**Entry type:** Organisation
**Entry ID:** AWE0007

# Women’s Studies Program, Australian National University

(1976 - 2000)

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| **Born** | 19760101, Canberra Australian Capital Territory Australia |
| **Died** | 20001231, Canberra Australian Capital Territory Australia |
| **Occupation** | Tertiary education institution |

## Summary

The Women’s Studies Program was established at the Australian National University in 1976 as the result of activism and political pressure applied by students who were connected to the Women’s Liberation movement. In the first instance, the program’s key aims were to explore the position and representation of women in Australian and other societies, the forces producing female subjectivity and women’s experiences of femininity. Moving the examination of these questions into the academy was an important step in the development of a feminist critique of existing disciplines and institutional structures and the development of feminist scholarship in general.

## Details

The introduction of the Women's Studies Program was approved by the Faculty of Arts and the Board of the School of General Studies at the Australian National University in 1974 as an interdisciplinary course for advanced-year students. In January 1976, Dr Ann Curthoys was appointed as a Lecturing Fellow to develop and teach the course as a full-year single unit. It was described at the time as 'concerned with the study of women in society, and the biological, psychological, social, cultural, political and economic dimensions of gender differentiation' (ANU Calendar, 1977). The Program was administratively attached to the History Department.

After two years of teaching the course, Curthoys transferred to the University of Technology Sydney in February 1978 (she returned to ANU as Professor of History in 1994) and Dr Susan Magarey succeeded her as lecturer. The early years of the program featured a number of lecturers from a range of departments such as History, English, Psychology, Philosophy, Demography, Sociology and Anthropology, as well as guest lecturers Senator Susan Ryan, Sara Dowse (who had been head of the Women Affairs Unit in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1974-77) and Jenny Macklin (later a Labor minister). Magarey was later joined by Julia Ryan as a temporary lecturer (1981-82). In 1983, Magarey went to the University of Adelaide as the founding Director of the Research Centre for Women's Studies.

In 1984, Dr Dorothy Broom (Department of Sociology) was appointed lecturer and convenor of the program. Dr Jill Julius Matthews (Department of History) was also appointed lecturer in 1984, becoming convenor in 1987, a role which alternated between them. By the late 1980s, the program offered four annual and two semester units, a 4th year honours program, a Graduate Diploma, a Master of Letters and higher degrees by research. It also supported a Resource Unit on Women and Gender which developed teaching bibliographies to inject gender issues into other Faculty of Arts courses.

After a period of financial cutbacks and uncertainty about the Program's longevity, a review of the Program resulted in the ANU Council resolving in September 1995 that the Program be designated the Centre for Women's Studies, with Matthews as Director (she had been promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1991 and Reader in 1994). Dr Jan Jindy Pettman (Department of Political Science) was appointed Director and Reader from the beginning of 1997. At that time, there were four lecturers: Dr Jill Matthews, Dr Rosanne Kennedy, Dr Fiona Paisley and Dr E Wilson.

On 7 April 2000, the ANU Council approved a general restructure of the Faculty of Arts which abolished the Centre for Women's Studies as an administrative unit with effect from 1 July 2000. In 2001, the 25th anniversary of the Women's Studies Program was celebrated with a seminar featuring current and former staff including Ann Curthoys, Susan Magarey and Liz O'Brien.

## Published resources

**Resource**
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

**Journal Article**
Women's Studies at the Australian National University: The early years, Curthoys, Ann, 1998

Orphans of the storm: The attrition of the ANU women's studies program, Matthews, Jill Julius and Broom, Dorothy, 1991

**Site Exhibition**
From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg

## Archival resources

**Australian National University Archives**
Women's Studies - Tenth Anniversary at ANU - Dr. Dorothy Broom, Dr. Jill Matthews, Dr. Susan Magarey, Ms. Wang Ying, Ms. Wu Lintao, Ms. Xu Xuehai, Ms. Liu Maoshu, Ms. Lian Lijuan, Kathleen Taperell & others

Women's Studies

Australian National University Council minutes

ANU Women's Studies Program audiovisual material and photographs

Material relating to 25th anniversary celebrations of ANU Women's Studies Department

Jill Matthews papers

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