

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Women's and Gender Studies Instruction: Teaching to Replace the Renaissance Man in the Face of Conservatism

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Regardless of growing global enrollment rates, critics have long interrogated the merit of Women's and Gender Studies referring to it as a frivolous investment. At the same time, many students fail to understand the purpose or benefit of a WGS education while instructors struggle to find pedagogical works to utilize in their teaching. Although studies have offered insight into student experiences and learning outcomes in WGS classrooms, they offer little in terms of the instructors' efforts throughout the teaching and learning process (Berger & Radeloff, 2014; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995; Sevelius & Stake, 2003; Spoor & LehMiller, 2014; Stake, 2006; 2007; Stake & Gerner, 1987; Stake & Hoffman, 2001; Stake & Rose, 1994; Zucker, 2004). To address this gap in the literature, I explored the experiences and efforts of instructors while teaching for a WGS program or department in a conservative state where the culture challenges the core of the academic discipline. I employed an interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The study was guided by the research questions (a) how do instructors in four-year institutions of higher education in Indiana experience teaching WGS courses, (b) how do WGS instructors prepare their syllabi, lesson plans, and course materials prior to the start of the course, (c) how do WGS instructors prioritize which lessons and topics are addressed throughout

the semester, and (d) how do WGS instructors facilitate learning in and outside of their classrooms? Eleven instructors from four of the largest public, four-year universities in Indiana participated in semi-structured interviews. The resulting themes of themes (a) guiding students to personal and academic growth, (b) teaching as a form of care,(c) encouraging engagement, and (d) courses as living entities portray the experiences and efforts of the instructors to be intentional, methodical, and care-driven.