, is this topic a culmination of the student's academic interests and studies at Vassar?
2. Is the topic a feasible one for a senior thesis? Is it too broad? Too ambitious? Does the student have access to the appropriate resources to investigate this particular topic?
3. Are the sources available to complete the thesis? Can the student access these sources?

### **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5**

#### WMST THESIS WORKSHOP

Thesis Workshop: Seniors will meet with faculty (their advisers if possible, some members of the Steering Committee, and other interested faculty), and give a brief account (5 minutes) of their topic and methodology. The Workshop is intended to enable majors to a) receive clarifications about questions or concerns expressed in the comments they have received from the Steering Committee, b) to discuss with each other and the faculty how they might go about addressing or responding to these concerns, c) to receive general advice from faculty

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4**

DUE TO ADVISOR- 5 PAGE PROPOSAL

Proposal should include a statement of the exact focus, a brief discussion of the literature on the subject already reviewed and a statement of what the research plan is for the next few months. In addition, students will provide an annotated bibliography of the materials read and listing of materials that remain to be researched. The latter might include interviews, other forms of research, etc.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9**

ADVISERS TO RETURN COMMENTS ON PROPOSAL AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.

**B SEMESTER**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5**

SUBMIT AN OUTLINE OF THE FIRST DRAFT THESIS TO EACH ADVISER AND TO PROGRAM OFFICE BY 4 P.M.

By this time you should have narrowed your focus while considering the broader context and background that will be necessary to set the scene for your analysis, explication, or interpretation. An outline will push you to consider the flow as well as limits of your thesis. Imagine your outline as a Table of Contents with tentative chapter titles. Under each chapter title, note the areas to be covered and the questions to be presented. In other words, give some organization to all your possible building blocks, though at this state you may not have begun all of your building. Don't think that this outline binds you to a particular style or outcome; consider it as one possible way to organize your thoughts and materials at this particular stage of the thesis process.

Submit a copy to each of your advisers and one to the program office. This copy is to be signed by BOTH advisers. The signatures reflect a consensus between the advisers and the student about the thesis project.

**MONDAY, MARCH 30**

THESIS DRAFT DUE

After this date, no other written material will receive comments from adviser.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 7**

FACULTY RETURN THESIS DRAFT WITH COMMENTS TO SENIORS

**THURSDAY, APRIL 16**

6:00-9:00P.M. THESIS PRESENTATION DINNER

Seniors will make a short presentation (15 minutes) about their thesis project, which will be followed by a short discussion where you will respond to questions and observations from the audience. You should now be far along enough in the thesis project where you are able to give an interesting public account that tells others what your thesis is about, describes the issues/questions you have engaged with, and gives an overview of the analysis you have accomplished. Students and faculty present will have an opportunity to learn about your project, ask questions and engage with your analysis.

**TUESDAY, MAY 5**

FINAL DRAFT DUE TODAY-SUBMIT TWO COPIES OF THESIS ON SPRINGBOARD BINDER TO PROGRAM OFFICE BY 4:00PM

**MONDAY, MAY 11**

FACULTY RETURN THESES WITH COMMENTS AND GRADE TO PROGRAM OFFICE BY 4 P.M.

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 13**

THESIS RETURNED WITH COMMENTS TO SENIORS.

Students can pick up thesis in program office – New England 204.

**SENIOR THESIS PLANNING FORM**  
**Women's Studies Program**

Please complete this form, submit to Sheila Stukes – NE 204 or email (shstukes@vassar.edu) by 4p.m. Friday, September 5, 2008.

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_  
**TENTATIVE THESIS TITLE**

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- IDENTIFY THE TWO DISCIPLINES IN WHICH YOU HAVE DONE OR WILL BE DOING ADVANCED 300 LEVEL WORK
  
- WHY DO YOU THINK YOUR ADVISERS MIGHT BE?
  
- HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO THEM ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ADVISING YOU? WHAT DID THEY SAY?
  
- PROVIDE A BRIEF SUMMARY OF YOUR TOPIC QUESTIONS AND SOURCES ON A SEPARATE PAGE AS A SECTION OF THIS EMAIL

**WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM  
WOMEN'S STUDIES FACULTY  
2008-2009**

Director of Women's Studies: Diane Harriford (Sociology)

Arlyck, Elizabeth (French)  
Blumenfeld, Rodica (Italian)  
Brawley, Lisa (Urban Studies/Women's Studies)  
Bren, Paulina (Women's Studies)  
Carruyo, Light (Sociology)  
Carter, Kristin (Women's Studies/English)  
Celerier, Patricia (English)  
Church, Jennifer (Philosophy)  
Cohen, Ballerino Colleen (Anthropology)  
Cohen, Miriam (History)  
Collins, Lisa (Art)  
DeCoster, Barry  
Donnelly, Liza (Women's Studies)  
Dunbar, Eve (English)  
Dunn, Leslie (English)  
Edwards, Rebecca (History)  
Gray, Janet (Psychology)  
Hart, Kathleen (French)  
Hiner, Susan (Women's Studies/French)  
Kane, Jean (English)  
Lans-Johnson, Shirley (Political Science)  
Libin, Kathryn (Music)  
McGee, Dylan (Asian Studies)  
Moon, Seung sook (Sociology)  
Murdoch, Lydia (History)  
Narayan, Uma (Philosophy)  
Olsen, Barbara (Classics)  
Ossorio, Rebecca  
Paravisini, Lisa (Hispanic)  
Piesche, Peggy (German Studies)  
Qui, Pei Pei (Chinese/Japanese)  
Reno, Christine (French)  
Robertson, Karen (Women's Studies)  
Schneider, Jeffrey (German Studies)  
Schneiderman, Jill (Women's Studies)  
Shanley, Mary (Political Science)  
von der Emde, Silke (German Studies)  
Walen, Denise (Drama)  
Wallace, Patricia (English)  
Whitcomb, Margo (Women's Studies)  
Yow, Laura (English)