

Political Science 4216F
WOMEN & POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Fall Term 2023

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Course Description

Women are underrepresented in all levels of politics in Canada and in most jurisdictions around the world; and, this underrepresentation is even more pronounced in political leadership roles. In 2023, why is this still the case – and what can be done about it?

This course offers an intensive, intersectional examination into the topic of gender and political leadership, examining Canada's experience in a global context. Students are encouraged to think critically about the institutions, political cultures, partisan dynamics and other processes which enforce and sustain the underrepresentation of non-dominant perspectives into our political system.

The first half of the course examines the problem: historic institutions and traditions that have limited women's political participation; barriers faced by non-dominant groups throughout the political lifecycle, starting with candidacy through to exits from political life; partisan dynamics and incentives; the broader (and problematic) socialized ideas and norms about leadership; and the changing role of media and social media.

The second half of the course focuses on solutions towards seeing greater representation in politics, including an examination of actions and policy approaches which have proven effective in other jurisdictions. Importantly, the consequences of underrepresentation in our political system – and opportunities that emerge from improving this chronic problem in Canada – are carefully examined, from legitimacy to trust to better decision making.

For with a keen interest in the topic of gender and politics, and for those who would relish in a lively weekly discussion about smashing the patriarchy out of our political system – well, this course is for you.

Assignments & Evaluation

- **Class Participation (20%)** –
- **Reflection Paper (15%)** – Due on Friday September 29, 2023 at 3pm.
- **Weekly Reflections (15%)** –
- **Analytical Case Study (30%)** – Due on OWL in Week 9 on Friday, November 17, 2023 at 3pm.
- **Op Ed (20%)** - Due on OWL on Friday, December 1, 2023 at 3pm.

Learning Outcomes

The course has four major learning objectives.

1. To offer a comprehensive exploration into the topic of gender and politics, with a focus on women in political leadership roles, including building familiarity with the key concepts, ideas and research on the topic relevant to a Canadian context;
2. To build students' ability to express their own ideas in writing, including in traditional academic assignments as well as with training on writing for a popular or professional audience, building an important specialized skill of communicating complicated ideas in simple language;
3. To provide a safe and meaningful environment for engaged dialogue about important and sometimes difficult topics, including learning to listen and share with people who may have different perspectives and experiences; and
4. Most importantly, to strengthen students' critical lenses for thinking about equity, including with respect to gender, in our political system and culture, as the basis for building engaged citizens who demand better in the future.