Women and Politics: A Global Perspective
Sociology 670
Winter 2008

Professor: Pamela Paxton
Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-3:18
Classroom: 60 Derby Hall
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-12:00 or by appointment
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“Daddy, on television today they said that a man was Prime Minister. Is it possible that a man can be Prime Minister?”
-Reportedly asked by the child of a news correspondent after Gro Brundtland, Norway’s former female Prime Minister, was ousted from office (Solheim 2000:75)

Course Description:

Why have women succeeded in obtaining substantial political power in some countries and not in others? What cultural, structural, and political factors shape women’s access to political power worldwide? How do we assess women’s impact in the political arena? These questions, as well as others related to women, politics, and power, will be the focus of this course. The course is global in its focus and considers women’s acquisition of political power in countries around the world. But students will also be introduced to research on women in politics in American society.

Overall, this course provides a comprehensive introduction to the history of women’s entry into politics internationally, the current state of women’s political representation across countries and regions, and contemporary debates on why and how women’s access to political power varies across countries. Drawing on scholarly research, selected films, and classroom discussion, we explore not only women’s voting rights, but also the roads women take to local and national political office. We also consider special topics such as the importance of the United Nations and the international women’s movement to women in politics. Whenever possible, we will be attentive to the ways in which gender intersects with other social identities, such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation.

Course Materials:

Additional readings are available as a coursepak from Zip Publishing, available at Long’s Bookstore. Coursepak readings are noted as “CP” on the course outline.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Class Participation (10%). Students should come to class having read and thought about the assigned readings. Regular and thoughtful contributions to classroom discussions are essential to the success of the class.

Female Leader Assignment (15%). There are numerous biographies of powerful women across the world. Students must choose one such individual and write a brief summary of that individual’s life. The summaries should be approximately 2-3 pages and should include (when available) a summary of the female leader’s upbringing, the leader’s rise to power and the context under which it occurred, and important events, policy decisions, etc. during the leader’s tenure in office. There are many sources of information about female leaders. A list of sources will be distributed in class and can be supplemented with other sources such as newspaper articles. Leaders do not need to be presidents or prime ministers, although more information may be available for such highly-visible women. Due January 22nd

Midterm (25%) The Midterm will take place in class on January 31st. The midterm will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions covering all readings, lectures and class discussion to that date.

Paper (25%). This 10 page paper is due March 4th. The paper must be on a topic related to women in politics and students must obtain approval for their project before beginning. The format of the paper includes a justification for the importance of the chosen topic and a review of existing literature. More information on the paper will be distributed during the second week of class.

Final (25%). The final will be an essay exam of 4 questions, drawn from 8 possible, covering readings, lectures and class discussion from the entire course. The eight possible questions will be distributed on March 6th. The final exam is scheduled for March 10th 1:30-3:19.

Outline of Course:

Note on Reading: Several debates will become immediately obvious as you begin to read. Keep the following questions in mind throughout the course:

• Who can represent whom?

• Do women have to act differently than men to justify their inclusion in politics?

• Are there women’s issues? Are there women’s interests? If so, what are they?
• What are the different paths to power for women? What helps women gain political power? What hurts?

• Do women legislate differently than men? Do women lead differently than men?

• How does women’s experience vary across the countries of the world?

• Can we facilitate or legislate increased representation of women in politics? Should we?

**January 3:** Introduction to the course

**January 8:** Arguments for Women’s Representation in Politics: Formal, Descriptive, and Substantive Representation

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 1, pp.1-19


**January 10:** Orienting Theories: Power, Gender, Patriarchy, and Intersectionality

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 1, pp.19-28


**January 15:** The Suffrage Movement in the United States

In-class: Selections from film, Iron-Jawed Angels

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 2, pp.29-46

**January 17:** Suffrage Movements outside the United States

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 2, pp.47-62


**January 22:** Female National Leaders and Women in the Cabinet

*Female leader assignment due*

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 3, pp. 80-95


**January 24:** Explanations – Culture

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 4, pp.101-120


**January 29:** Explanations – Social Structure

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 4, pp.121-132


Selected statistical tables, United Nations and World Bank. (CP)

**January 31: Midterm**

**February 5:** Explanations – Politics

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 5, pp.133-150


**February 7:** Explanations – Politics – Quotas

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 5, pp. 151-166


**February 12:** Explanations – Overarching Factors

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 6, pp. 167-190


**February 14:** Do Women Make a Difference?

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 7, pp. 191-216


**February 19:** Regional Difference – Introduction and the West

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 3, pp.63-79
Paxton and Hughes: chp. 8, pp. 217-223

February 21: Regional Differences – Eastern Europe and Latin America

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 8, pp. 223-237


February 26: Regional Differences – Africa, Asia, and the Middle East

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 8, pp. 237-256


February 28: the United States, day 1

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 9, pp. 257-308

March 4: the United States, day 2

Paper due


March 6: Where Do We Go From Here?

Final questions distributed

Paxton and Hughes: chp. 10, pp. 309-317

Final: Monday, March 10th 1:30-3:19.