

# Founding Feminisms: Reflecting on the Roots of the Field

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## Introduction

At this time, many gender and women’s studies programs, centers, and departments are celebrating milestone anniversaries and exploring their rich histories across Wisconsin and the world. This thread explores, honors, and critiques historical narratives and analyses of gender, women’s, and sexuality studies programs, as well as adjacent fields and community-based work. These resources document the founding of programs, the work of early leaders and faculty, and the activist and intellectual traditions that shaped their development. Some grapple with racial tensions, gender policing, ableism, and other exclusionary elements the field has sought to overcome, including U.S.-centric impulses rooted in settler colonialism, imperialism, and the marginalization of transnational and Global South feminist perspectives. In addition, these resources excavate our shared intellectual genealogies as women’s, gender, sexuality, and LGBTQ+ studies scholars, ultimately exploring intersections across the historical transformations of feminist inquiry and social justice work.

For more on [struggles within the field, including racism](#), see bibliography 108b.

For early publications on:

- [Women’s studies as a discipline \(1972-1977\)](#), see bibliography 3.
- [Black women’s studies](#), see bibliography 17.
- [Mainstreaming women’s studies into the traditional curriculum](#), see bibliography 22.

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# Foundations

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## Evolutions and Transitions

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## Milestone Anniversaries

The following is a sampling of resources honoring milestone anniversaries in GWS. This is not an exhaustive list, and more research will be needed by anyone looking to complete a thorough examination of the anniversaries or institutions.

### At 10 Years

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- Trebilcot, J. (1980). Women's studies ten years later. *Off Our Backs*, 10(2), 16–33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25773200>
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- Hughes, L., & Enright, S. (2016, Mar. 31). UH Hilo Women's Studies program celebrates 25 years and the start of new baccalaureate degree. *UH Hilo Stories*. <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/chancellor/stories/2016/03/31/womens-studies/>
- Hutton, L. (2019, Nov. 14). The Center for Women's Studies celebrates 25th anniversary. *Colgate University News*. Colgate University. <https://www.colgate.edu/news/stories/center-womens-studies-celebrates-25th-anniversary>
- Looking back, moving forward: 25 years of women's studies history [Special issue]. (1997, Spr-Sum). *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 25(1/2).
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- Reid, S.A. (2017, Oct. 17). Center for Women celebrates 25 years at Emory. *Emory News Center*. [https://news.emory.edu/stories/2017/10/er\\_center\\_for\\_women\\_anniversary/campus.html](https://news.emory.edu/stories/2017/10/er_center_for_women_anniversary/campus.html)

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- Phadke, S. (2003). Thirty years on: Women's studies reflects on the women's movement. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38(43), 4567–4576. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4414191>
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- Guy-Sheftall, B. (2009, Apr. 1). Forty years of women's studies. *Ms.*, 19(2), 55-57.
- Pritchard, L.K. (2013, April). Forty years of women's and gender studies: A view from the trenches. *History of Women in the Americas*, 1(1), 84-97. <https://doi.org/10.14296/hwa.v1i1.1693>
- Reynolds, M. (2025), Mar. 26). Women's Studies and Gender Studies celebrates 45th anniversary. *The Loyola Phoenix*. <https://loyolaphoenix.com/2025/03/womens-studies-and-gender-studies-celebrates-45th-anniversary/>
- Tyrrell, K.A. (2013, Nov. 6). The evolving fabric: Women and Gender Studies celebrates 40 years at University of Delaware. *UDaily*. <https://www1.udel.edu/udaily/2014/nov/women-gender-studies-110613.html>
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- Arvelo, A. (2024, Dec. 11). 'And still we rise': BC Celebrates 50 years of Women's and Gender Studies Program through exhibit. *The Brooklyn College Vanguard*. <https://vanguard.blog.brooklyn.edu/2024/12/and-still-we-rise-bc-celebrates-50-years-of-womens-and-gender-studies-program-through-exhibit/>
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- Daggett, X. (2024, Apr. 4). Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies turns 50. *Illinois State University News*. <https://news.illinoisstate.edu/2024/04/womens-gender-and-sexuality-studies-turns-50/>
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- Heaney, K. (2020, Feb. 18). Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department celebrates 50th anniversary. *The Cornell Daily Sun*. <https://www.cornellsun.com/article/2020/02/feminist-gender-and-sexuality-studies-department-celebrates-50th-anniversary>
- Her Turn News. Gender & Women's Studies celebrates and persists at UW Madison [Audio]. *WORT*. <https://www.wortfm.org/gender-womens-studies-celebrates-persists-at-uw-madison/>
- Martinez, S. (2025, Dec. 9). *Fifty years of community, love, and resistance: Gender Studies at the University of Utah*. University of Utah College of Humanities. <https://humanities.utah.edu/news/fifty-years-of-community-love-resistance-gender-studies-at-utah.php>
- Meek, J. (2023, Mar. 29). At 50 years and counting, Purdue Fort Wayne's Women's Studies Program is golden [Audio]. *89.1 WBOI*. <https://www.wboi.org/arts-culture/2023-03-29/at-50-years-and-counting-purdue-fort-waynes-women-studies-program-is-golden>
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- Nunez, E., & Lacey, S. (2021, Mar. 29). Women's and gender studies students and faculty reflect on department's 50th anniversary. *The State Hornet*. <https://statehornet.com/2021/03/sac-state-womens-studies-50th-anniversary/>

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- Priesterath, A. (2024, Dec. 18). UC Santa Cruz closes Women’s Studies Department for their 50th anniversary. *University Express*. <https://www.uccuniversityexpress.com/latestissue/uc-santa-cruz-closes-womens-studies-department-for-their-50th-anniversary>
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- Sebring, B. (2023, Mar. 14). Women’s studies celebrating 50 years at PFW. *Purdue University Fort Wayne News*. <https://www.pfw.edu/news-center/womens-studies-celebrating-50-years-pfw>
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- Warnecke, L. (2024, Apr. 24). How it started, how it’s going: ISU Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies reflects on 50 years. *WGLT*. <https://www.wglt.org/local-news/2024-04-24/how-it-started-how-its-going-isu-womens-gender-and-sexuality-studies-reflects-on-50-years>
- Wells, S.O. (2022, Sep. 22). 50 years of Pitt women’s and gender studies celebrated. *University Times*. <https://www.utimes.pitt.edu/news/50-years-pitt-women-s-and>

## Program Histories by State

The following is a sampling of resources exploring GWS programs across the US. This is not an exhaustive list, and more research will be needed by anyone looking to complete a thorough examination of the institutions. Most departments have history pages on their websites, and these are not included here. For more information about a specific institution’s department, search the internet for the department name and “history.” What’s included below are mostly longer histories, those published in journals or digital collections of historical records.

### Arizona

- Dinnerstein, M. (1982). Curriculum integration at the University of Arizona. *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 10(1), 23–24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40003118>
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### Big Ten/Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC)

Yates, G. G. (1979). Big Ten forms women’s studies permanent consortium. *Women’s Studies Newsletter*, 7(1), 31–31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40041980>

### California

- Berkeley
  - Barry, A., Godard, C., & Park, A. (2025, Sept. 10). The history of women’s studies is a history of conflict. *Public Books*. <https://www.publicbooks.org/the-history-of-womens-studies-is-a-history-of-conflict/>

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- Christ, C.T. (1997). Anniversary lecture: The American university and women's studies. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 16(1), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/464038>
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  - Hale, S. (1986). Our attempt to practice feminism in the Women's Studies Program. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 8(3), 39–43. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3346369>
  - Ponciano, N. (2019, Oct. 2). The rise of women's studies at CSULB. *Long Beach Current*. <https://lbcurren.com/special-projects/70th-anniversary/2019/10/02/the-rise-of-womens-studies-at-csulb/>
  - Rosenfelt, D. S. (1973). Closeup: Long Beach Women's Studies Program. *Women's Studies Newsletter*, 1(3), 2–11. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40041837>
  - Sievers, S. L. (1986). What have we won, what have we lost? *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 8(3), 43–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3346370>
- Golden Gate University
  - Lam, K. (1972, Dec.). Why a program failed. *Off Our Backs*, 3(4), 17. [Golden Gate University]. Available via Women's Studies Archive database.
- Humboldt State University
  - Corbett, K. L., Preston, K. (1998). *From the catbird seat: A history of women's studies at Humboldt State University, 1971-1996*. Humboldt State University.
- Loyola Marymount University
  - Addo-Quaye, K. (2015, Sep. 30). The department of women's and gender studies celebrates its 10th anniversary. *The Los Angeles Loyolan*. [https://www.laloyolan.com/news/the-department-of-women-s-and-gender-studies-celebrates-its-10th-anniversary/article\\_a1f1bc78-53c9-567c-ad32-3a2d3bd7ca86.html](https://www.laloyolan.com/news/the-department-of-women-s-and-gender-studies-celebrates-its-10th-anniversary/article_a1f1bc78-53c9-567c-ad32-3a2d3bd7ca86.html)
- Sacramento
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  - Boxer, M.J. (1978, Spring). Closeup: Women's Studies Department at San Diego. *Women's Studies Newsletter*, 6(2), 20-23. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40042461>
  - Cannon, N.H. (1971, Oct-Dec.). First U.S.A. women's studies program. *Women Speaking*, 2(28), 19. Available via Women's Studies Archive database.
  - Cavanaugh, M. (2020, Mar. 10). First women's studies department in the nation celebrates 50 years [Audio]. *KPBS*. <https://www.kpbs.org/news/midday-edition/2020/03/10/first-womens-studies-department-nation-celebrates>

- Foulkes, S.B. (2007). *Coalitions, collaborations, and conflicts: the history of women's studies at San Diego State University from 1969-1974*. [Master's thesis, San Diego State University.] ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
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- Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. (n.d.). *Our history*. San Diego State University. <https://womensstudies.sdsu.edu/about-us>
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- Ristine, J. (2020, Nov. 30). Women's Studies at 50. *SDSU News*. <https://www.sdsu.edu/news/2020/11/womens-studies-50>
- Russell, T., Loftin, L., & Shayne, J. (2020). The history of San Diego State University's women's studies program. In J. Shayne (Ed.), *Persistence is resistance: Celebrating 50 years of gender, women & sexuality studies*. <https://uw.pressbooks.pub/happy50thws/chapter/the-history-of-san-diego-state-universitys-womens-studies-program-by-by-temperance-russell-lori-loftin-san-diego-state-university-and-julie-shayne-university-of-washington-b/>
- Salper, R. (2011). San Diego State 1970: The initial year of the nation's first women's studies program. *Feminist Studies*, 37(3), 656–682. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23069927>
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- Some politics of women's studies [Special issue]. (1971, May 31). *NUC San Diego State College Chapter Newsletter*, 8. Available via Women's Studies Archive database.
- San Francisco State University
  - De Anda, J. (2011, Nov. 1). SF State women and gender studies department celebrates forty years. *Golden Gate Xpress*. <https://goldengatexpress.org/14680/campus/wgs/>
- Stanford
  - Feminist Studies celebrates 20 years. (2001, July/August). *Stanford Magazine*. <https://stanfordmag.org/contents/feminist-studies-celebrates-20-years>
  - Freedman, E. B., & Rosaldo, M. Z. (1981). A note on the perils of publicity: The Feminist Studies Program at Stanford. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 9(3), 3–3. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40003900>
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  - Women's studies program-UCLA. (1971, Aug. 20). *Everywoman*, 2(12), 19. Available via Women's Studies Archive database.
  - Adams, C.K. (1973, Jan. 29). Call it a miracle: Women's studies scene. *Together*, 1(1). Available via Women's Studies Archive database.
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- UC Santa Cruz
  - Priesterath, A. (2024, Dec. 18). UC Santa Cruz closes Women's Studies Department for their 50th anniversary. *University Express*. <https://www.uccuniversityexpress.com/latestissue/uc-santa-cruz-closes-womens-studies-department-for-their-50th-anniversary>
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- University of California, S. Cruz. Women's Studies Dept. *The wave: Women's studies at UC Santa Cruz*. Women's Studies Dept., University of California.

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## Transforming the Curriculum

From its beginnings, women's studies has focused not only on the development of the field itself, but infusing all levels of education with feminist principles, pedagogies, and praxes to accurately and inclusively reflect women's lives and experiences. Some attempts were more successful than others, but the work to integrate women's studies throughout the institutional curricula became more formalized in the 1980s and 1990s.

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## International

The following is a sampling of resources exploring the histories of GWS programs across the world. This is not an exhaustive list, and more research will be needed by anyone looking to complete a thorough examination. For more information about a specific country's programs and histories, search the internet for the country name, "women's studies" or "gender studies," and "history."

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