



Political Science 9782 | 4216
WOMEN & POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
Fall Term 2024

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Virtual or Phone Office Hours: [Book a time to meet](#)

In Person Office Hours: By appointment, Huron University College (A208)

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 2024, 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 political systems.

The first section 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 section 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 upper year and graduate students with a keen interest in the topic of gender and politics, and for those who relish in lively weekly discussions about smashing the patriarchy out of our political system – well, this course is for you.

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 speaking and writing for popular or professional audiences, building an important specialized skill of communicating complicated ideas in simple language;
3. To provide a safe, fun 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.

Teaching Methodology and Expectations of Students

This is a graduate-level seminar course with an emphasis on group dialogue and peer-to-peer learning. As such, students are strongly encouraged to be present for all classes. The following are expected of students in this course:

- An expectation of self-directed, independent and active learning;
- An expectation that assigned readings will be read thoroughly prior to class;
- An expectation that each participant will participate in an active, respectful, and relevant manner, contributing ideas and insights while also listening to others;
- An aspiration toward enhanced depth and breadth of learning as the course proceeds;
- An aspiration toward more critical and analytical thinking as the course proceeds and assignments are completed; and
- An aspiration toward a continued curiosity toward new ideas and an openness toward others and their ideas.

Required Course Material

This course will draw on two central texts, which students are encouraged to purchase or access through the library. Other articles, podcasts and media materials will be made available through OWL.

- Pamela Paxton, Melanie M. Hughes and Tiffany D. Barnes (2020), *Women, Politics and Power: A Global Perspective, Fourth Edition*, Thousand Oaks: A SAGE Company. [Available online via Western's Library.](#)

- Linda Trimble, Jane Arscott and Manon Tremblay, eds. (2014), *Stalled: The Representation of Women in Canadian Governments*, UBC Press. [Available online via Western's Library.](#)

Assignments & Evaluation

- **Class Contributions (20%)** – as a seminar course, attendance and active participation is paramount. Students are expected to attend and actively participate in all class discussions and activities. The evaluation will be evaluated based each student's contributions towards the collective learning of the class. Marks will be provided at the midpoint (October 25, 2024) and conclusion (December 6, 2024) of the course.
- **Reflection Paper (20%)** - this initial writing assignment asks students to write an up to 1000-word (maximum!) reflection paper responding to this question: *why are more women needed in political leadership roles?* This paper should draw on materials from the course as well as other materials, experiences or cases the student views to be most relevant. This assignment is due at the end of Week 4, on Friday October 4, 2024 at 3pm.
- **Seminar Leadership (20%)** - working in small groups, students will lead one seminar discussion during the course. This includes delivering a framing presentation related to the week's topic and readings (eg. examining a current event in the context of the week's readings), followed by facilitating class discussion on the topic. More detailed instructions will be provided in class.
- **Addressing Gender Inequality in Politics: Analytical Case Study (40%)** – students will choose one specific jurisdiction and one intervention in that jurisdiction aimed to increase the representation and/or diversity of women in political leadership roles. Students will write an up to 2500 word (maximum) case study critically examining *the efficacy of the intervention* as well as the lessons emerging from this case for other jurisdictions. More details will be provided in class. This case study is due on Friday, November 22, 2024 at 3pm.

What Grades Mean

The University of Western Ontario Senate has adopted a set of grade descriptors which explain the meaning of grades assigned in all university courses:

- A+ 90-100% One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
- A 80-89% Superior work which is clearly above average
- B 70-79% Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
- C 60-69% Competent work, meeting requirements
- D 50-59% Fair work, minimally acceptable
- F Below 50% Fail

Class Schedule

Part I: The Problem		
Week 1	Tuesday, September 10, 2024 @ 1:30- 3:30pm	<p>Welcome to Women & Political Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions & course overview • Discussion about all assignments and evaluations • Sign up for seminar leadership dates and groups • Initial framing conversation: how does Canada stack up when it comes to the representation of women in politics, and in our top political roles? More importantly, why exactly do we rank where we are? <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course outline (noting that if there are topics you would like to cover during this course that you do not see on this outline, please raise them!) • Review Interparliamentary Union monthly rankings: https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking
Week 2	Tuesday, September 17, 2024 @ 1:30- 3:30pm	<p>The Problem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The historical evolution and context • Orienting theories of gender, power and leadership • A contemporary picture of (under)representation <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paxton et al (2020), "Chapter 1: Introduction to Women in Politics" in <i>Women, Politics and Power: A Global Perspective, Fourth Edition</i>. • Paxton et al (2020), "Chapter 2: Women Struggle for the Vote" in <i>Women, Politics and Power: A Global Perspective, Fourth Edition</i>. • Listen to "Episode 1: The Problem," No Second Chances Podcast, Canada 2020 (link in OWL) • Read "Introduction" and "Conclusion" chapters of Linda Trimble, Jane Arscott and Manon Tremblay, eds. (2014), <i>Stalled: The Representation of Women in Canadian Governments</i>, UBC Press.

<p>Week 3</p>	<p>Tuesday, September 24, 2024 @ 1:30- 3:30pm</p>	<p>Barriers: An Intersectional Lens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pipeline problem: an intersectional and critical analysis of what we know today <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paxton et al (2020), “Chapter 3: Positions and Pathways” in <i>Women, Politics and Power: A Global Perspective, Fourth Edition</i> and Paxton et al (2020), “Chapter 4: Intersectionality and Difference” in <i>Women, Politics and Power: A Global Perspective, Fourth Edition</i>. • Holman & Schneider (2018), “Gender, race and political ambition: how intersectionality and frames influence interest in political office,” <i>Politics, Groups, and Identities</i>
<p>Week 4</p>	<p>Tuesday, October 1, 2024 @ 1:30-3:30pm</p>	<p>“She’s Not Qualified” & Other Misogynistic Bullshit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialized ideas and definitions of leadership • Ambition and confidence • Role model effects <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paxton et al (2020), “Chapter 5: Explaining the Political Representation of Women: Culture” in <i>Women, Politics and Power: A Global Perspective, Fourth Edition</i> • Richard Fox and Jennifer Lawless (2014), “Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition,” <i>American Political Science Review</i> (available on OWL). • “See Jane 2021: Looking Back and Moving Forward - the State of Representation in Popular Television from 2016 to 2022,” Gina Davis Institute on Gender and Media (available on OWL) <p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection Paper (20%) due on Friday, October 4, 2024 at 3pm

Week 5	Tuesday, October 8, 2024 @ 1:30-3:30pm	<p>Social Inequality & Political Inequality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social structure • Wage gaps, educational opportunities and work • Networks and access <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paxton et al (2020), "Chapter 6: Explaining the Political Representation of Women: Social Structure" in <i>Women, Politics and Power: A Global Perspective, Fourth Edition</i> • Explore OECD data on Women in Politics: https://data.oecd.org/inequality/women-in-politics.htm
Fall Reading Week 2024: October 12-20, 2024		
Week 6	Tuesday, October 22, 2024 @ 1:30- 3:30pm	<p>Political Women, Scrutiny & Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in the personal lives of political women • Differential treatment by media and on social media • Introduction of Analytical Case Study assignment (40%) <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ludovic Rheault, Erica Rayment, and Andreea Musulan (2019), "Politicians in the line of fire: Incivility and the treatment of women on social media," <i>Research & Politics</i> • Angelia Wagner, Linda Trimble and Shannon Sampert (2018), "One Smart Politician: Gendered Media Discourses of Political Leadership in Canada," <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> <p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First half class contribution marks (10%) will be uploaded by the end of this week
Week 7	Tuesday, October 29, 2024 @ 1:30- 3:30pm	<p>Exit Interviews & The Lived Experiences of Leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons from epic departures • Addressing the quality of life and working conditions of elected officials <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lazarus, Steigerwalt and Clark (2022), "Time Spent in the House: Gender and the political careers of US House Members," <i>Politics & Gender</i>

Week 8	Tuesday, November 5, 2024 @ 1:30- 3:30pm	<p>Special Topic Class: Gender & 2024 American Election</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special session: discussion about the 2024 American Election and the role of gender in the election narratives, candidate evaluations and policy topics <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD - current coverage on gender and the election in major media outlets will be provided in advance but closer to election day
Part II: Solutions		
		<p>Changing the System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral systems • Legislative quotas <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paxton et al (2020), "Chapter 7: Explaining the Political Representation of Women: Politics" in <i>Women, Politics and Power: A Global Perspective, Fourth Edition</i> • Chantal Maillé (2022), "Improving Democracy: Gender Quotas and Diversity in Canada," Presented to the ICGR 5th International Conference on Gender Reserach
Week 9	Tuesday, November 12, 2024 @ 1:30- 3:30pm	<p>Changing the Incentives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign finances • Incentives for political parties <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currie-Wood and Pruyzers (2023), "Putting their money where their mouth is: The gendered dynamics of central party financial transfers to local election candidates," <i>Party Politics</i> • Jansen, Thomas and Young (2012), "Who donates to Canada's political parties?" Paper presented at CPSA (on OWL)

Week 10	Tuesday, November 19, 2024 @ 1:30- 3:30pm	<p>Changing Norms & Attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions and evaluations of candidates and leaders <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant and Amanda Bittner (2017), “Digging Deeper into the Gender Gap: Gender Salience as a Moderating Factor in Political Attitudes,” <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> 50(2): 559-578 <p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical Case Study (40%) due on Friday, November 22, 2024 at 3pm
Week 11	Tuesday, November 26, 2024 @ 1:30- 3:30pm	<p>Do Women Make a Difference?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive representation, symbolic representation • Demonstrated diversity benefits • Women leaders during COVID • Legitimacy, trust and decision making <p>Examining Interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal sharing about the interventions studied in the case study assignments - please come prepared to speak informally (no presentation needed) about your case study <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paxton et al (2020), “Chapter 9: Do women make a difference?” in <i>Women, Politics and Power: A Global Perspective, Fourth Edition</i> • Avivah Wittenberg-Cox (2020), What Do Countries With The Best Coronavirus Responses Have In Common? Women Leaders, <i>Forbes</i>. Available on OWL
Week 12	Tuesday, December 3, 2024 @ 1:30- 3:30pm	<p>The Final Chapter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speaker - TBD • Closing conversation on gender equity, politics and our collective role in driving progress <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None - and all assignments are complete! <p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second half contribution marks (10%) will be uploaded by the end of this week