

## **The ACTC Women's Studies Program and Augsburg's Mission**

Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary collaborative four-college major, created and nurtured in the cooperative scholarship and work of Augsburg College, Hamline University, The College of St. Catherine, and The University of St. Thomas. Although the program is not exclusively an Augsburg program, the Women's Studies major is one that is consistent with the mission of Augsburg College. Women's Studies is a field that both supports and is supported by the goals of Augsburg's mission as stated here:

*To nurture future leaders in service to the world by providing high quality educational opportunities, which are based in the liberal arts and shaped by the faith and values of the Christian church, by the context of a vital metropolitan setting, and by an intentionally diverse campus community.*

### ***...providing high quality educational opportunities...***

Women's Studies is a program that seeks and builds interconnections between and among culture, history, philosophy, religion, literature, language, and communication studies. The program draws on materials from each of these fields, weaving cultural fabrics, using specific perspectives of culture and core values, and pulling out particular strands of meaning, in order to think critically about the human condition. Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary-transdisciplinary major that draws on the extensive body of multidisciplinary research on women. The program provides a basis of understanding and an environment in which to analyze women's experiences and their situations today, nationally and globally, from multiple perspectives.

### ***...based in the liberal arts and shaped by the faith and values of the Christian church ...***

In Women's Studies, students cover material in the fields of art, literature, music, history, political science, sociology, philosophy, and theology as they learn to analyze women's experience in light of multiple "feminisms." Students routinely read fiction, poetry, history, philosophy, and theology; they study the work of women artists, writers and musicians. The major includes advanced Women's Studies courses such as Feminism and Christianity, Women in Fiction, Women in Art, Studies in Modern Fiction, Native American Women and Film, Criticism, History of Women, American Women and Politics, and Latin American Liberation Theologies. In advanced courses, they learn to

both critically consider and appreciate the cultural material arising from multiple faiths, arts, and sciences. Women's Studies majors also learn:

- How feminist theories can be put into practice in society, through the application of scholarly, artistic, and faith-based approaches to women's contributions to culture.
- How to apply strategies for personal and social changes for the improvement of women's situations, status and cultural recognition.
- How women have made contributions in areas of both faith and reason.

*... in the context of a vital metropolitan setting,*

*and by an intentionally diverse campus community ...*

Since its theories incorporate not only gender but also race and class differences, Women's Studies coursework also helps students develop an informed awareness of cultural diversity and the process of social transformation. In the foundations course, students acquire a basic understanding of major feminist approaches to the analysis and production of knowledge and culture, coming to an awareness of women's contributions as well as an understanding of moments in history when women's contributions have been ignored and/or appropriated.

In Women's Studies, students critically and analytically evaluate the diverse and multiple circumstances of women nationally and globally. Texts are carefully chosen to offer students specific knowledge about the lives and cultures of women who are different from themselves. Students analyze women's responses to such systems as imperialism, colonialism, racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Students demonstrate this analysis in oral presentations, tests, papers, and group discussions. Students make use of personal experiences to make connections between themselves and women who have had significantly different experiences, practicing what Rebecca Walker describes as using personal story as "the best basis for feminist theory ..." using our lives as a source of "feminist theory that neither vilifies or deifies, but that accepts and respects difference."