POL 346 / GST 344 Gender and American Politics  
Spring 2013

Basic Information
Class meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-3:45 p.m. in 107 Bishop  
Instructor: Dr. Heather L. Ondercin  
Office: 233 Deupree Hall  
E-mail: ondercin@olemiss.edu  
Office Phone: 915-7218  
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

E-mail is an effective way to reach me, I check my messages several times a day. If you can’t attend my office hours, talk to me and we can make an appointment. Never hesitate to talk to me if you have a problem, comment, or concern.

Course Description

Gender is a social and historical construction loosely tied to the biological categories male and female. Gender can be an identity possessed by an individual. Gender also acts as an institution structuring individual experiences and political outcomes. Additionally, gender is not limited to only the study of women. It applies to men as well.

This class is designed as an overview of the field of gender and politics, specifically American politics. We will examine critically the role gender plays in shaping U.S. politics at the individual level and how gender shapes the institutions of the U.S. political system.

The class begins by introducing some fundamentals of feminist theory; providing the critical lenses we will use throughout the semester. We move on to examine how gender structures the political status of individuals in the United States. We will discuss the three waves of the women’s movement to understand how the relationship between gender, citizenship, and law has changed over time. In the second section of the class we explore how gender structures the political participation of both men and women. In this section we ask how and why women’s political participation differs from men’s. The third section of the class addresses how gender shapes who runs and wins elective office in the United States. In this section we also explore the impact of gender on the various institutions of government: Executive, Legislative, Judicial, and the federal bureaucracy.

Course and Learning Objectives:

• Overall, students will have an understanding of how gender is shaped by and shapes politics in the United States.
• In class participation, students will further their basic knowledge about the role of gender in politics and critically analyze ideas presented in the readings, lecture, and class discussion.

• Given the exams, students will apply their knowledge of gender and the U.S. political system obtained in class discussion, lectures, and readings.

• Given the short essay assignments, students will analytically apply material from both class and reading to analyze contemporary issues in politics.

Class Practices and Policies

The class meets twice a week. I expect you to be there at all times. I will not take attendance in the class, it is the student’s responsibility to come to class and arrive on time and prepared for class. It will be extremely hard to do well in this class if you do not regularly attend. A lot of material for the exams will only be covered in class. Additionally, all assignments must be turned in during class. You are paying far too much money for college not to attend. Moreover, I assume that since you are here to learn, you will want to come to class so you can do so. (If you are not here to learn, you should be asking yourself far bigger questions about why you are here!). This is a serious class for serious students – those of you looking to get a good grade while doing little or no work should seek a different instructor.

I will run the class in a variety of formats. You can expect a mixture of lecture, class discussion, small group projects, and individual projects. At all times, my aim will be to help you achieve a deep understanding of the material. Since so much of what I want you to learn will be dealt with only in class, it is important that you attend. Two things are very important to the success of this class: 1) your participation in every class; and 2) that you have completed the readings before the class in which we will discuss them. You cannot learn from each other, and I cannot learn from you, if you are not prepared for class. I encourage you to ask questions you may have about lectures, class discussions, readings, and things you see in the news. Do not be passive; class will be much more interesting and you will learn the material better if you are an active participant.

I expect you will observe common courtesy when you are in class. Please come on time: lateness is very rude! Please turn off cell phones. Please leave the newspaper, crossword puzzles, and other work at home. NO LAPTOPS ALLOWED. If I see you using electronics, work for other classes, or non-class related material you will lose all participation points for that day. If this happens 3 or more times in the class you will get a zero for participation for the semester. I do not teach in your bedroom; therefore, please do not sleep in my classroom. I expect you to be mentally present as well as physically present in class; this is the best way to ensure that you learn the course material.

This is a class about gender and American politics. It is not a class about politics. However, in this class we will engage in discussions about politics and policies. During our discussions
I want everyone to feel free to share their opinions with each other. Each of us brings a unique perspective to the class and we can all learn from this diversity. In order to make this possible you need to be respectful of other people’s opinions, even if they are the direct opposite of your own beliefs. I will not tolerate personal attacks on each other or the use of disrespectful language. There is no room for an atmosphere of intimidation, and I will not tolerate it in this class. If there are any issues that you feel uncomfortable with please feel free to talk to me.

I will not discuss or send grades via e-mail. E-mail is not a secure form of communication, meaning anyone can read your messages. In order to protect your privacy I will not e-mail you your grades. However, I am happy to discuss your grades with you in person anytime during office hours or by appointment.

**Required Books**

Three books are required for this class and are listed below. All the books should be available in the book stores around campus and on Amazon.com. Any additional readings can be found on Black Board. Readings on Black Board should are indicated on the syllabus with a BB next to them. You need to print out the readings on Black Board and bring them to class with you so they are handy for discussion. Not bringing the readings to class will result in a lower participation grade.


**Grading**

Grades for the class will be based on participation, brief writing assignments, and two exams. A total of 100 points are available. Below you will find a description of each of the factors that go into the final grade, the due dates, and the grade distribution.

**Participation.** Participation in class discussions and other classroom activities is extremely important; as a result participation is worth 15% of your final grade. This means if you fail to participate the highest grade you will be able to receive in this class is a B. Participation will be assessed in two different ways. First, there will be a variety of in class and out of class assignments throughout the semester, these will count for participation. Second, your in-class contributions will also count towards participation. You are expected to be engaged
in class discussions, ask questions, and contribute to group work. Participation is not simply about quantity or quality. You should participate on a regular basis in a meaningful way.

**Writing Assignments** There are five short writing assignments that are designed to apply what we are learning in the classroom to contemporary U.S. politics. For each assignment you will write 3-5 pages, double spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font or equivalent and with standard 1 inch margins. All assignments are due on the date listed in the tentative course schedule. Descriptions of each writing assignment can be found at the end of the syllabus.

Assignments should turned in via SafeAssign on Black Board. The file you turn in should be a pdf. Assignments need to be time stamped by 9:00 a.m. on the day that they are due. Assignments turned in late, but time stamped after 9:00 a.m. will receive a penalty of a full letter grade for every 10 minutes the assignment is late. For example, your paper was turned in at 9:10 and the grade on the paper was an 90, but because the paper was 10 minutes late your grade will be reduced to a 80. I do not accept assignments slipped under my office door or put in my mail box. Assignments turned in after the regularly scheduled class period will not be accepted. All assignments are to be typed.

Writing counts. I expect assignments to be clearly written with complete sentences and proper grammar. I highly recommend that you read them over before you turn them in.

**Exams.** There will be two exams. Both exams will be essay format. The second exam is not cumulative. You will be expected to bring a blank blue book to class.

If you are absent for the midterm exam you will have the option to take a cumulative final exam. The cumulative final exam will be essay format and consist of two sections. The first section will be a condensed midterm exam, fewer questions worth more points each. The second section is the same final as the rest of the class. Each section will be graded independently. The grade for the first section will be your midterm exam grade. The grad for the second section will be your final exam grade. If you missed the midterm exam and would like to take the cumulative final you will need to inform me of this decision by e-mail no later than April 25th. Do not assume I will remember that you missed the first exam,
you must send an e-mail.

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Remember if you are a political science major and wish to have this class count towards the major requirements you must receive at least a C.

**Grade Appeal.** I will not discuss changes in grades on exams for 24 hours after the paper or exam has been handed back. If you feel that I missed an important point that you made or there is some other problem with your grade after 24 hours you may submit a grade appeal. Your appeal should be a typed argument for why your grade should be changed. It should be no longer than 1 page. You will need to hand the appeal and the original exam back into me for review. I will then ask you to schedule a time to meet with me to discuss the appeal. Appealing the grade does not mean that I will automatically increase your grade.

**Extra Credit.** Extra credit will not be given on an individual basis. Everyone in the class has the opportunity to earn extra credit by completing the extra credit assignment. You can earn up to 3 points of extra credit. Simply completing the extra credit does not guarantee that you will receive a full 3 points. The extra credit assignment and grading rubric are posted on Black Board. You can turn in the extra credit any time up until the due date, but pay attention to the class schedule because I will not accept extra credit after the due date.

**Other Important Policies**

All students are expected to work independently on all assignments. Group and collaborative work is not permitted unless specific instructions are given. If you are not clear on how to properly give credit to others, please see me before turning in any assignment. I take this issue very seriously and will check all things turned into me for signs of plagiarism. Remember if you can find it on the Internet, so can I. Proper citations must be used to acknowledge any ideas, concepts, theories, organizational formats, and writing that is not your own.
Students with disabilities: Reasonable accommodations will be made for any student with a documented disability to ensure that the student is able to participate in class to the best of their abilities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor early in the term. It is also the student’s responsibility to register with the disability services office on campus. Do not wait until just before an exam to decide you want to inform the instructor of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.

If you did not attend the first day of class and/or added the class late, all class policies apply equally to you. It is your responsible to find out any information gone over during the class periods you missed. Deadlines will not be adjusted on an individual basis.
Course Outline

Tuesday, January 22nd. Class Overview.

Thursday, January 24th. The Study of Gender and Politics.
  • Syllabus.
  • Ritter, Gretchen. 2008 “Gender as a Category of Analysis in American Political Development.” in *Political Women and American Democracy* ed. Christina Wolbrecht, Karen Beckwith, and Lisa Baldez. BB

Tuesday, January 29th. The Social Construction of Gender and Masculinity in Politics.

Thursday, January 31st. Socially Constructing Women in Politics: Double Binds
  • Jamison, Kathleen Hall. 1997. “Hillary Clinton as Rorschach Test” in *Beyond the Double Bind* Oxford University Press. BB

Tuesday, February 5th. First Wave of the Women’s Movement
  • “Declaration of Sentiments” BB
  • “Constitutional Argument” Susan B. Anthony. BB
  • “Ain’t I a Woman?” Soujourner Truth, BB

Thursday, February 7th. The Politics of the Women’s Movement: 1st Wave Continued

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1Any changes to this schedule will be announced verbally in class. It is the student’s responsibility to note changes and adhere to the new schedule.
Tuesday, February 12th. The Politics of the Women’s Movement: Second Wave


Thursday, February 14th. The Politics of the Women’s Movement: Second Wave


Tuesday, February 19th. The Politics of the Women’s Movement: Second Wave

- Chapters 1, 2, 3, 9 and 10 Why We Lost the ERA by Jane Mansbridge

Thursday, February 21st. The Legal Status of Women at the end of the 2nd Wave.


Tuesday, February 26th. The Politics of the Women’s Movement: Third Wave


Assignment 1 Due Today

Thursday, February 28th. Political Participation


Tuesday, March 5th. Men’s and Women’s Psychological Orientation to Politics

Thursday, March 7th. Midterm

Tuesday 12th and Thursday 14th: Spring Break

Tuesday, March 19th. Parties and Issues Women’s Issue Alignment / Realignment.


Thursday, March 21st. Voting and Partisanship

- Carroll, Susan J. “Voting Choices: Meet You at the Gender Gap” in *Gender and Elections* ed. Susan J. Carroll and Richard L. Fox. BB

Assignment 2 Due Today

Tuesday, March 26th. Gender and Political Behavior Cont.

- Chapters 1 & 5 *Women, Work and Politics The Political Economy of Gender Inequality* by Torben Iversen and Frances Rosenbluth. 2010. Yale University Press. BB

Thursday, March 28th. Representation of Women


Tuesday, April 2nd. Representation of Women: an International Perspective


Assignment 3 Due Today

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Thursday, April 4th. Women as Candidates: Running for Office
  • Chapters 2 & 3 *It Still Takes A Candidate: Why Women Don’t Run for Office*. Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard Fox. BB.

Tuesday, April 9th. Women as Candidates: Running for Office
  • Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 4 *The Political Consequences of Being a Woman*

Thursday, April 11th. Media
  • Chapters 5, 8, & 9 *The Political Consequences of Being a Woman*

Tuesday, April 16th. Women in the Executive
  • Duerst-Lahti, Georgia. 1997 “Reconceiving Theories of Power: Consequences of Masculinism in the Executive Branch” BB

Thursday, April 18th. Women in the Executive

Assignment 4 Due Today

Tuesday, April 23rd. Impact of Women in Government

Thursday, April 25th. Impact of Women in Government

Last Day to Turn in Extra Credit

Tuesday, April 30th. Wrapping things up.
  • Chapters 1-6 *Big Girls Don’t Cry*

Thursday, May 2nd.
  • Chapter 7-12 *Big Girls Don’t Cry* Wrapping things up.

Assignment 5 Due Today

Tuesday, May 7th at 4:00 p.m. Final Exam.
Writing Assignments

Assignment 1: Do We Need the ERA? You are one of the nation’s leading legal minds and are faced with the task of assessing the legal and political rights of women in the United States. Since the Constitution of the United States is the supreme law of the land you know that it will contain the answer to your question. Since the last time you read the Constitution was back in your Con Law class in law school you feel that it is best to re-read the Constitution, keeping the following questions in mind: 1) Are there references to sex or gender in these documents? If so, what are they and what rights or actions do these references refer to? 2) Since this document applies to citizens of the United States, how is citizenship defined?

Based on your reading of the Constitution you need to form an argument about what rights apply to women in the United States and why.

Some tips for writing a good brief:

• Clearly state your argument at the beginning of the brief. This argument will serve as the central thesis of your brief, so you need to let the reader know early on what position you are arguing.

• Provide reasons to support your argument.

• Support those reasons with evidence drawn from the U.S. Constitution.

• Your opinion does matter; however, your opinion should be the basis of your augment and backed up by the reasoning and evidence presented in the brief.

Assignment 2: Organized Women’s Interests. The byproduct of many social movements are interest groups. In this assignment you will perform a critical analysis of an organized interest group that claims to represent women. This can be an organization we have talked about in class or one of your choosing. If you have questions about whether the organization you would like to analyze is appropriate, please come talk to me. You should provide a brief overview of the organization. This should include information about what the organization stands for, a brief history of the organization, and what activities the organization engages in. The majority of your paper should be devoted to analyzing the organization’s claim to represent women. Who are they representing? And how are they representing them? What are their ties to social movements in the United States? Make sure to include the website address for the organization.

This should not be simply a report about the organization; rather, you are to critically analyze the organization’s claim to represent women. The paper also is not simply your opinion. Rather, you need to develop an argument and use evidence from the organization’s website as support for the argument. Additionally, the readings and class discussion should inform
Assignment 3: Gender and the Political Parties. For this paper you will need to visit both the Republican Party’s and Democratic Party’s websites. The appropriate addresses are listed below. You are to critically analyze both the text and images on these websites for gender-based appeals. Based on these websites what role do women play in the parties? What role do men play in the parties? How are women and men targeted? What issues are associated with men and women? Are the two parties similar or different in their appeals? Some of the appeals are not obvious on the web site, so make sure you look around on each site.

- Republican Party: http://www.gop.com/
- Democratic Party: http://www.democrats.com/

In a critical analysis you should not simply state your opinion. Rather, in a critical analysis you should form an argument about what text and images are saying about the Democratic and Republican Parties. Your argument should be supported by a lot of detail from the websites. Additionally, the readings and class discussion should inform your critical analysis.

Assignment 4: Member of Congress Profile. In this paper you are to evaluate how different members of Congress present themselves to their constituency. You are to select two members of Congress, one man and one woman, who have web sites for this assignment. Make sure to select members of Congress that are serving in the same chamber, for instance a male and female member of the House of Representatives. Do not select one member from the House and one member from the Senate. In this paper you should provide a brief summary of each member’s background. The majority of your paper should be spent conducting a comparison between of the two members’ websites. What images do the members provide of themselves? What is the content of the sites? Are these sites similar or different? What do you attribute these similarities and differences to: Gender? Committee Assignments? Constituency? Make sure to include the web addresses to the Members of Congress’s websites.

Assignment 5: Critical Response to *Big Girls Don’t Cry*. Throughout the semester we study a multitude of academic theories and empirical findings regarding gender and politics. The last book we read is considerably different because it takes a more journalistic account of the role of women in politics, specifically the 2008 Presidential Election. In this assignment you are to perform a critical analysis of the book *Big Girls Don’t Cry* with respect to the material we have covered throughout the semester. How does this journalistic account fit with the works we have covered this semester? We have covered a lot of material this semester and *Big Girls Don’t Cry* also covers a lot material, so your critical analysis will not be able to cover everything. Rather, a good critical analysis should focus on one or
two points. You should form an argument and use material from both class and the book to support your argument.