

### Focus on Women's and Gender Studies



In celebration of Women's History Month, Multicultural Moments will highlight Women's and Gender Studies (WGSP) programs. This issue will present the evolution of WGSP programs, explain the importance and prevalence of WGSP programs, and highlight the WGSP program at Montgomery College.

**The Evolution of WGSP Programs:** What we now refer to as Women's and Gender Studies has evolved from early programs in Women's Studies.

- Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary field, partly driven by the women's liberation movements in the 1960s and the increase of women entering teaching positions in higher education. The first Women's Studies courses were taught at San Diego State University and Cornell University in 1969. By the end of the 1970s, there were approximately 200 undergraduate women's studies programs, with courses such as Women's Literature and the Psychology of Women. Later decades saw courses and programs expand to emphasize intersections of women's studies with race, gender, and culture. Read more about the evolution via the following link: <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2550/Women-s-Studies.html>.
- The rise in Women's Studies programs can also be attributed to the work of undergraduate and graduate students empowered by the women's liberation movement as described in Barbara Shircliffe's 2000 article, "[Feminist Reflections on University Activism through Women's Studies at a State University: Narratives of Promise, Compromise, and Powerlessness.](#)"
- In this 2009 [Q & A](#) with Alice Ginsberg, editor of *The Evolution of American Women's Studies*, Ginsberg discusses some of the challenges Women's Studies programs faced, including fighting the many misconceptions about feminism and its connection to women's studies.
- In the 2010 NPR segment, "A Look Back at Women's Studies Since the 1970s," Founding director of the Women's Research Resource Center at Spelman College Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall notes that Women's Studies stemmed from both the women's movement and the black studies movement. She argues, "So women's studies, is not just about looking at women... it is really an intellectual pursuit; it is academically rigorous,... it really is about trying to understand 50 percent of the human family." Listen to her full interview [here](#).

**Importance and Prevalence of WGSP:** Despite many claims that a [WGSP degree is meaningless](#), programs are prevalent around the globe, and many WGSP students not only find the programs meaningful but also find fulfilling careers in a variety of fields.

- Hear from students and faculty at Adrian College about the importance of studying gender, gender differences, and learning from the perspectives of women and non-binary individuals across disciplines in this [video](#).

- Joan Korenman, Professor Emerita and Founder to the Center for Women and Information Technology at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, maintains a list of more than 900 Women's/Gender Studies Programs and Research Centers containing programs around the globe. You can review the list via the following link: <https://userpages.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/programs.html>. In addition, programs like Go Overseas offers 146 [Feminist, Gender and Sexuality study abroad programs](#) in politics, business, media, and the arts.
- According to [2022 ZipRecruiter data](#), the average annual salary in Women's Studies is \$63,199, with the majority earning between \$35,000 and \$83,000. Those with WGSP credentials, can find career opportunities in health, education, community outreach, social work, journalism, marketing, and other fields according to a 2021 Indeed article, "[18 Women's and Gender Studies Jobs](#)."
- In a recent panel, [What can I do with a degree in Women and Gender Studies?](#) sponsored by the New Jersey Women's and Gender studies Consortium, five panelists shared why they chose WGSP and how they use the skills they gained in their current professions. The panelists included a playwright, a legislative services director working on health issues, a business coach who also teaches sex education, a domestic violence victims' rights advocate, and a student success coordinator in higher education.

**Women's and Gender Studies at MC.** WGSP is celebrating 35 years at MC! In reflections on the program after 25 years, former chair Diane Daniel recalled, "I was chair of what was then called the Committee to Integrate Women into the Curriculum. It was in the early 90s... We had no release time, no staff support, and no money! What we did have was passion and commitment." The first annual scholarship receptions awarded three students \$50 scholarships each.

- MC's WGSP program has come far since the 1990s, offering a 12-credit certificate program, thousands in annual scholarships, a summer colloquium, and a variety of courses (such as *Introduction to Women's Studies*, *Introduction to Gender Studies*, and other courses in Health, Literature, History, Sociology, Philosophy, and Psychology). To learn more about the certificate and program events or to contact a program coordinator, visit the [WGSP website](#).
- In [Theory and Praxis: Women's and Gender Studies at Community Colleges \(2019\)](#), co-edited by MC's WGSP program coordinator Genevieve Carminati, MC Alum Kayla Calvin shared her thoughts on the WGSP program: "I believe in the people running the program. They have allowed us to have the hard-to-understand, hard-to-explain conversations that lead to change and understanding..." and "I learned that it's important to almost interrogate yourself in order to unlearn things that allow an unjust society to remain" (p. 174). Calvin went on to pursue anthropology at the University of Maryland.
- Celebrate the continued passion and commitment of the WGSP program at MC by attending the [35<sup>th</sup> Annual WGSP Scholarship Reception](#), March 9, 5:30-6:30 via Zoom. Click [here](#) to pre-register for the event and/or donate.

*May we avoid blaming or bias based on our circumstance and continue to be grateful for the gifts of the global community.*

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