

Women's/Gender/Sexuality Studies Career Paths

Clinical Social Worker

Counselors and other clinical social workers benefit from integrating a women's studies major or minor into their professional development. Understanding the history and development of women's roles in society can help clinical social workers provide perspective for their clients. Graduates can use the knowledge from their degree programs to connect clients with the most effective and appropriate resources in their communities.

Health Clinic Coordinator

Working in health clinics allows women's studies majors to combine their understanding of the social and political aspects of women's health with their innate organizational and leadership skills. Health clinic coordinators often handle everything from scheduling medical personnel to appealing for funding. At the same time, they must manage relations with neighborhoods that often face conflict with politicians and religious groups.

College Professor

Some women's studies students use their degrees to launch a career in academia. As a burgeoning specialty, many colleges and universities are growing their women's studies departments to meet growing student demand. Likewise, many women's studies professors enjoy the opportunity to publish their work in the commercial press instead of solely in academic journals.

Human Rights Advocate

Because women in some foreign countries do not enjoy the same liberties as women in the United States, many women's studies majors campaign for equality and justice around the world. In some cases, students can volunteer or even gain jobs with international rights organizations that monitor the treatment and the advancement of women.

Victims' Advocate

Some women's studies students pursue a career that puts them in direct contact with the victims of domestic abuse, hate crimes, or other acts of violence. Victims' advocates bridge the gaps between law enforcement, the legal community, and medical professionals. Experienced victims' advocates can help confused and frightened

women receive critical medical and legal attention. Victims' advocates also help their clients remain committed to pursuing criminal prosecution for their abusers, especially in situations where they feel intimidated or shamed for doing so.

Journalist

A women's studies degree or concentration can provide a student with a valuable and unusual perspective regarding current events. Women's studies majors can use their writing, interviewing, and research skills to report on issues facing women, as well as on the ways that women impact society. Today's journalists must assure their audiences that issues facing women deserve as much respect and attention as issues facing men

Archivist

Many companies, communities, and nonprofit organizations rely on archivists to accurately document the actions and the legacies of their institutions. Women's studies majors can bring their perspective to archivist positions by assuring future generations that the roles of women are not overlooked or understated. In addition, many women's studies graduates use their roles to reexamine the history of women in organizations, often uncovering new dimensions to history in the process.

Lawyer

Attorneys who complement their law school studies with a concentration or a degree in women's studies can unlock the potential to work with a variety of specialized cases. As the general public becomes more aware of long-term challenges such as sexual harassment, discrimination, and domestic violence, attorneys who build a reputation for handling sensitive cases can build strong specialty practices.

Artist or Musician

Many creative professionals use their women's studies degrees to inspire powerful songs or works of art. The inspiring and sometimes tragic stories of women throughout the centuries can motivate artists to achieve more for themselves, while providing the starting points for retelling or depictions of important stories. Women have made a consistent impact in the arts throughout history, and today's generation of creators must work even harder to keep that tradition alive.

Battered Women's Center Director

Shelters for abused women face a unique set of challenges that women's studies majors can use their skills to overcome. Not only must a center director find funding and support for their facilities, they must do so in ways that protect the privacy of their clients. Many women's shelters operate in undisclosed locations so that abusive men cannot cause further harm to shelter residents. Center directors must be able to assure neighbors of their safety, while facilitating meetings with attorneys and law enforcement professionals during divorce proceedings or criminal prosecution. In addition, women's studies degree holders use their organizational skills to provide a comfortable environment for residents. Directors must maintain their facilities and coordinate with housekeepers, contractors, and public utilities.

Business Owner

Many women's studies majors channel their fiercely independent spirit into careers as entrepreneurs. By understanding the needs and wants of women, they can create companies that solve problems for customers in unique ways. By leveraging their ability to tap into women's desires, they can grow a range of businesses from bookstores to real estate agencies that allow female clients to be served in exactly the way they prefer.

Nurse-Midwife

The converging trends of high malpractice insurance and the desire for more traditional childbirth experiences have created job opportunities for midwives. Whether helping to deliver children at their patients' homes or operating from comfortable maternity facilities, women's studies graduates use their strong communication skills to coach women through this joyous but challenging ritual.

Legislative Aide

As politicians work harder to court the votes of women, many elected officials have recruited women's studies majors to their research teams. By viewing current laws and proposed legislation through the filter of women's history, these specialists can help their representatives to really understand the impact of law on women in their districts.

Public Relations Manager

Women tend to make most of the buying decisions in America, often selecting the kinds of goods they bring into their households. As mothers and wives, women also influence the purchasing decisions of

the men in their lives. Recent studies show that most single men often purchase the same brands of goods that their mothers chose. Therefore, companies that want to maintain positive relationships with their female customers have started to recruit public relations professionals with exposure to women's studies courses. In addition to the strong writing and communication skills that women's studies majors develop during their academic careers, employers rely on their perspective into female wants and needs. This insight can affect the way that companies launch new products or repair mistakes.

Rape Crisis Program Director

Because they understand the challenges facing victims of sexual abuse, women's studies graduates make ideal leaders for rape crisis programs. Their knowledge of women's health gives them the ability to help clients understand the psychological and physical trauma of rape. In addition, women's studies majors possess the organizational and communications skills to train teams of volunteers and staff members. Program directors must also communicate the importance of seeking treatment to victims who are too afraid to ask for help. To do so, they write articles and make media appearances that encourage victims or their family members to seek confidential assistance.

Casting Director

A growing number of dramatic professionals are enrolling in women's studies programs to gain insight into the real lives of women throughout history. This knowledge helps casting directors make important decisions and recommendations that enhance the authenticity of movies and plays. By selecting actresses that can accurately represent the lives of women, casting directors can leave a powerful legacy for future generations.

Town Manager

A sign of whether a town manager is doing an effective job is whether you notice their work. When communities function well, town managers often go unnoticed. When problems arise, you can see citizens lining up to complain at city hall. A growing number of women's studies majors use their skills as effective town managers or other civil servants. Their sensitivity to the needs of women and minorities helps them make critical decisions about community services and funding decisions.

Health Clinic Medical Assistant

As more women seek medical treatment at dedicated women's clinics,

medical assistants and nurses who enroll in women's studies programs gain a powerful advantage over other trained professionals. Women visit these clinics to get a level of care and concern that they cannot find at other doctor's offices and care facilities. By understanding the wants and needs of their patients, women's studies graduates can provide a higher level of holistic care.

Union Organizer

Though women have made tremendous strides in business over the last century, many women still work in substandard conditions for unacceptable salaries. Women's studies majors that work with labor organizations identify employers that exploit women or otherwise fail to provide mandatory health and welfare benefits for their female employees. These activists have successfully lobbied for day care facilities in factories, extended maternity leave, and other important benefits.

Hospital Foundation Executive Director

As hospitals strive to deal with rising insurance rates and cutbacks from government agencies, they rely on strong foundations to provide support for long term improvements and infrastructure. A foundation director with a background in women's studies can help position medical care centers to appeal to women and to excel in under-served specialties that can rally public support.

Skills of Successful WGSS Majors

In addition to the insight that students gain from a degree in women's studies, degree candidates also develop a number of beneficial career skills, including:

Strong critical thinking skills. Like all liberal arts majors, women's studies students gain the classical ability to solve problems and think creatively about potential solutions. Students learn from the examples of influential writers, inventors, and thinkers throughout history. Women's studies majors benefit from an increased emphasis on the history of female cultural and political figures, especially leaders that mainstream liberal arts programs sometimes overlook.

Confident oral presentation skills. Women's studies majors must present a succession of oral presentations throughout their degree

programs. Each opportunity to speak in front of a class provides the opportunity to hone a student's presentation skills and to reduce their apprehension about speaking to groups. These skills prove valuable later in life regardless of the career a women's studies major pursues.

Effective writing skills. Students pursuing a women's studies degree must learn to write powerful essays and reports that chronicle the achievements of women throughout history as well as the challenges that face future generations. Over the course of four years, students may write hundreds of papers. Therefore, students gain the chance to refine their writing skills while developing the ability to compose and edit complex reports under deadline.

Strong research skills. All liberal arts and social sciences majors develop powerful abilities to ferret information from libraries and from the internet. Because women's studies is a fairly new concentration, many students rely on primary interviews with subjects who have not yet told their stories to other researchers. In many cases, women's studies majors must approach research sources with a healthy degree of skepticism. Therefore, students enrolled in women's studies programs build skills and experience in fact checking and verification that surpass those of students in many traditional college majors.

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