Women’s Studies Peer Evaluation Policy

Purpose and Scope

The primary purpose of the peer evaluation process is to assess the extent to which all WOST pre-fixed and cross-referenced courses meet the goals of the program. Because those undergoing the peer evaluation process are new either to women’s studies or to a particular course, the process is also designed to give instructors the opportunity to receive helpful, formative feedback.

Peer evaluations will be conducted for those teaching WOST pre-fixed or cross-referenced courses that meet one of the following conditions:

- The course is being taught by an instructor who has not previously taught for WOST; in this case, the course will be reviewed for the first two semesters that it is taught by this instructor.
- The course is being taught by an instructor who has previously taught for WOST but has not previously taught this particular course; in this case, the course will be reviewed only for the first semester that it is taught by this instructor.
- The course does not meet either of the first two conditions, but a course review is requested by the WOST Director.
- The course does not meet either of the first two conditions, but a course review is requested by the instructor.

When appropriate, the WOST Program Committee can vote to waive a peer evaluation for a particular instructor who has taught extensively for Women’s Studies in the past and whose course recently (i.e., in the past year or two) underwent the WOST course approval process.

Components of the Peer Evaluation

The peer evaluation will be based on the following components:

- the course syllabus and any other assignments the instructor might wish to provide
- a classroom visitation

Criteria for Evaluating

In assessing the instructor and course, the evaluator should pay particular attention to how well the course meets the goals of the Women’s Studies Program. These goals are as follows:

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• Analyze academic disciplines from a feminist and antiracist perspective.
• Encourage original scholarship and research about women that takes into consideration gender, race, class, and sexual orientation.
• Integrate self-exploration with academic skills.
• Provide a non-authoritarian learning environment which values students’ ideas and encourages an open exchange of information and opinion.
• Promote an individual and critical approach to learning.
• Promote knowledge of the diversity of women’s experiences.

In addition to these goals, instructors may have goals of their own. As part of a formative feedback loop, the evaluator should feel free to discuss with the instructor issues, questions, and concerns that do not fall within the scope of the goals listed above. However, everyone should keep in mind that the primary purpose of the review is to assess how well a course meets the goals of the WOST Program.

**Timetable and Process for Appointing Peer Evaluators**

At the first Program Committee of the semester, the Director of Women’s Studies will distribute a list of instructors who meet the criteria for review. Volunteers from the Program Committee will be assigned one or more instructors to review. Faculty and LTLs with at least two years of teaching experience can serve as evaluators. Untenured faculty may choose not to evaluate faculty with a higher rank, just as LTLs may choose not to evaluate tenured and tenure-track faculty. During semesters where the number of reviews required is high or when there isn’t enough tenured faculty to conduct the reviews of other tenured faculty, the Director may request additional volunteers from the list of WOST Affiliated Faculty.

**The Final Report**

No later than four weeks after the close of the semester, evaluators will submit a report to the Director that summarizes the extent to which the goals above have been met and addresses any areas where there was room for improving the course. The report should be submitted electronically to the Director using the template available on the WOST website. At this time, the Director will review the report together with the student evaluations and instructor self-evaluations. The Director will then send the report onto the instructor, along with any comments or concerns she might have about the course. The evaluations will be shared with instructors and filed in the Women’s Studies office.

In addition, instructors may request a separate, more general review of the course from their evaluators for the purposes of reappointment and tenure and promotion.

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portfolios. Such arrangements should be worked out between the instructor and evaluator.

Guidelines for Peer Evaluators

Class Visitations

The peer evaluator should initiate contact with the instructor once the Director has informed her or him about the upcoming evaluation. The evaluator should work with the instructor to find a day for the class visit convenient to both; in selecting a date for a visit, both parties should keep in mind the goal of the evaluation: namely, to assess the course in relation to the WOST Program goals.

Evaluators are asked when possible to structure their visits according to the following best practice recommendations from CELT:

- Evaluators should arrange a pre-observation meeting with the instructor. During this meeting, the evaluator and instructor can discuss the purpose of the review, the WOST Program goals, the instructor’s individual goals, the progress of the course thus far, etc.

- Evaluators should follow-up their class visit with a second meeting that takes place as soon after the observation as possible. At this stage, evaluators can invite the instructor’s own impressions of the class, provide feedback, and offer constructive suggestions.

For more advice on conducting class visitations, please see the CELT handbook, which is available online at: http://www.ipfw.edu/celt/insite/peerreview.shtml.

Course Syllabi

Because so many of our courses originate from outside the Women’s Studies Program, the syllabus is an important vehicle by which students become acquainted with the goals of the WOST Program and the nature of a WOST cross-referenced course. For this reason, it’s critical that the goals be an explicit component of course syllabi. In reviewing course syllabi, evaluators should look to see that they include the following:

- information that identifies the course as a Women’s Studies cross-referenced course (for courses that are non-WOST-prefixed course)
- a list of the Women’s Studies Program goals that the course aims to meet

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