Gender and Feminism Area Examination

The philosophy underlying the structure of the Gender and Feminism Area Examination has been designed to clearly delineate the content of the field of Gender and Feminism for the graduate student while simultaneously maximizing, instead of restricting, inquiry into individual interest areas. The intent is to facilitate each doctoral candidate’s own development as a gender and feminist scholar by providing feedback and advising as each student progresses to learn, organize and advance gender and feminist work. The area exam will encompass gender and feminist theory, methods and research, and a third substantive sub-area to be selected by the student.

In order to qualify to take the area exam in Gender and Feminism, the student must have taken at least one graduate level (500, 600, 700) class on gender and/or feminism from within the Department of Sociology and, in addition, at least one other class on gender and/or feminism from any graduate department (including Sociology), or demonstrate comparable exposure (research projects, publications or other studies). The graduate courses and/or other qualifications must be approved by the student’s Gender and Feminism Area Committee.

The Gender and Feminism Area faculty have developed a foundational reading list in theory and methods which is required of all students sitting for the area examination. Each student, in consultation with her/his examination committee members, will develop a reading list that incorporates the foundational readings, a more thorough review of contemporary theory and methods, and the literature relevant to the student’s specialization in the area.

The steps and process for taking the exam are:

1. Form a three-member Gender and Feminism Area Exam Committee. The chair of the committee must be a member of the Gender and Feminism Area faculty in sociology (Ann Miles, Susan Caringella, Elena Gapova, Chien-Juh Gu, Angela Moe, Zoann Snyder). Other committee members may be selected from either the Gender and Feminism Area faculty or gender and/or feminist faculty from outside sociology at WMU (pending committee chair approval). It is recommended that a student form this committee at least six months in advance of taking the exam, to provide ample time for constructing a reading list, consulting the committee, and preparing for the exam.

2. In consultation with the exam committee, identify a sub-area for the exam. Examples of a sub-area include but are not limited to gender and the body, feminism and violence, gender and work, Black feminism, gender and justice, gender and emotions, gender and sexuality, gender and religion, queer studies, and global feminism.

3. In consultation with the exam committee, develop and obtain approval of a reading list for each area of the exam: gender and feminist theory, feminist methods and research, and the sub-area. It is
important that this process be individualized and student-driven, but also done with the consistent consultation of the exam committee, particularly the chair. Typically, a final or near-final reading list is subjected to an exam committee meeting where a discussion may result in an approved reading list. This meeting should be organized by the student, and occur at least a month in advance of taking the exam. Students should feel free to organize additional committee meetings, earlier and later in the process, as needs arise. (Please note that even after a reading list is approved, it may become appropriate to change it a bit as the exam date nears and certain readings become more or less relevant. Students should consult their committee members for approval of any such changes as they occur.)

4. In consultation with the exam committee, craft and submit questions (or descriptions of major themes) for each of the three areas covered in the reading list. These questions and themes will be drawn on by the area exam in the development of both the written and oral portions of the exam. Typically the discussion that occurs during a committee meeting for the reading list can also encompass discussion of these questions and themes.

5. Regardless of the individualized arrangements for developing the reading list and submitting questions/themes, the student must notify the committee chair of intent to take the exam within the first three weeks of the semester in which she/he plans to take it. If not already done or arranged, it is at this time that the student should indicate her/his plans for submitting a final and approved reading list as well as a set of questions/themes. The actual dates of the examination must also be arranged at this time.

6. The exam can be taken in the fall or spring semesters and, with approval from the exam committee, may be scheduled during summer terms. The written portion of the exam is to be scheduled over a 5 day period (typically Monday-Friday but this is flexible) and is a take-home exam. The oral portion is to be scheduled over a 1 ½ to 2 hour time period within three weeks of the completion of the written portion.

7. All of the exam questions are to be emailed by the committee chair to the student by 9am on the first day of the examination. The written responses are due by 5pm on the fifth day of the examination via email attachment to all committee members. A hard copy may also be supplied to the committee members’ mail boxes, if requested.

8. The written portion of the examination will encompass three responses, not to exceed 20 pages each, in response to questions posed by the committee for each area. It should not be assumed by the student that a choice of questions in each area will be available; this
determination will be made by each examination committee on a case by case basis. At the oral portion, students should be prepared to discuss, explain and defend their answers to the written questions, as well as respond to any other questions/themes posed to the committee earlier on in the process.

9. Immediately or shortly following the oral portion, the exam committee will meet, without the student’s presence, to determine the outcome of the exam. By consensus, they may either pass the student on merit, require some level of revision to the written portion which may or may not require another oral portion, or fail the student. Stipulations and time parameters for any revisions will be determined by the committee and shared with the student orally and in writing within one week of this determination. In determinations of passes and failures, the exam committee chair will provide a written statement of this result to both the student and the student’s graduate file within the Department of Sociology. A student who fails the exam may retake it once in a subsequent semester so long as the above procedures are again followed.

Just as an example, a schedule for taking the exam could be:
• September: choose committee
• September-December: develop reading list
• December: arrange committee meeting to discuss/approve reading list
• September-April: read from reading list/prepare for exam
• Late January: declare intent to take the exam, make arrangements for submitting final approved reading list and questions/themes
• Mid-February: submit questions/themes for each of the 3 areas
• Mid-March: take written exam
• Early April: complete oral portion of exam

Gender and Feminism Foundational Readings

**Liberal Feminism**


**Marxist Feminism**


**Socialist Feminism**


**Radical Feminism**


**Postmodern/Poststructuralist Feminism**


**Multicultural Feminism**


Intersectionality


Transnational Feminism


Gender Theory


Feminist Standpoint Theory


Methodology


