Government 385: Women and Politics

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Spring 2010
Office hours: Thursday, 2:00-4:00

Class meetings: Wednesday, 1:10-4:00; PAC 411

Course overview

Women and Politics is a diverse and lively subfield within political science. The subfield encompasses a wide range of topics, including feminist political theory, voting behavior, comparative public policy, and the study of women’s movements. This course, however, will focus specifically on issues surrounding women in politics, that is, women as political actors. Furthermore, we will concentrate (though not exclusively) on the subject of women engaged in conventional politics.

The course begins with a brief exploration of women’s political participation over time and also of women’s voting behavior. We move on to consider the meaning of representation and why it might be important for women to be represented politically. We then examine factors that affect both the “supply” and the “demand” for female candidates. We look at the ways in which the media have covered women campaigning for office. The final sections of the course investigate women in executive office and whether it makes a difference to political outcomes to have more women in politics. This is a course in comparative politics with a strongly cross-national focus. That is, we consider the United States as one country among many, but this is not an American Politics course.

Course Requirements

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Country Wiki Project</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Topic Papers (5-6 pages, 15% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft of final paper (due April 19th)</td>
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<td>Presentation on final paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper (15-20 pages, due May 11th)</td>
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Participation: This course is a seminar and it is vital that you attend every class prepared to talk about the assigned readings. Missing even one class will have a seriously detrimental effect on your participation grade. I expect our discussions to be lively, passionate and fun! I also expect you to listen to each other and to me with courtesy and
respect, even when we disagree. Your participation grade will consist of the following factors: frequency and quality of in-class comments, preparation of discussion questions, and other small assignments that come up over the course of the semester.

**Study Questions:** Each week two people will prepare two study questions to help guide our discussion of the readings. If it is your week to prepare study questions, you should also come to class prepared to lead discussion. The study questions will need to be posted to the course Blackboard site by 10pm on Tuesday. Everyone will prepare study questions twice over the course of the semester. I will distribute a sign-up sheet next week. Questions should speak both to issues in particular readings and broader themes of the week.

**Country Wiki Project:** Each of you will become an expert in the politics of a particular country. I will suggest countries, but I’m open to others, selected in consultation with me. Most weeks you will be asked to complete an assignment on your country. Usually these assignments will take the form of investigating empirical information for your country for theories we have studied in class. The results of the group country assignments will become a reference resource for the class. These assignments should be submitted on Blackboard using a Wiki.

**Topic Papers:** The course requires two topic papers, five to six pages each. Topic papers will be based on the readings of a particular week, though you may include readings from earlier in the semester as well. Everyone must write at least one topic paper prior to spring break. Otherwise, the choice is up to you, but you may want to consider both which topics you are most interested in and which due dates fit your schedule. All topic papers are due on a Monday at 4pm, the week following class discussion. I will distribute a sign-up sheet next week so think about which weeks you would like to write about. Even short papers need a thesis, in other words, need to be making an argument. The thesis is up to you, but the paper should relate to its subunit and make use of the relevant readings. You are welcome to use outside readings as well, but that is absolutely not a requirement. I am very happy to discuss your topic papers with you.

**Presentation:** We will spend the last two course meetings presenting the work from the research papers. This is a chance to share your research with your classmates, practice public speaking, and get feedback. We will talk more about guidelines for the presentations as we get near the end of the semester.

**Final Paper:** The main requirement for the course is an original research paper of 15 to 20 pages. You may write the paper on a topic of your choice related to the course and approved by me. There will be a series of short assignments (bibliography, paper description, completed section) leading up to the completion of the draft of the paper (and counting toward your grade on the draft). The draft is due early enough in the semester that substantial re-writing is possible after you receive my comments. I find that this form of writing assignment is more satisfying for me and for you because the end result is much better.
Course Readings

All readings listed on the syllabus are required. They are also all available from Olin library either as a hard copy reserve or as electronic reserve. If you have never used electronic reserve, let me know and I will explain how to access the readings. We will read large sections of the following texts and they are available for purchase at Broad Street Books.


We will also read selections of a yet-to-be-published book. I will distribute hard copies of the following in class:


Course Policies

Students are required to complete all readings and attend each class period prepared to talk about the readings. Extensions and incompletes will not be granted under any circumstances other than significant and verifiable personal emergencies (e.g., serious illness, death in family). Late work will be penalized one full grade per day.

All work that you submit must be your own. You must cite all sources used in completing the assignments using the standard form of citation that we will go over in class. If you are unsure how to use proper citation form, please ask me. Failure to use proper citation is plagiarism. You must adhere to all aspects of the honor code. Plagiarism is a serious offense. If you have any questions, please come talk to me or see: www.wesleyan.edu/studenthandbook/3_honorsystem.ctt
Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

INTRODUCTION

Jan 27  Introduction

Feb 3  Women and Political Participation: Historical and Contemporary Gender Gaps


Feb 10  What is Representation?


Feb 17  What Affects the “Supply” of Female Candidates?


Feb 24  What Affects the “Demand” for Female Candidates? Electoral Institutions and Quotas


March 3  What Affects the “Demand” for Female Candidates? Political Parties and Incumbency


Mar 24  Campaigning: Gender and the Media


Mar 31  **The Role of Gender in the 2008 US Presidential Campaign**


April 7  **Campaigning: Executive Office Internationally**


April 14  **Women in Executive Office**


April 21  **What Do Women Accomplish in Office?**


April 28  Research Presentations

May 5  Research Presentations