

POL 312-01: WOMEN IN POLITICS (THE POLITICS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY)

Washington & Jefferson College
Spring 2024
Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays 1:00 – 2:10 PM
Old Main 203

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION

This course provides an overview of women in American politics from the passage of women's suffrage to the present with an emphasis on women as voters, political candidates, and members of interest groups as well as how women govern. Policy issues related to gender, such as employment equity and reproductive rights, are also examined.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a course designed to explore the ways in which gender and sexuality play a role in politics, with a focus on the descriptive and substantive representation of cisgender women and the LGBTQ+ community in American politics.

In the first half of the course, we will examine what cisgender women and the LGBTQ+ community think about politics and which policies they support. We will also consider what the rest of the public thinks about these groups and their policy priorities. We will conclude by looking at whether and how those policy priorities are represented in American party politics.

In the second half of the course, we will focus on how cisgender female and LGBTQ+ candidates fare in electoral politics: What sort of unique challenges or biases do these candidates face when they are in front of voters? Are there best practices to encourage more female and LGBTQ+ candidates to run for office? Finally, if elected, what sort of impact do cisgender female and LGBTQ+ elected officials have on policy?

Beyond the substantive knowledge about the politics of gender and sexuality provided in this course, you will gain knowledge about how to analyze empirical political science research. You will be provided with ample opportunity to engage with scholarly research, both by reading and discussing research on gender and sexuality; and by conducting your own research projects.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After taking this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the role of gender and sexuality in American politics.
2. Describe the attitudes and political behavior of American cisgender women and the LGBTQ+ community; and attitudes towards those groups.
3. Explain how American political parties and other institutions represent the interests of cisgender women and the LGBTQ+ community.
4. Describe the electoral challenges female and queer politicians face and the impact they have in elected office.
5. Read, analyze, and conduct (basic) political science research.
6. Participate in rigorous academic discussions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Foundations Quiz: There will be one quiz in this course on core concepts of gender and sexuality; as well as analyzing research methodology and data science. This quiz will consist of a combination of objective questions and short answers. If you happen to be absent from class on the day of the quiz and provided it is an excusable absence (See Attendance policy below), we can schedule a makeup exam. If you anticipate being absent for the quiz, please let me know as soon as possible. (5%)

Discussion Leading: You will lead discussion in class **three times** throughout the course of the semester. Discussion will be focused on whatever the reading assignment is for that day. You will work with your fellow discussion leaders to (1) present a short presentation of the reading for the rest of the class; (2) formulate discussion questions based on the reading; and (3) moderate discussion with your classmates. You and your fellow discussion leaders will submit your prepared presentation and list of discussion questions to Dr. Kersting for approval and feedback at least 48 hours in advance. You will sign up for days to lead discussion in the first weeks of the semester. More information about this assignment will be distributed in class. (20%)

Research Paper Project: The majority of your grade in this course will be based on a semester-long research project which culminates in a 12-15 page paper and an in-class presentation. The paper will be focused on either the descriptive or substantive representation of women and/or the LGBTQ+ community in politics and policy. In this project, you will be required to collect and analyze basic descriptive data to answer your research question. There will be several smaller assignments throughout the semester designed to demonstrate your progress on this project. You will also meet with Dr. Kersting one-on-one at least twice in the early stages of this project to brainstorm ideas and troubleshoot issues. (5%). More information about the research project will be distributed at the beginning of the semester. The due dates for each component of this project are as follows:

1. Research Proposal: February 23 (2.5%)
2. Data Collection Plan: March 15 (2.5%)
3. Literature Review: April 3 (10%)
4. Data Analysis: April 22 (10%)
5. Final Draft: May 6 (20%)
6. Presentations: May 6 & May 11 (10%)

Attendance: You are expected to be present for every class meeting. My expectations for your intellectual growth in this course are high. When you are not present, you are unable to partake in that growth. **Everyone receives three free excused absences.** You do not need to notify me of these absences in advance. Do not abuse these excused absences. Students unable to attend class because of illness should contact Student Health Services. **If you feel ill, please do not come to class.** Students unable to attend class because of a family or other emergency should contact the Office of Student Life. If there is a reason for an ongoing absence in this class, please discuss this with me as soon as possible. (5%)

Participation: You will be expected to fully participate in class discussion. Actively engaging with the course material through discussion with fellow students is crucial to your understanding of the material. As a rule of thumb, you should be speaking, on average, at least once per class to receive a B for participation. Speaking more than this will ensure a higher grade. Conversely, if you habitually fail to contribute to class discussion, you can expect your participation grade to decrease. While participation grades will be primarily based on contributing to in-person class discussions, there will also be the opportunity to gain participation credit through occasional small non-verbal assignments. If participation is found to be lacking from most of the class which I suspect to be a result of not completing the assigned readings, I reserve the right to hold unannounced pop quizzes (10%).

Grade Determination:

Component	Worth
Foundations Quiz	5%
Discussion Leading	20%
Research Meetings	5%
Research Proposal	2.5%
Data Collection Plan	2.5%
Literature Review	10%
Data Analysis	10%
Research Paper Final Draft	20%
Research Paper Presentation	10%
Attendance	5%
Participation	10%

At the end of the course, your grade will be assigned based on the following scale: A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D (66-69); and F (0-65).

COURSE POLICIES

Late Assignment Policy: You are expected to submit all assignments by the due dates listed on the syllabus. Late assignments can be submitted after the due date with a grade penalty. The final grade for the assignment will be lowered by a third of a letter grade for every 24 hours the assignment is late. Assignments submitted more than a week after the due date will not be accepted for credit.

Extensions on assignments can be granted providing two criteria are met: (1) there is a legitimate excuse for the assignment not being submitted on time (e.g. documented illness or personal emergency); and (2) you request the extension before the assignment is due.

Classroom Culture: For this course to be fully successful, I expect two things from each student. First, I expect active engagement in classroom discussion. While much time will be devoted to class lectures on the material, there will always be time devoted each class for group discussion on the topics we have discussed that day. Relatedly, I expect you to have completed the readings and to be prepared to discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of the arguments presented in the texts. Our discussions will draw from those theoretical debates. Participation accounts for 10% of your total grade, so it is in your best interest to come prepared for class. A firm grasp of the literature will serve you well in preparation for exams in this class and in crafting a firm foundation for further classes in political science.

While preparing to discuss the course material, I suggest you read (or at least scan) a newspaper once a day. Since this is a class on politics, it is especially important to keep up on current events since they are often direct results of the political system we will be examining. W&J has an online subscription to the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal. Information for accessing these newspapers can be found in the following links: [NYT](#), [WaPo](#), and [WSJ](#).

We will occasionally discuss issues that are controversial or polarizing. This is an intrinsic part of the political process, and, as such, it will certainly be a part of our discussions. While it is by no means wrong to hold an opinion on controversial issues, I expect and require civility in discussions. Hateful comments will not be tolerated and will be grounds for dismissal from the class session.

A key part of academic discussion is treating your classmates and the instructor with respect. Respect not only pertains to what you are contributing to class discussion, but also how you listen to what your classmates and the instructor are saying. I expect you to be an active listener during class discussions.

Technology: In my experience as an instructor, I have found that while some students may benefit from using technology in the classroom, there are also many students who abuse the privilege of technology use. **Laptop and tablet use for class purposes is permitted in this course, but this is a privilege. If I habitually observe students abusing this privilege, I reserve the right to prohibit all technology use.** Relatedly, cell phone use is prohibited in this course. If I observe you using your phone during a class, you will receive no participation credit for that day.

Contacting the Instructor: The best way to get in contact with me is through email (jkersting@washjeff.edu). I do my best to reply to all student emails within 24 hours and typically my replies will be much sooner than that. That being said: do not email me at midnight and expect a timely answer.

If your questions or concerns are substantial in nature, it is best to meet with me in person rather than engage in a lengthy email exchange. I have regular office hours listed above, but if those times do not work for you, please feel free to schedule an appointment with me.

Mental Health and Wellness: W&J faculty and staff recognize that mental or physical health concerns can affect any of us, and sometimes make it difficult for students to manage their academics or daily life. **If you find yourself struggling this semester, please let me know. I am one of many people here at W&J who care about you and your welfare.**

Please also consider contacting the Student Health & Counseling Center 724-223-6107 or the 24/7/365 Counseling Support Line 833-434-1217, for support if you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed, anxious, depressed, lost, or are struggling with personal issues. Services are free and confidential.

Students have access to free, confidential in-the-moment counseling, self-help, and meditation programs including the prepaid version of HeadSpace, and online therapy options via 833-434-1217 or the CampusWell app that you can download to your phone.

Disability Support Services: Washington & Jefferson College is committed to providing academic accommodations for students with disabilities. This includes individuals with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and mental health disorders that meet the definition of a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students who plan to request accommodations should contact the Director for Academic Success as early as possible, although requests may be made at any time. To determine whether you qualify for accommodations, or if you have questions about services and procedures, please call 724-223-6008 or send an email to dss@washjeff.edu.

Academic Honesty: Washington & Jefferson College is a community dedicated to the intellectual and personal development of its students. Such development may be achieved in many ways, including creating original works of writing, art, and music; conducting research; engaging in discussions; taking examinations; and participation in co-curricular activities. Central to such developmental activities is that whatever a student represents as being the fruit of his or her own intellectual labor is indeed his or her own. Otherwise, the student will not only have acted dishonestly, but will also have wasted the developmental opportunities afforded by the College. W&J upholds academic honesty in the College community by pursuing cases of academic misconduct. When such academic misconduct is discovered, the College will ensure through the imposition of appropriate penalties that the student does not gain unfair advantage through his or her dishonesty and will help the student address the concerns that led to the offense. If the nature of the intellectual dishonesty is determined to be conscious, calculated and/or intentional, or if academic misconduct recurs, the student may be judged to be incapable of benefiting to a satisfactory degree from the developmental opportunities afforded by the College, and may then be permanently dismissed so that the College's resources may be directed to deserving students.

AI/LLM Use Policy: In an academic context, plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's work as one's own. Presenting the output of an automated tool (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT or Dall-E 2) as one's own work is misrepresentation of the work of the engineers and scientists who developed the tool and of the creators and owners of the significant body of data (text, images, etc.) upon which the model was trained. **Students are not allowed to use advanced automated tools on assignments in this course. Each student is expected to complete each assignment without substantive assistance from others, including automated tools.** Use of these tools to complete coursework will result in grade penalties and an academic integrity violation.

TEXTBOOK AND READINGS

There are no required texts to purchase for this course. All course readings will be posted online for your use. Readings are to be completed BEFORE the class meeting for which they are listed.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Subject to change)

Meeting	Topic	Readings/ Assignments
Wed. Jan. 24	Course Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Syllabus
Fri. Jan. 26	What is gender and sexuality?	
Mon. Jan. 29	What is intersectionality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jordan-Zachary (2007): "Am I a Black Woman or a Woman Who Is Black?"
Wed. Jan. 31	Reading Research: Definitions and Research Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anzia and Berry (2011): "The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson Effect"
Fri. Feb. 2	Reading Research: Research Methodology	
Mon. Feb. 5	Reading Research: Interpreting Data	
Wed. Feb. 7	Reading Research: Interpreting Data	
Fri. Feb. 9	Quiz/What is representation?	
Mon. Feb. 12	Public Opinion: Gender Attitude Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lizotte (2020): <i>Gender Differences in Public Opinion</i> Chapter 1
Wed. Feb. 14	Public Opinion: Gender Attitude Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lizotte (2020): <i>Gender Differences in Public Opinion</i> Chapter 2
Fri. Feb. 16	Public Opinion: Gendered Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dolan (2011): "Do Men and Women Know Different Things?"
Mon. Feb. 19	Public Opinion: LGBTQ+ Policy Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Egan and Sherrill (2005): "Marriage and the Shifting Priorities of a New Generation of Lesbians and Gays"
Wed. Feb. 21	NO CLASS – Symposium on Democracy	Research Proposal due by end of day
Fri. Feb. 23	Public Opinion: LGBTQ+ Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jones (2021): "Political Distinctiveness and Diversity among LGBT Americans"

Meeting	Topic	Readings/Assignments
Mon. Feb. 26	Public Opinion: Attitudes towards LGB Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garretson (2017): “The How, Why, and Who of LGBTQ ‘Victory’”
Wed. Feb. 28	Public Opinion: Attitudes towards Trans Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis et al. (2022): “Transitioning Opinion?”
Fri. Mar. 1	Substantive Representation: Party Position Taking on Women’s Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wolbrecht (2000): <i>The Politics of Women’s Rights</i> Chapter 2 pp. 23-44 <p>Deadline for Research Meeting 1</p>
Mon. Mar. 4	Substantive Representation: Party Position Taking on Women’s Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wolbrecht (2000): <i>The Politics of Women’s Rights</i> Chapter 2 pp. 44-72
Wed. Mar. 6	Research Paper Workshop	
Fri. Mar. 8	Substantive Representation: Congressional Behavior on LGBTQ+ Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hansen and Treul (2015): “The Symbolic and Substantive Representation of LGB Americans in the US House”
Mon. Mar. 11	Substantive Representation: Party Position Taking on LGBTQ+ Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kersting (2023): “Schooling the Parties”
Wed. Mar. 13	Substantive Representation: Party Position Taking on LGBTQ+ Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karol (2023): “How Does Party Position Change Happen? The Case of LGBT Rights in the U.S.”
Fri. Mar. 15	TBA	Data Collection Due
Mon. Mar. 18	NO CLASS – Spring Break	
Wed. Mar. 20	NO CLASS – Spring Break	
Fri. Mar. 22	NO CLASS – Spring Break	
Mon. Mar. 25	Descriptive Representation: Gender Differences in Political Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verba, Burns, and Schlozman (1997): “Knowing and Caring About Politics”
Wed. Mar. 27	Descriptive Representation: Voters and Gender Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brooks (2013): <i>He Runs, She Runs</i> Chapter 1

Meeting	Topic	Readings/ Assignments
Fri. Mar. 29	Descriptive Representation: Voters and Gender Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brooks (2013): <i>He Runs, She Runs</i> Chapter 5
Mon. Apr. 1	Descriptive Representation: Female Executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McDonagh (2009): <i>The Motherless State</i> Chapter 1
Wed. Apr. 3	Descriptive Representation: Voters and LGB Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haider-Markel (2010): <i>Out and Running</i> Chapter 2 <p>Literature Review Due</p>
Fri. Apr. 5	Descriptive Representation: Voters and LGB Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haider-Markel (2010): <i>Out and Running</i> Chapter 3
Mon. Apr. 8	Descriptive Representation: Voters and Trans Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haider-Markel et al. (2017): “Bringing T to the Table”
Wed. Apr. 10	Guest Speakers	
Fri. Apr. 12	Descriptive Representation: Gender and Candidate Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fox and Lawless (2010): “If Only They’d Ask” <p>Deadline for Research Meeting 2</p>
Mon. Apr. 15	Descriptive Representation: Gender and Election Aversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kanthak and Woon (2015): “Women Don’t Run?”
Wed. Apr. 17	Descriptive Representation: Gender and Candidate Pipelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomsen and King (2020): “Women’s Representation and the Gendered Pipeline to Power”
Fri. Apr. 19	Descriptive Representation: LGBTQ+ Election Aversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wagner (2021): “Avoiding the Spotlight” <p>Data Analysis due</p>
Mon. Apr. 22	Descriptive Representation: Quotas and Reservations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Htun (2004): “Is Gender like Ethnicity?”
Wed. Apr. 24	Descriptive & Substantive Representation: The Impact of Elected Female Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swers (2002): <i>The Difference Women Make</i> Chapter 1
Fri. Apr. 26	Descriptive & Substantive Representation: The Impact of Elected Female Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swers (2002): <i>The Difference Women Make</i> Chapter 3

Meeting	Topic	Readings/ Assignments
Mon. Apr. 29	Descriptive & Substantive Representation: The Impact of Elected LGBTQ+ Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reynolds (2013): “Representation and Rights”
Wed. May 1	TBA	
Fri. May 3	TBA	
Mon. May 6	Presentations	Final Papers Due
Sat. May 11	Presentations	Meeting Time: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM