Introduction

Year 2010 marks the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the Gender Studies Program. This special issue of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Journal SARJANA is in celebration of these 15 years the Gender Studies Program has been in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. This volume comes out of a small but committed group of lecturers, researchers and women’s rights activists and their contribution is a manifestation of their dedication to the issue of gender.

College and university-level women’s studies classes in the United States were first offered in the late 1960s and early 1970s following the realization that academic research and teaching were based on white, middle-class male perspectives and experiences. Women’s studies programs were launched in academic institutions in Europe and Asia in the following decades. The Gender Studies Program at the University Malaya, initiated in 1996, is the only program in Malaysia offering a minor in Gender Studies. Like its counterparts in other countries, the Gender Studies Program explores traditional topics from alternative viewpoints and from a gender perspective (see for example, Brush, Gold, & White, 1978; Macalister, 1999).

Merits in the Gender Studies Program being a stand alone program/department/institute at the University of Malaya is as follows:

- Visibility
- Potential to expand into a research institute, with postgraduate and undergraduate teaching
- Potential for internationalization
- Contribute towards strengthening University of Malaya’s position as a research university
- Offering innovative, cutting edge courses
- Inter and trans disciplinary research and teaching