

Gender and Public Policy
Barnard College
Spring 2025

Last revised: January 24, 2025

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 12-2pm and by appointment

Class location: 913 Milstein Center
Class time: Mondays, 2:10-4pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will examine how notions of sex and gender have shaped public policies, and how public policies have affected the social, economic, and political citizenship of women in the United States over time. We will think in depth about equality—what this concept means in the context of gender and politics, to what extent it should be the primary goal of gender-related policy, and the role of government in its promotion. Course materials consider challenges faced by those who identify as women as compared to men, and also diversity of experiences among self-identified women. Students are also encouraged to think critically about how the questions we ask and the answers we get might change if we move beyond the gender binary. We'll also take a step back and consider how we know what we know, what might be missed by the way we currently measure and study gender and politics, and how important events and people are understood, taught, and remembered. By the end of the semester, students should acquire a broad understanding of gender and public policy in the United States as well as knowledge and tools to consider how the field might evolve moving forward.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Readings and assignments are geared toward helping students achieve the following objectives:

1. Better understand inequities based on gender and sex, their sources, and attempts to reduce them through political and legal means.
2. Think critically about the extent to which men and women have different political interests, have been affected differently by past and present public policies, would benefit from different types of policy in the future, and require gender balance in American political institutions to achieve equitable outcomes.

3. Learn key elements of the political science canon on gender and politics, and evaluate them theoretically and empirically.
4. Consider how these scholarly works might enrich our understanding of current events, and how current events might lead us to reevaluate questions and arguments presented in scholarly work.
5. Identify an important and precise topic for research, think about how to use the tools of social science to investigate it, and ultimately present a clear, persuasive, and concise analysis or detailed plan for future analysis.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will reflect the components listed below.

Final grade breakdown:

Discussion participation	10%
Reading/discussion journal	20%
Book review	15%
Research project	
Puzzle	5%
Proposal	10%
Final paper	30%
Presentation	10%

Reading/discussion journal and class participation

This course is a seminar, not a lecture, so careful reading and active participation will be key to its success. Attendance is mandatory, excused only in exceptional circumstances like illness, family emergency, or religious observance.

Journal

Students will keep a reading/discussion journal throughout the semester. Please create a Google document for your journal and share it with me. There should be an entry for every week with assigned reading. The first part of the entry should be completed before class, and the second part should be completed as soon after class as possible.

There is a template on Canvas for the journal. Please answer every question every week. As we will discuss in class, feel free to add a question if there's something you want to track over the course of the semester.

This journal is worth 20% of your final grade. Students will receive full credit to the extent that the journal is (1) completed on time; and (2) reflects strong effort to engage with the readings and the course. Each week, students will get a score of 3 (check-plus), 2 (check), 1 (check-minus), or 0 (not completed). Late entries will receive a maximum score of 1 (check-minus) because it's important for students to complete the first part of each entry before the discussion occurs. At the end of the semester, I will average each student's score over the 10 weeks in which we have assigned readings. An overall average of a 2 (check) will translate to an A.

A: 2.0-3.0
A-: 1.9-1.99
B+: 1.8-1.89
B: 1.7-1.79
B-: 1.6-1.69
C+: 1.5-1.59
C: 1.4-1.49
C-: 1.3-1.39
D: Below 1.3

Reading discussions

Reading discussions are the core of our class meetings. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings and think critically about them in preparation for class discussions. The purpose of grading participation is to encourage careful, thoughtful, and consistent reading. Students will come into the class with different degrees and kinds of experience with class-related materials. This is absolutely fine. No one is being graded on how "smart" their comments are; rather, the participation grade is based on the degree to which students are engaging with the readings. This is a learning environment, a place to make mistakes and work through ideas. I ask only that you complete the readings in good faith and come to class ready to engage and listen.

That said, I understand that there can be various barriers to class participation for some students. If participating in class will be consistently difficult for you for any reason, please do not hesitate to contact me and we can discuss alternative options for evaluation.

Cell phones must be silenced and placed out of sight (e.g, in a bag) during class. Laptops may only be used for taking notes or referencing readings. Other activities (e.g., internet browsing, email, games, etc.) are distracting to other students and the instructor. Use of electronic devices in a manner that is distracting to others (including the instructor) will affect your participation grade.

Discussant Service. Each week, there will be a discussant responsible for reading the materials especially closely and preparing a set of 5 discussion questions. Discussants must email discussion questions to the class at least 24 hours before

our weekly meeting. Please circulate only the questions, and not all of your notes on the readings. Great discussion questions will not simply ask for students' opinions, but push them to think about the arguments and evidence analytically based on what we've learned in class up to that point.

Each class will start with the discussant(s) sharing the five reactions from their reading journal from that week. This should not take long, as each reaction should not be more than a few sentences. I will lead the class discussion, working the discussants' questions into my plan for the day.

Discussant service will be incorporated into each student's discussion participation grade (i.e., not graded separately).

Flash discussions. Following our reading discussion, we will have a 10-15 minute "flash discussion" of a topic relating to gender and politics that was recently in the news. Each student will be responsible for contributing one such topic. It could be related to the week's readings, though this is not required. Sign-ups will be first come, first serve. When it is your week to offer the topic, pay especially close attention to news relating to gender and email an article on your chosen topic to the class at least 24 hours in advance of our meeting. In class, we will talk about how this specific issue or event relates to class themes. This will not be graded separately—it will be incorporated into your participation grade.

Research Project

Each student will complete a series of assignments that culminate in a research paper and presentation. These assignments are (in shorthand): (1) Questions; (2) Puzzle; (3) Proposal; (4) Paper; and (5) Presentation. All assignments must be submitted electronically by the time of our class meeting on the day it's due. Late submissions will receive a penalty of 3 points per day (including weekend days).

Questions (due 2/3). Prepare a list of 3-5 questions you have about gender and politics. Think of this as a list of genuine curiosities. We will talk about how you could mold some of these questions into research puzzles. This assignment is ungraded.

Puzzle (due 2/10). Students will write up a research puzzle, due February 10th. This should be approximately 1-2 pages (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, standard 11 or 12-point font), and is worth 5% of your final grade. Take one of your questions (or come up with a new question if you like) and develop it more fully into a puzzle. A puzzle takes a question and explains why it's interesting and surprising in some way. We will discuss this in more detail in class. There are many ways in which something can be surprising. Are there things you would have expected to change that have been stagnant, or things you would have expected to be consistent that have changed? Are there certain policies you would expect to exist that don't, or

policies you would not expect to exist that do? Why do we see Policy X at Time 2 but not Time 1, or in Place A but not Place B? These are all forms a puzzle can take.

Research proposal (due 2/24). A 3-4 page (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, standard 11 or 12-point font) paper proposal is due on February 24th. Proposals should include the elements listed below. This is worth 10% of your final grade for the course.

1. A clear statement of the research puzzle, and why it matters.
2. An outline of your plan for addressing the puzzle.
 - a. What will be your primary research strategy?
 - i. Will you be synthesizing secondary materials in a novel way, for example, will you be using primary source materials, or both?
 - ii. Will your analysis be qualitative, quantitative, or a mix?
 - iii. What sources of evidence do you plan to use (e.g., an existing dataset, existing oral histories, newspapers, etc.) and why? Will you need to collect any data? If so, please outline your plan for doing this (note: I am happy to provide guidance).
 - iv. Will your research strategy involve case studies? If so, which case(s) will you choose and why?
3. What will be your next step after writing this proposal and when do you plan to complete it?

Paper (due 4/28). The paper is due on April 28th, and is worth 30% of your final grade for the course. This paper should be 15-20 pages (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, standard 11 or 12-point font).

I will read and comment on a draft of your paper, as long as you email it to me no later than April 14th (two weeks before the deadline).

Papers in Gender and Public Policy can take various forms, but they will typically include:

- An introduction that states your research puzzle, explains why it matters, and then previews the rest of the paper.
- An outline of your plan for addressing the puzzle.
 - You should explain what methodology you use and why. For example, if you have chosen to use case studies, what case studies have you chosen and why? If you've chosen a comparison (e.g., of different states or countries, or of different historical moments within a country or state), why is this a good comparison? What do we get out of it? What are the benefits and costs of these research choices?
 - What kind(s) of evidence will you use? What are the benefits and limitations of this choice?
- A clear, persuasive execution of the plan.

- A conclusion that briefly summarizes the paper and, if you wish, outlines potential avenues for future research in this area.

Presentation (4/28 or 5/5). Our last two meetings will be dedicated to research presentations. Sign-ups will be on a first-come, first-serve basis. You will have 10-12 minutes to share your research paper with the class. Students are required to use presentation slides (Google Slides, Powerpoint, or similar). Email the slides to me at least one hour before class, so I can load them all up before we begin. Please note that all papers are due on April 24th regardless of when the paper is scheduled for presentation.

Book Reviews

Each student will write a 4-5 page (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, standard 11 or 12-point font) review of a book relating to gender and politics. Your review should present the book's research question, summarize the argument, explain how it fits into the literature, explain the research strategy (including what kind of evidence is used), assess the strength of the argument and/or evidence, and consider how it might speak to motivating questions of the class. Please email the instructor for approval of your selected text.

You will have 10-12 minutes to share your review with the class. Students are encouraged to use slides to make their presentations easier to follow. These presentations will occur in Weeks 6-13, and dates will be assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis. Your written review is due on the date of your presentation. The written portion is worth 10% of your final grade and the presentation is worth an additional 5%, so the book review assignment is worth 15% of your final grade in total.

The purpose of this assignment is threefold: (1) to sharpen students' skills in summarizing existing literature for research projects; (2) to give students a broader view of the gender and politics canon without doubling each student's reading burden every week; and (3) to allow the substantive content of the class to reflect students' interests.

COURSE TEXTS

All materials will be available electronically as e-books through Clio, on Canvas, or on the web. This course does not require students to purchase any books. There is a documentary assigned for one of the weeks, which can be rented through Amazon, and is also available on several other platforms.

BARNARD COLLEGE WELLNESS STATEMENT

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself—your own health, sanity, and wellness—your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- <http://barnard.edu/counseling>
- <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>
- [Stressbusters Support Network](#)

BARNARD HONOR CODE

Students are expected to comply with the Barnard Honor Code (<http://barnard.edu/dos/honorcode>) for all course requirements.

CENTER FOR ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES & DISABILITY SERVICES (CARDS)

Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities in accordance with college policy. For details, see the CARDS webpage (<https://barnard.edu/disabilityservices>).

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (1/27): Introduction to the course; discussion of inclusivity and productive deliberation

Week 2 (2/3): Equity as a goal of public policy; the Equal Rights Amendment

- Reading assignment
 - MacKinnon, Catharine. 1991. "Reflections on Sex Equality under Law." *The Yale Law Journal* 100(5): 1281-1328. [Canvas]
 - Stone, Deborah. 2002. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decisionmaking*. New York: Norton. Chapter 2. [Canvas]
 - "[The Equal Rights Amendment](#)." *HKS PolicyCast*, 21 March 2018.
 - Kurtzleben, Danielle. "[Biden says the Equal Rights Amendment is law. What happens next is unclear](#)." *NPR Weekend Edition*. January 17, 2027.
- Additional assignment: questions due.

Week 3 (2/10): Suffrage and its limitations

- Reading assignment
 - Harvey, Anna. 1998. *Votes Without Leverage: Women in American Electoral Politics, 1920-1970*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1. [Canvas]
 - Teele, Dawn Langan. 2020. "Women & the Vote." *Daedalus*, Special Issue on Women & Equality, 149(1), pp. 25-39. [Canvas]
 - Hamlin, Kimberly. "How Racism Almost Killed Women's Right to Vote." *Washington Post*, 4 June 2019. [Canvas]
 - "[After 100 years, there's still no 'woman voter'.](#)" Featuring Christina Wolbrecht. *Democracy Votes Podcast of the McCourtney Institute for Democracy*, 17 August 17 2020.
- Additional assignment: puzzle due.

Week 4 (2/17): Thinking about liberty as a goal of public policy, and in the context of representation.

- Reading assignment
 - Hirschmann, Nancy J. 2003. *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 and 3 (pp. 1-39, 75-102). [E-book through Clio]
 - Lawless, Jennifer and Richard Fox. 2010. *It Still Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1-3. [E-book through Clio]
 - Familiarize yourself with the basics of the [Ready to Run](#) program.

Week 5 (2/24): Individualized reading week

- Additional assignment: proposal due.

Week 6 (3/3): The concept of "women's interests" and descriptive representation

- Reading assignment
 - Sapiro, Virginia. 1981. "Research Frontier Essay: When Are Interests Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women." *American Political Science Review* 75: 701-716. [Canvas]
 - "How Hostile Sexism Came to Shape our Politics", *The Monkey Cage*. [Canvas]
 - Bunyasi Tehama Lopez and Candis Watts Smith. 2018. "Get in Formation: The Presence and Purpose of Black Women at the Women's March on Washington as an Act of Pragmatic Utopianism." *The Black Scholar*, 43(3) p. 4-16. [Canvas]
 - Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'." *Journal of Politics* 61(3): 628-657. [Canvas]
 - Montoya, Celeste M. and Christina Bejarano and Nadia E. Brown and Sarah Allen Gershawn. 2021. "The Intersectional Dynamics of Descriptive Representation." *Gender and Politics*. [Canvas]

Week 7 (3/10): Workplace

- Reading assignment
 - Iverson, Torben, Frances McCall Rosenbluth, and Øyvind Skorge. 2020. "The Dilemma of Gender Equality: How Labor Market Regulation Divides Women by Class." In *Daedalus*, Special Issue on Women & Equality, 149(1), pp. 86-99. [Canvas]
 - Schultz, Vicki. 2018. "[Reconceptualizing Sexual Harassment, Again.](#)" *Yale Law Journal*. Vol. 128.
 - Brooks, Deborah Jordan and Lydia Saad. 2020. "Double Whammy: Why the Underrepresentation of Women among Workplace and Political Decision Makers Matters in Pandemic Times." *Politics & Gender* 16(4): 1110-1122. [Canvas]
 - Chuluun, Tuugi and Kevin L. Young. "[Women at the top of the world, still not at the center.](#)" *The Brookings Institute*. December 2020.

Week 8 (3/17): No class (spring break)

Week 9 (3/24): Income and wealth

- Reading assignment
 - "[Claudia Goldin on the Gender Pay Gap.](#)" *Social Science Bites* (Podcast), 1 December 2022.
 - Michener, Jamila and Margaret Teresa Brower. 2020. "What's Policy Got to Do with It? Race, Gender & Economic Inequality in the United States." In *Daedalus*, Special Issue on Women & Equality, 149(1), pp. 100-118. [Canvas]
 - Edna, Grace and William G. Gale. "[How does gender equality affect women in retirement?](#)" *The Brookings Institute*. December 2020.
 - Thurston, Chloe. 2018. *At the Boundaries of Homeownership: Credit, Discrimination, and the American State*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5. [Canvas]

Week 10 (3/31): Taxation

- Reading assignment
 - *Periodical*. Documentary film (featuring Barnard alum Madeleine Morales!). Available for rent through Amazon, and also various other platforms. Please let me know if you have trouble accessing it.
 - Betz, Timm, David Fortunato, and Diana Z. O'Brien. "[The Pink Tax That's Costing Women Billions of Dollars a Year—and What We Can Do About It.](#)" 2020. *Ms.*, 23 December. [Canvas]
 - Betz, Timm, David Fortunato, and Diana Z. O'Brien. 2021. "[Women's Descriptive Representation and Gendered Import Tax Discrimination.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 115(1): 307–315. [Canvas]

Week 11 (4/7): Motherhood

- Reading assignment
 - Skocpol, Theda. 1992. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Chapter 8 (pp. 424-479). [E-book through Clio]
 - Collins, Caitlyn. 2019. *Making Motherhood Work: How Women Manage Careers and Caregiving*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1, 6-7. [E-book through Clio]
 - Hamlin, Kimberly. "Women asked for an Independence Day. They got Mother's Day instead." *The Washington Post*, 7 May 2021. [Canvas]

Week 12 (4/14): Abortion

- Reading assignment
 - Beisel, Nicola and Tamara Kay. "Abortion, Race, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century America." *American Sociological Review* 69: 498-518. [Canvas]
 - Reingold, Beth, Rebecca Kreitzer, Tracy Osborn, and Michele Swers. "Anti-Abortion Policymaking and Women's Representation." *Political Research Quarterly*, 74, 2 (2021): 403-420. [Canvas]
 - Michele L. Swers. ["What Will Congress Do on Abortion Post-Roe?"](#) *Washington Post*. 2022. [Canvas]
 - ["Abortion is not always a clash of absolutes."](#) Featuring Candis Watts Smith and Rebecca Kreitzer. *Democracy Works* (Podcast), 15 September 15 2021.
- Additional assignment: last day to submit (optional) research paper draft.

Week 13 (4/21): Title IX

- Reading assignment
 - McDonagh, Eileen and Laura Pappano. 2008. *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate is Not Equal in Sports*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1-2. [E-book through Clio]
 - "Judge Rejects Biden's Title IX Rules, Scrapping Protections for Trans Students." *The New York Times*, 9 Jan 2025. [Canvas]
 - Weisman, Dennis. 2022. ["Transgender Athletes, Fair Competition, and Public Policy."](#) *Regulation*. The Cato Institute.
 - ["Title IX, 50 years later: Why female athletes are still fighting for equality."](#) *On Point* (Podcast), 23 June 2022.

Week 14 (4/28): Presentations

- Additional assignment: research paper due.

Week 15 (5/5): Presentations

Discussion Participation Guidelines

Class participation is worth 20% of your final grade. To get an A for participation, you must come prepared to discuss the readings assigned for each week. As you read, think about the questions listed below. This will help you prepare for discussion.

- What is the central argument? (1-2 sentences)
- What kind of evidence is used to support the argument?
 - Were you convinced? Why or why not?
- If there is more than one reading assigned for the week, how do they relate to each other? Are the arguments complementary? Are they in tension with each other? If so, which do you find more compelling and why?
- How do they relate to readings from prior weeks?
 - Again, are they complementary? In tension?
 - What might authors of other books/articles we've read say about this reading?
- Does this reading help to answer any of the motivating questions of the class? If so, how?

I strongly recommend writing some notes immediately after you finish each book or article, so it's still fresh in your mind.