

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS

The National Women's Studies Association has long encouraged both undergraduate and graduate student participation in its annual conferences. The guidelines below offer some suggestions about how to prepare a successful proposal, especially for those who are doing so for the first time.

Prospective presenters will benefit from understanding how the proposal review process works; in November the national office will receive from 350-500 proposals for papers and sessions. These proposals go on to the proposal review committee and are read anonymously by at least three reviewers whose areas of expertise align with the subject areas identified on the proposal.

In November and December, the proposal review committee reads the proposals in light of criteria listed in the Call for Proposals. The reviewers report their recommendations to the committee chair: yes, include in the program; no, do not include in the program; perhaps include in the program. Those with unanimous "yes" reviews will find a place in the program, and those with unanimous "no" reviews will be declined. Those in the "maybe" category are re-reviewed before final decisions are made.

Complete panel proposals are more likely to find a place in the program because they are fully developed presentations with organized themes; the proposal review committee has difficulty developing panels of similar quality and complexity by linking individual papers. With this information in mind, here are some additional steps you can take as you develop proposals for NWSA conferences:

1. Start early. The deadline for proposals usually falls in early November, but those with plans to submit proposals begin their work long before this. Putting a panel together involves several steps: approaching prospective panelists, collecting abstracts from each of them, molding the papers into a cohesive theme, and contacting and securing commitments from prospective moderators. Keep in mind that everyone you deal with will be busy with many other projects. A good rule of thumb is to make your most generous estimate of how long this process will take, then double it, and plan accordingly.
2. Submit a proposal for a complete panel rather than an individual paper. It's tempting to opt for the individual paper option, which seems faster and easier, and which seems to save you the chore of approaching a lot of people you've never met and may hesitate to impose on. But if you submit an individual paper proposal, you will diminish your chances of acceptance. And if your individual paper is accepted, you'll find you have very little choice about the other members of your panel or who will be moderating your sessions. If, however, you decide to submit a proposal for a complete panel, you'll make these choices and develop important new professional contacts. This isn't as hard as it may sound; NWSA maintains many different caucus, task force, and interest group listservs for its members. Other possibilities include using the electronic resources of

wmst-1 and other feminist listservs, which will put you in touch with other women's studies scholars who may be interested in your topic.

3. Make your panel as diverse and interdisciplinary as possible. Program committees can and do favor panels that assemble participants from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds over panels on which the participants come from the same discipline, background, or institution.

4. Write a good proposal description. When you have finally assembled your panelists and moderator, you may think that pasting the abstracts together is enough to add up to a good proposal. The best proposals include a panel description that connects all the proposed papers to an overall theme.

5. Meet the organizational requirements. Incomplete proposals and those received after the deadline will not be considered. Plan ahead; last year the NWSA server was overloaded on the proposal submission deadline date. People sometimes had to try more than once to submit. Give yourself a late October deadline and you will not confront this problem!

Adapted from the American Studies Association

Guidelines for Submitting All Proposals

Step 1: Note that all proposals must be submitted electronically via www.nwsaconference.org by **midnight EST on November 1, 2006**. Late submissions will not be considered.

Step 2: Note the option to submit poster session proposals; selecting this option increases the likelihood of acceptance due to limited breakout session space. Also note that full sessions/panel proposals must include a **non-presenting moderator** who will be charged with introducing speakers, keeping time, and coordinating discussion. Moderators will be listed in the conference program and must register for the conference. NWSA will assist with assigning moderators for individual proposals.

Step 3: Indicate whether you are applying for the Program Administration and Development or Women's Centers Pre-Conferences, the General Conference Session, or the Creative Writers Series. You may also indicate that your proposal is organized to address one of the conference sub-themes: Girls Studies and Activism, Performing Feminisms, or Im/Migration and Mobility. See below for more information and descriptions of these events.

Step 4: The National Women's Studies Association especially encourages complete panel/session submissions. Full panels typically include at least three presenters plus a moderator. The Proposal Review Committee encourages members to use NWSA and other listserves to network and find colleagues with whom to develop full sessions. NWSA bulletin boards and/or its web site will also serve as resources for those soliciting potential panelists on topics of mutual interest.

Step 5: Identify the appropriate session format for your proposal. Full details on session types are listed in the Call for Proposals.

For more information on how to submit quality proposals, to find examples of accepted proposals, and for answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the conference, visit www.nwsaconference.org.

General Guidelines

All participants on the 2007 NWSA program must be current (2007) members of NWSA, including the Creative Writer's Series, pre-conferences, and general conference. Membership in NWSA runs from January 1-December 31, 2007. **Panel organizers are responsible for conveying information about this requirement to prospective participants.** Participants must be current members and pre-registered for the conference by **April 16, 2007** or risk being removed from the printed program book.

To inquire about your membership status, email nwsaoffice@nwsa.org or call (301) 403-0525. Conference registration fees are separate from membership.

Participation Limits

To promote broad participation in the Annual Conference, an individual may not appear in the conference program more than **two times** (e.g., presenting a paper, moderating a session, leading a workshop). This total does not include participation in any session connected with an NWSA office, committee, award or invited sessions (e.g., NWSA business meetings, addresses, or awards ceremonies).

GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

Panel vs. Paper and Other Session Formats

The general conference has a variety of formats for examining women's studies education, scholarship, and activism: panel sessions, paper sessions, poster sessions, performances, workshops, and roundtables. Poster sessions were a new and well-received format in 2006 due to their informal nature and their networking potential. Therefore we are expanding the program space devoted to poster sessions and encourage prospective participants to consider this option.

Panels provide an opportunity for examining specific problems or topics from a variety of perspectives. Panels may present alternative solutions, interpretations, or contrasting points of view on a specified subject or in relation to a common theme. Panel members are expected to prepare papers addressing central questions.

The National Women's Studies Association especially encourages complete panel submissions. The Proposal Review Committee encourages members to use NWSA and other listserv resources to network and find colleagues with whom to develop full sessions.

Paper proposals are typically submitted individually and arranged into sessions by the Proposal Review Committee. In paper sessions, authors present 10-12 minute papers followed by audience discussion. A typical structure for a session with four papers allows approximately 5 minutes for the moderator to introduce the session, 10 minutes for each presenter, and 30 minutes for discussion.

Performance proposals may be submitted individually or as a group, although the National Women's Studies Association encourages combined performance sessions around particular themes, texts, or theoretical concepts. Please note that performance proposals must demonstrate intellectual rigor and relevance to the field of women's and gender studies.

Poetry and Prose submissions are accepted for possible inclusion in the Creative Writer's Series only. These individual submissions will be arranged into sessions by the Creative Writer's Series Chair. Accepted writers will read for a maximum of 15 minutes.

Sponsored Sessions may be submitted by NWSA Caucuses on topics of particular interest to caucus members and NWSA members as a whole. One sponsored session per caucus will be offered space in the Conference Program if submissions are received by

the proposal deadline. Task forces and interest groups may also submit proposals for sponsored sessions, but please note that these slots are not guaranteed.

Roundtables typically include a moderator and 4-6 presenters who make brief, informal remarks about a specific idea or project. It allows for extensive discussion and audience participation.

Poster Sessions present research or analysis on a topic by combining graphics and text on a 4'x8' board. The poster session presenter is available during an assigned session time in order to interact on a one-on-one basis with the attendees viewing the poster. A well-planned poster communicates its message in a visually and textually powerful way, allowing the attendee to grasp the information quickly. Detailed instructions on the preparation of posters are available at www.nwsaconference.org/.

Workshops provide an opportunity to exchange information or work on a common problem, project, or shared interest. Workshops are typically experientially oriented with brief presentations that allow adequate time for reflective discussion and interaction.

Abstracts vs. Proposal Descriptions or Sample Creative Work

Abstracts for all proposals, including Creative Writing Series and poster sessions, should be 50-100 words. Abstracts explain to potential attendees the topic, foci, and/or goals of the presentation or reading in a clear and succinct manner in the program book. Abstracts may be revised or edited for the printed program.

One- to two-page proposal descriptions (250-500 words) should include some or all of the following, as appropriate:

- Objective or purpose of the paper, panel, workshop, etc.
- Perspective or theoretical framework
- Results and/or conclusions and point of view
- Relevance to the field of women's studies and/or conference theme
- Discussion of how the session will be structured

Proposal descriptions assist proposal reviewers with evaluating the session or paper's appropriateness for inclusion in the conference program. **Creative Writer's Series** applicants should submit no more than 10 double-spaced pages of sample work.

Abstracts and proposal descriptions may not exceed word limits above.

General Conference Review Procedures

All General Conference proposals are reviewed anonymously (without author identification). Guidelines for reviewers are developed by the National Conference Chair and the Proposal Review Committee. Depending upon the format and type of scholarly work being proposed, the appropriate criteria from among the following will be used to evaluate proposals:

- topic (originality, choice of problem, importance of issues, relevance to conference theme)
- contribution to women's and gender studies
- frameworks (theoretical/conceptual/practical frameworks, rationale, literature review, grounding)
- balance of topic areas, levels of expertise, institutional locations
- written proposal (quality of writing, clarity, logic, organization)
- audience appeal (member appeal, journal article quality)
- format (appropriateness of format to content, issues, or themes)
- opportunities for interaction (opportunities for contributions from audience or exchange of multiple perspectives)

Incomplete proposals will not be considered.

Proposal Status

NWSA will send accept/decline notifications by email on **February 1, 2007** for all prospective participants in the general conference session.

Those who have submitted proposals for the Standing Committee Pre-Conferences will be notified separately by the session organizers by email on **February 1, 2007**.

In an attempt to ensure high quality presentations that can be enjoyed by all conference attendees, we offer the following suggestions:

General Information

- Know the time and location of your session. If possible, visit the room prior to your talk so you have a sense of the space.
- Arrive at the assigned room as early as you can and set up quickly to allow the session to start on time.
- End your session on time – exceeding time makes it harder for the next set of presenters to prepare for their session, and causes your attendees to arrive late to their next session.
- When presenting, talk at a normal speaking rate, loudly enough for those in the back of the room to hear. Vary your speech patterns to avoid a monotone presentation.
- Even if reading a paper, make every effort to look at your audience and engage them in your presentation.
- When speaking, position your face at an angle that allows participants to read your lips. Avoid speaking while facing away from the audience, or while looking down at papers or screens.
- Do not exceed your time – doing so negatively impacts the others in the session. Practice your presentation prior to the conference to ensure that you are able to cover desired material in the allotted time.
- If reading a paper or other lengthy document, bring one additional copy to be borrowed by interpreters to assist in translating/signing technical terms and/or proper names.
- If a translator is present in your session, work with the assisted attendee(s), translator and moderator to provide seating in a location that supports the needs of all parties.
- If engaging in experiential activities make sure you have planned for the inclusion of all, regardless of physical abilities.
- If your session includes discussion or questions, ensure that those speaking take turns so that attendees can focus on the contributions of one participant at a time.
- Take care that sounds from your session do not negatively affect other sessions occurring in adjoining rooms.
- Avoid wearing jewelry or other items that make noise unless doing so relates to the presentation.
- NWSA asks that all presenters and attendees refrain from wearing perfumes and other scented products while participating in conference activities.
- Permission must be granted by the NWSA Executive Director in order to burn candles, incense or any other scent or fume-producing products in the session rooms or exhibit hall. Sessions at which these products are used will be identified in the program book.
- Expect that session attendees will be interested in talking to you further about your work – come prepared with business cards or other materials that can help others contact you after the conference.

- If you are unable to make your presentation, either find a colleague to share your materials, or inform the moderator of your absence.

Presenting a Paper

- Presenting a paper does not mean simply reading your paper. Ideas that are clearly, and perhaps cleverly, communicated in writing may not always appear so when presented aurally. Practice the presentation to ensure that your ideas can be communicated well in the conference format.
- You will not be able to share everything you know about your subject in the time allotted. Your goal should be to highlight the most interesting aspects of your work, and to create enough interest in your topic to encourage the audience members to seek out your completed paper for additional information.
- Make sure you have a strong opening and closing to your talk, and have identified some body material that can be eliminated should you find yourself short on time. Do not sacrifice the closing since this is the summative information about your work.
- It takes about 2 minutes to read a double-spaced page, so a 7-8 page paper would yield a 15 minute presentation. Plan your time wisely, taking into consideration the number of panelists and the desire for post-presentation discussion.
- Be careful with the amount of editorializing you do during your presentation – time taken for this commentary may lengthen your talk if you timed your discussion based on your written work.
- Consider printing your paper in 16-point font so it will be easy for you to read; you may wish to mark pauses and points of emphasis so you can note them with your voice.
- Prepare yourself for questions: allow for disagreement and do not be afraid to say “I don’t know,” or “That’s a point I hadn’t considered.”

Use of Visual Aids and Handouts

- If providing handouts of any kind, prepare some large print copies and/or make it possible for attendees to obtain an electronic version that allows for type size adjustments or use of text readers (creating audio from written text).
- Audio-visual equipment will be assigned to rooms and sessions based on requests submitted via the Call for Proposals. Although there will be technicians on hand to ensure that the requested audio-visual equipment is available and working properly, it is the presenter’s responsibility to know how to use the equipment they have requested.
- If using computers, projectors, or other similar items, make sure to work with the moderator and other presenters to ensure that the flow of the session is planned in a manner that allows a quick transition from speaker to speaker regardless of equipment used.
- If utilizing overheads or other projected visuals, select a large font and limit text to key information. Select colors that are visible in both high and low light.
- If possible, turn off the projector when not in use to diminish noise from the equipment.
- If utilizing video, enable closed captioning if available.

- Avoid the use of flashing graphics or anything that produces a strobe-light effect.
- If using overheads, projectors, or video, keep the room lighting as high as possible.
- Although one hopes not to need it, create a back-up plan in case the audio-visual portion of the presentation cannot be used (i.e. disc error, faulty equipment, etc).