

IZIFUNDO NGAMAKHOSIKASI NESINI

GENDER STUDIES

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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES



WHAT is Gender Studies?

Everybody's talking gender. Music videos pump images of fantastic or familiar masculinity and femininity through the airwaves; national and international politicians debate the meaning of racial and gender equality; religious communities explore new – and traditional – ideas about men and women; in taxis, cafés, shebeens, corners and kitchens, friends pour over the microdynamics of gendered sexuality and communication: what did he mean when he said that? What is she going to do?

Within the Faculty of Humanities, a subject named Gender Studies offers the opportunity to explore the informal kaleidoscope of issues concerning gender, culture, and sexuality within a formal academic framework.

WHY Study Gender Studies?

Gender Studies explores the power of gender dynamics within multiple fields of social relevance. Research and scholarship about gender is often embedded within ideas about class, race, and history, so working with a gender lens can illuminate knowledge in a new, multi-faceted way. If, for example, most economists evaluate a country's wealth through measuring the value of what that country produces as goods, economists who take gender seriously will also explore the value of what gets created through reproductive labour, the work many women do taking care of children, the home space, and the elderly. This approach changes the whole orientation to the study of economics. Another example: in media analysis, taking gender seriously will both allow in-depth understanding of how (for example) the news gets created, and look at what that news may mean for different constituencies, in different places. Gender Studies is internationally recognised as a field which makes connections, opens doors and challenges familiar ideas.

In African contexts, interest in Gender Studies is booming, as a result of wide continental recognition that issues of masculinity, femininity/womanhood, and sexuality are relevant to all our concerns about independence, freedom from conflict, and the development of deep democracy. Within Africa, there are complex and exciting conversations about gender, and these are continually interacting with global interests in human rights and with diverse political struggles to imagine and create just societies. In the Faculty of Humanities, Gender Studies has a particular focus on African contexts, and links this focus to an international field of research on gender Issues.

WHAT can I do with Gender Studies?

There are three possible pathways for Gender Studies:

- 1) A major in Gender Studies can be combined with another major (such as Psychology, Law, Sociology, or Film and Media) so that professional development as a psychologist, lawyer, development practitioner, or media worker is strengthened by a particular expertise in gender analysis. This is often very useful in a world where knowledge of gender works well in combination with other professional skills.
- 2) A major in Gender Studies is very useful if you are planning to move into international, or national, development work. In the past, Gender Studies majors have spent a postgraduate year in management studies and then gone on to careers in research institutions and NGO and development arenas.
- 3) It is possible to pursue postgraduate studies, both nationally and internationally, in Gender Studies. Such studies can lead to careers in research, academic teaching and scholarship, politics, and NGO work throughout the world.

Gender Studies postgraduates from the Faculty of Humanities have found jobs with the Commission on Gender Equality and the Department of Trade and Industry in South Africa, with NGO's in the UK and the USA, with higher education institutions in Botswana and Rwanda, and with a wide range of organizations in Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Kenya.



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Core courses include the following fields of study:

- What does gender mean in Africa and elsewhere?
- Feminist theories and women's movements in the context of global social movements
- The impact of economic and political developments on men and women
- The way gender and sexualities are rooted in political contexts
- Doing research in the politics of gendered knowledge



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WHAT students say about Gender Studies

Undergraduates who take Gender Studies introductory courses such as Understanding Gender and Gender, Sexuality and Politics in first and second year, often do these courses as curriculum fillers.

Once they have been introduced to the themes in these courses, however, many switch their majors to include Gender Studies. Here are some students' comments on what they found in our courses:

"I decided to challenge myself by adding Gender Studies as a third major as I believe that it gives me a broader scope to job opportunities that are in line with my passions in life, one of the passions being the striving towards global social justice and equality. I do find the material covered extremely informative, interesting and necessary to understand, analyse and grasp when dealing with the complexities within societies."

"I became very interested in Gender studies last year after hearing my roommate passionately discuss and explain to me the difference between sex and gender. She would constantly explain her work to me as a way to study and this broadened my interest. Even though politics was my first love, I fell in love with Gender Studies and I knew that this was the course I would have to take in order for me to have a more enjoyable second year."

"I think the Gender Studies department is one of the strongest, most organised and well run departments I have engaged with at UCT."

"I have wanted to take a gender studies class for a long time, and this was finally my first class. I wish I had more than a year left in university as I would really like to add a gender studies major now!"

For further information

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