

Women's Studies Handbook 2026-27



MA (& PHD) WOMEN'S STUDIES



<https://www.ucc.ie/en/womensstudies/>
<https://bsky.app/profile/uccwomenstudies.bsky.social>
<https://www.facebook.com/UCCWomenStudies/>
<https://www.instagram.com/uccwomenstudies/>

Program Director & Chair: [Dr Evelien Geerts](mailto:egeerts@ucc.ie) (egeerts@ucc.ie) (+353 (0)21 490 2708) (Philosophy Department, 2 Elderwood, top floor, College Road) (OH: Tue, 13-14hrs during the teaching terms or virtual appointments)

Administrator: [Colette Connolly](mailto:womenstudies@ucc.ie) (womenstudies@ucc.ie) (+353 (0)21 490 2588)

Welcome to Women's Studies at UCC

We are happy to have you join our postgraduate community at University College Cork.

During this academic year, you will be focusing on all things women's, gender, and sexuality studies in what will hopefully become a tight-knit community of folks.

While the Women's Studies MA modules are there for you to be thoroughly trained in contemporary critical theoretical concepts, methods and methodologies, and critical thinking, writing, and presenting, the MA dissertation module will provide you with the opportunity to work on an academic research piece during the summer, and that under the supervision of an academic expert.

Although the PG7044 PhD module will not be running this academic year, you are welcome to audit the Program Director's Philosophy courses and partake in the many research events organized at UCC.

We are looking forward to working with you & supporting you in your critical pedagogical learning journey!

Dr Evelien Geerts & the Women's Studies Board

Contents

Important Dates 2026-27.....	4
MA Degree Structure	5
Attendance Policy, Absences & Community Agreements	7
Pastoral Care & Accommodations.....	9
Assignments & Requirements	10
Acknowledging Sources & Avoiding Plagiarism	12
Referencing (Assignments & Dissertation)	12

Important Dates 2026-27

*Note that all the assignment dates will be communicated via Canvas. The Women's Studies program document (for the first 2 weeks of the semester & the full program) is the most important document. This document will regularly (and clearly) be updated and posted on Canvas.

- Orientation and start of semester 1: **7 September 2026**
- Public Holiday - no lectures: **26 October 2026**
- End of Semester 1 lectures: **27 November 2026**
- Christmas Recess (three weeks): **from 18 December 2026**
- Start of Semester 2: **11 January 2027**
- Public Holiday - no lectures: **01 February 2027**
- Public Holiday - St Patrick's Day - no lectures: **17 March 2027**
- Easter Recess (two weeks): **from 19 March to 2 April 2027**
- Last week of S2 lectures: **12 April 2027**
- MA Dissertation-related deadlines:
 - WS6008 Dissertation Proposal: **January 15, 2027 (by midnight)**
 - WS6008 Dissertation Literature Review Essay: **March 26, 2027 (by midnight)**
 - WS6008 Final Dissertation Presentations: **April 21, 2027, from 4-7PM**
 - WS6004 MA Dissertation (final manuscript): **September 24, 2027 (by midnight)**

MA Degree Structure

September – December	WS6002 Feminist Theories (10 credits) WS6007 Research Skills Part I: Feminist Methodologies (5 credits) Plus research-related workshops & Feminist Journal (part of WS6005)
January – April	WS6003 Gender and Society I: Contexts (5 credits) WS6005 Gender and Society II: Interdisciplinary Perspectives (15 credits) WS6008 Research Skills Part II: The Literature Review (10 credits)
April – end of September	WS6004 MA Dissertation (manuscript) (45 credits)

The MA degree can be taken over one year, with full-time registration, or over two-years with part-time registration. If you are registered part-time, you will take your MA dissertation-related modules in your second year.

Pedagogical objectives:

On successfully completing the MAWS course, students will be able to:

- formulate arguments at a post-graduate level that reflect a critical, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary knowledge of contemporary critical theoretical and feminist debates;
- communicate those arguments effectively both orally and in writing;
- apply concepts, theories, and methodologies appropriately at post-graduate level;
- assess how differences (gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual identity and orientation, and so forth) and their intersections inform theoretical positions;
- critically evaluate evidence drawn from existing research and scholarship;

- design and pursue independent academic research;
- utilize those transferable skills developed through engagement with the self-directed learning, research, and academic writing aspects of the course.

Although students will encounter a wide spectrum of feminist theories and methodologies during the first semester, our aim is to provide a conceptually integrated course in which the teaching team works together to:

- offer students a post-graduate training in women's, gender, and sexuality studies;
- introduce them to key feminist theories, concepts, and historical and contemporary debates;
- introduce them to the practice of keeping a feminist journal;
- and provide an opportunity for students to develop the critical and analytical skills that will enable them to conduct post-graduate and interdisciplinary research.

During the second semester:

- the focus of the seminars lies on gender and society, with discussions on issues such as the origins of feminism, the development of women's movements, concerns around violence against women and minorities, reproductive rights, and many other topics;
- during the second semester, the students will develop their feminist journal in more detail;
- students start identifying their dissertation topics. They will hand in a dissertation proposal by mid-January and then can start meeting with an appointed supervisor from February onwards. A literature review and dissertation presentation take place later in the Spring.

MA dissertation writing preparation:

- around mid-January, students will hand a dissertation proposal (including a bibliography) summing up what they would like to focus on. These outlines will be considered by the Board, and, if deemed feasible, the most appropriate supervisors will be appointed by February;
- during the February-April period, students will begin consultations with supervisors and will hand in the literature review by the end of March and present on their dissertation project at the end of April;
- full-time research and the writing-up of the dissertations are carried out over the period May to end of September (part-time students have a different timeframe and complete their dissertations during the second year of their studies)

Taught elements of the MA:

- the taught elements of the MA course modules are delivered during two semesters: from September-December and from January-April;
- copies of the module descriptions are available in the book of modules and on Canvas;
- there are usually 6 staff-student contact hours per week in this period (Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 5pm-7pm), although some seminars, research events, practical workshops, ... might be arranged;
- each taught module ends with an essay assignment (the details are communicated well in advance on Canvas and that per module);
- students are expected to attend Women's Studies and related events, especially when they have been integrated into the weekly program. Most classes are organized as seminars, meaning that students ideally come prepared to class (i.e., by having read the readings in advance, by taking notes, writing down questions, ...).

Attendance Policy, Absences & Community Agreements

We will work on community agreements during the first two weeks of class so that we can engage with one another as co-learners in the classroom (and beyond) and learn how to value each other's lived experiences and knowledges.

These agreements will also help us better manage the challenging discussions and discomfort that we might experience when engaging with the reading materials and each other during the year. This set of agreements assists us with holding ourselves accountable to the knowledge produced during our discussions; discussions that are guided by scientific knowledge production within the context of academic freedom/inquiry, respectfully developed academic critique, and affirmative dialogue.

Kindly note that there is a difference between freedom of speech and academic freedom/inquiry in the classroom.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH	ACADEMIC FREEDOM/INQUIRY
expression of ideas (no 'false' ideas)	discrimination among ideas (not all ideas are equal)
market place of ideas	"A university isn't a town square where anyone has the right to say anything they like." (Shannon Dea, 2018)
lying = allowed and protected	lying = fraud
"more speech"	"better speech"
no restraint	(inter)discipline
balance, "the other sides"	quality, professional competence (peer review, (inter)disciplinary associations)
"diversity of views"	difference in theories, methodologies, epistemologies

“Drawing boundaries between Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom/Inquiry”. Made by Sarah Bracke and lay-outed by Sara S’Jegers.

Please note that:

- all students are expected to attend all seminars in person, unless ill or unable to make it to class for a valid reason. Please stay home when ill as to not infect others – in most cases, class recordings can be provided. Contact your lecturer in advance via email to let them know you won’t be attending a particular session. If you are ill for a longer period (i.e., more than a week of missed classes), then please also contact the Program Director and provide them with a medical certificate;
- try to prevent handing in assignments late – if you happen to fall ill or are experiencing any other issues that are preventing you from handing in your work on time, then please contact the Program Director. Solutions can always be found;
- regular attendance and active participation will help you make the most out of your time at UCC – given that active participation consists of many forms, lecturers will do their best to ensure that students can engage with the materials in a variety of accessible and inclusive ways.

Pastoral Care & Accommodations

Sometimes life happens. If you are going through a difficult time while at UCC, then please contact the Program Director. We will respect your privacy. Please also note that in case of specific accommodation requests, we are happy to work on whatever it is that you need to succeed in the MA.



For reasonable accommodations, feel free to contact the Disability Support staff (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/access/support-while-in-ucc/disability-support/>) and also set up a conversation with the Program Director at the start of the academic year.

For personal or medical issues, you may wish to contact the office of Student Counselling and Development (<https://www.ucc.ie/en/studentcounselling/>), who will provide professional advice on any personal issues affecting your work or well-being for free.

Assignments & Requirements

*More information about the assignments (plus cover sheets) can be found on Canvas. Note that some of these assignments might still change. All assignments are double-marked (meaning that the Program Director goes over all the grades to ensure consistency) and reviewed by an academic external examiner.

Required work:

During the first semester you will be required to submit two essays:

- WS6002 Feminist Theories – 1 x 5000-word essay;
- WS6007 Research Skills Part I Feminist Methodologies – 1 x 3000-word essay.

During the second semester you will be required to submit 4 essays, plus other assignments:

- WS6008 Research Skills Part II:
 - 1 x MA dissertation proposal of 2 pages plus bibliography;
 - 1 x 5000-words MA dissertation literature review;
 - 1 x MA dissertation project presentation.
- WS6003 Gender and Society I – 1 x 3000-word essay;
- WS6005 Gender and Society II – 1 x 3000-word essay;
- 6 reflexive Feminist Journal entries (up to 3000 words) – note that this assignment can still change in 2026-27;
- Completion of the [Bystander Intervention Program](#) – this consists of a reflexive piece up to 1000 words, or an art piece in the form of music, art, poetry, ...

You submit your MA dissertation by the end of September.

Writing an MA dissertation:

- The dissertation length will be between 18000 words and 20000 words (bibliography included);
- The pass mark is 40%;

- The dissertation is worth 50% of the total marks (i.e., 45 credits).

Working on the dissertation:

- involves a literature review and appropriate primary research and analysis;
- involves participating in a substantial research project;
- provides an opportunity to apply and integrate some of the concepts, theories and analytical approaches you have been introduced to during the taught months of the course;
- involves a learning journey that is largely self-directed, self-managed and self-motivated – though it will be supervised;
- allows students to focus on/ specialize in a selected area of interest.

Supervisors:

- should be part of the Women's Studies Board and ideally be a permanent staff member;
- primarily provide feedback and direction, and, if needed, do so with support from the Program Director (make sure to contact the Program Director in case any dissertation-related or personal issues arise during the dissertation process – note that if students do not advance as they should, then the supervisor will contact the Program Director to work on a project managerial schedule with set deadlines);
- ensure that students achieve the required academic standard and that the overall structure of the dissertation is appropriate;
- ensure that arguments are supported with relevant academic evidence and that referencing is appropriate;
- are the first markers of the dissertation.

Getting started:

- identify a research question/problem;
- ask yourself whether your aims and objectives are clear and practical;
- am I hoping to contribute to the solving of practical/social and other problems through my research?;
- remember that research design involves considering both theory and methodology.

Methods & methodologies:

- you will need to decide which methods & methodologies are appropriate for your research;
- ask if the methods & methodologies you are considering are the most useful for finding out the information you need;
- will you use qualitative methods/ quantitative methods/a mix?;
- are there any potential ethical issues you will have to take into account?;
- will you use interviews/ focus groups?;
- do you have the skills to use these methods or can you acquire them?

Acknowledging Sources & Avoiding Plagiarism

You can find UCC's Academic Integrity Policy [here](#). Note that we expect our MA students to refrain from using AI when working on their assignments and writing their essays and dissertation.

Note that you must acknowledge your source(s) when you:

- use the words of another writer;
- summarize the words of another writer;
- use another writer's ideas (even when rephrasing them);
- refer to a document, book, article, ... that you cite as evidence;
- use material from a website, blog, student paper, etc.

Acknowledging your sources using accurate referencing allows the reader to see exactly what research you have done for your essay – it provides the reader with the academic context they need, and it also gives you the chance to earn extra marks.

Not acknowledging your sources or using someone else's words leaves you open to an accusation of plagiarism. This is considered a very serious offence. All the MAWS assignments will be submitted through Turnitin when uploading them to Canvas.

Referencing (Assignments & Dissertation)

The following is a simplified guide with detailed information on the version of the Harvard referencing system. STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO FOLLOW THIS REFERENCING METHOD.

Acronyms:

Spell out an acronym in full on first using it, for example, National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) and then write NWCi in the text thereafter.

You do not need to punctuate acronyms with full stops.

In a dissertation, an alphabetical list of acronyms/abbreviations should be provided at the beginning of the volume.

Numbers:

Generally, numbers less than ten are spelled out, for example: 'There are six golden rules.'

Percentages:

Refer to 'per cent' in the text and use % in tables.

Using the Harvard system (author-date):

This system defines the ways in which you:

- (i) refer to authors/sources in your text;**
- (ii) list reference sources in the bibliography at the end of your text.**

You will find that on-line guides to the Harvard system vary slightly. For example, some methods bracket dates of publication while others do not, some break up references with semi-colons while others do it with full stops. Some enter author names in bibliographies in upper-case text.

The following examples are intended as a simplified guide to the referencing style used in the Women's Studies MA course.

References within the Text:

You must provide information on your sources when you:

1. refer to an author;
2. quote an author;
3. summarize or paraphrase an author's ideas;
4. quote factual information;
5. quote statistics or enter figures, tables, diagrams, ...

Also think about your citational politics!

References should contain:

- the author's surname;
- the year of publication;
- and the page number (in the case of a direct quote, reference or to direct readers to sources of ideas);

We require in-text references in this format and with this punctuation:

Open bracket / author name / comma / year / colon / page number / close bracket

e. g., (Murray, 2005: 14).

Where to place references

- 1. Do they fit naturally with the author's name?**

Where the reference occurs in the text may relate to whether or not the author's name fits naturally into the text.

For example:

As Jameson (2002: 25) suggests

Wilson's study (2005: 108) identified a number of factors ...

2. End of sentence references:

References that occur at the end of a sentence occur **before the full stop**, except in displayed quotations (an issue explained later), where the reference occurs after the full stop.

For example:

Vulnerable groups, as Heath points out, were considered to include 'children, women and the working-classes' (Heath, 2010: 51).

Further points relating to referencing:

- (a) When you are referring to an author's broad theory, the central thesis developed in a work, it is permissible to refer to author and date –

For example:

In her well-known study Anthony (2005) suggested ...

- (b) A **string of references cited together in a text** may be listed in chronological or alphabetical order –

e.g., (chronological list): The Roman Catholic Church condemns artificial methods of birth control and abortion in any circumstance, and its influence on Irish legislation and public policy

since 1922 has been considerable and well documented (Curtis, 2010, Ferriter, 2009, Earner-Byrne, 2007, Hug, 1999, Inglis, 1989, Keogh, 1985, Whyte, 1971).

(c) When **the same author has published more than one work in the same year**, distinguish references by adding 'a', 'b', 'c' to the date, e.g. Garvey (1991), Garvey (1991a), Garvey (1991b). Letters should be assigned according to the order in which the works are referred to in the text.

(d) **Where a work has three or more authors or editors**, the name of the first author or editor is given in the text followed by '*et al.*'; all author or editors' names should be given in the corresponding bibliographical entry.

(e) When **citing an anonymous work**, acknowledge it in the text as anonymous, e.g. (Anonymous 1945); for unsigned works use the name of the journal or periodical e.g. (*Irish Independent* 1998).

(f) When **referencing a web site in the text**, you may know the names of authors of some sites or the organizations that maintain them. It is simpler to use these names when referencing in the text than to enter the website address at the end of a sentence. As indicated in the section on bibliography below, the site name, address and date when accessed are entered in the bibliography.

Quoting Within the Text:

- If you **quote directly** from an author, you must give details of **author, year and page** and make sure that you have included the source in the bibliography.
- **Short quotations** (less than 30 words or up to two lines) should be **enclosed in single inverted commas and quoted in the text**.
- **Double inverted commas** are used when there is a **quote within a quote**.

For example: ‘For British colonists, “the imperial conquest of the globe found both its shaping figure and its political sanction in the prior subordination of women as a category of nature.”’ (Note that the rule is: doubles within single quotation marks (as above), and conversely, singles within double quotation marks.)

Displayed quotes /longer quotes are:

- set out separately, **indented and single spaced** to distinguish them from the text;
- **not** enclosed in inverted commas.

Referencing displayed / longer quotes:

Details of the author, date and pages usually follow these quotes either at the end of its last sentence (In which case – unlike the format for quotes in the text - they are placed **after** the full-stop) **or just below** it. (Again, make sure that you have included the source in your bibliography.)

For example:

Some were clear-cut: cancer of the womb or breast, severe heart disease, obstetrical histories indicating a dangerously high risk, acute psychological disorders, and other conditions such as renal failure and hypertension that had not responded to treatment and that an experienced physician considered would affect the life-expectancy of the mother.

(Solomons, 1992: 72)

An alternative approach, in which the reference appears in the text preceding the quote, is illustrated by the following quotation from Jennifer D’Arcy’s 1999 chapter ‘Gender and Irish Social Policy in Gabriel Kiely et al. (1999). *Irish Social Policy in Context*, Dublin: UCD Press.

The importance of the citizen as actor is identified by Lister (1998:38). She argues that:

To act as a citizen requires first a sense of agency, the belief that one can act, acting as a citizen especially collectively in turns fosters that sense of agency. This agency is not simply about the capacity to choose and act but it is also about a conscious capacity which is important to the individual’s self-identity.

If you omit a section of a quote, you indicate this with three dots ... :

‘There was a sense of scratching the surface and finding that the social problems of the real Ireland affected most families in some way. ... the campaign ... opened up a range of issues including the problems faced by single parents’ (Leahy, 2003: 9).

Figures, tables, diagrams, ...:

Figures, tables, diagrams etc. must be numbered.

Footnotes and endnotes:

Using the Harvard system means that there is rarely a need to include footnotes/endnotes and they should be avoided if possible. If something arises that requires further explanation and you must use a footnote/s these notes should be numbered sequentially and appear at the foot of the page/s in question. The alternative is to place an endnote at the end of the essay/chapter/end of the text of the dissertation.

Building a bibliography:

Your bibliography includes **full citation details of the materials you have used in your research**. It is particularly important to check your text and ensure that you have included in the bibliography every work you have directly cited. It is a good idea to construct your bibliography as you do your research. Enter each source as you use it. It can sometimes be difficult to retrace everything and pull together the bibliography at a later date.

The bibliography should be in **alphabetical order (by surname of the author)** and should include surname and initials, year of publication, title, place of publication and publisher – as per the Harvard method.

Print and web journal articles, websites, newspapers, archives or other sources should also be included in the bibliography.

Referencing style in the bibliography:

Books

Author Surname, Author Initial. (Year of Publication), *Title of Book*, Edition {if not the first}, Place Published: Publisher.

Edited Books

Editor Surname, Editor Initial. (Year of Publication) (ed.), *Title of Book*, Place Published: Publisher.

Article in a Book

Author Surname, Author Initial. (Year of Publication), 'Title of Article or Essay', in Editor Initial. Editor Surname (Date Published), *Title of Book*, Place Published: Publisher, Page Nos.

Article in a Book with two Authors

Author Surname, Author Initial. and second author Surname, Initial. (Year of Publication), 'Title of Article or Essay', in Editor Initial. Editor Surname (Date Published), *Title of Book*, Place Published: Publisher, Page Nos.

Article in a Journal

Author Surname, Author Initial. (Year of Publication), 'Title of Article or Essay', *Title of Journal*, Vol. No. (Issue No.), Page Nos.

Newspaper/Periodical Article

Author Surname, Author Initial. (Year of Publication), 'Title of Article', *Title of Newspaper/Periodical*, Day and Month, Page Nos.

Unattributed articles are listed under title:

Title of Newspaper/Periodical (Year of Publication), 'Title of Article', Day and Month, Page Nos.

Conference Paper (Published)

Author's Surname, Initials. (Year of Publication), 'Title of Contribution' in Editor Initials. Editor Surname (ed.) *Title of Conference Proceedings*, Date and Place of Conference, Place of Publication: Publisher, Page Numbers.

(Apply as appropriate to unpublished conference papers)

Publication from a Corporate Body

(e.g. a government department or other organization)

Name of Issuing Body (Year of Publication), *Title of Publication*, Place of Publication: Publisher, Report Number {*where relevant*}.

Thesis

Author's Surname, Initials. (Year of Publication) *Title of Thesis*,
Designation {e.g. *Ph.D.*}, Name of Institution to which Thesis was Submitted.

Electronic Material

Reference to web pages/sites and e-books:

Author/Editor Surname, Initials. (Year) *Title*, Place of Publication, Publisher {*if ascertainable*}, available from: URL [accessed (Date)].

e.g. Holland, M. (2004), *Guide to Citing Internet Sources*, Poole,

Bournemouth University, available from:

<http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/library/using/guide_to_citing_internet_sourc.html> [accessed 4 November 2004].

Reference to e-journals:

Author's Surname, Initials. (Year) Title', *Journal Title* [online], Volume No. (Issue No.), Location within Host, available from: URL [accessed (Date)].

e.g. Korb, K.B., (1995) 'Persons and Things: Book Review of Bringsjord on Robot-Consciousness', *Psycology*, 6(15), available from:

<<http://psycprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk/archive/00000462/>> [accessed 20 May 2004].

Translation

Gramsci, A. (1971), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. and ed. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith, London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Miscellaneous

When the same author has several publications, these are placed in order with the most recent first.

Alphabetically, in a reference list, 'Mc' is treated as if it was the same as 'Mac'.

When the same author has several publications in the same year, say, 2008, the one that occurs first in the text is '2008a', the one that occurs second in the text is '2008b', the next '2008c', etc.