WSTU 6240 Women, Gender, & Public Policy

Class Meeting & Contact Information
Class meets Mon. 6:10-8 pm in 1776 G St. Room 169  
Prof. Cynthia Deitch  email: deitch@gwu.edu  
Office: 837 22nd St. NW  202-994-7438  
Office hours: Mon & Wed. 4-5:30 pm & by arrangement

Course Description
Ideas about gender, implicitly or explicitly, influence public policy in many, if not most, aspects of life. Policy decisions frequently affect women differently from men. Given that gender is not a unitary category, we will pay close attention to how race, class, sexuality, among other dimensions of identity and inequality, often intersect with gender in shaping policy outcomes and impact. The course will examine several areas of public policy, some expressly related to women or gender and others that have significant gendered impact though policy-makers may not present the issue in that way. Such study offers the opportunity to achieve a deeper understanding of the way in which gender functions in the policy arena. Students will also familiarize themselves with the various vehicles of policy implementation: legislation, regulations, judicial interpretation, and executive actions. Most of the focus will be on U.S. policy at the federal level; however, we will also consider state level variation in U.S. policy, and cross-national comparisons.

Learning Objectives
As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

• Critically explain the factors that influence policy-making concerning women and gender.
• Critically analyze ways in which race, class, sexuality, and global location produce differences in gender policy.
• Critically discuss and apply a number of different theoretical or conceptual frameworks and disciplinary approaches that have been applied to the study of gender and public policy.
• Demonstrate expertise on a specific policy area of interest related to gender.

Course Requirements, an Overview

• Weekly participation in discussion of assigned readings and topics. 20%
• Posting 2-4 discussion questions before class each week (10x) 10%
• 10 minute policy update presentation with brief handout 10%
• 4-5 page policy briefing paper due the week the topic is covered 15%
• Panel presentation related to final paper 5%
• Final paper, 15-25 pages, due 5/5, topic related to the course 40%
Details on the requirements are provided elsewhere in this document.
Required Books and Readings

- *Generation Unbound: Drifting Into Sex and Parenthood without Marriage* by Isabel Sawhill, Brookings Institution Press, 2014
- *Gender, Work, and Economy: Unpacking the Global Economy* by Heidi Gottfried, Polity Press 2013
- Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics, SECOND EDITION, University of California Press, 2014. (Don't get the old edition by mistake!)
- Additional required readings will be on Blackboard throughout the semester.

CLASS & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**Attendance policy:** Given that this is a seminar, baring unforeseen circumstances such as illness, students are expected to come to class each session prepared to participate in a discussion of the assigned material.

**Late work:** Late work risks a grade penalty. Generally, no-penalty extensions of more than a day or two are given only for extenuating circumstances such as a medical or other emergency with written documentation. Incomplete grades for the semester are only given by special permission for extenuating circumstances and require a written contract.

**Classroom protocol:** All viewpoints, courteously expressed, are welcome. Robust discussion, including disagreement, makes for an interesting class. Reading or sending email, texting, using phones, or using laptops or tablets for purposes not related to the class are inappropriate classroom behaviors.

**Grading Scale:** A=95, A- = 91.5, B+=88.5, B=85, B- =81.5, C+=78.5, C=75, C- =71.5, D+=68.5, D=65, D- = 61.5, F=55 or lower (Note: This is the same scale Blackboard uses when it automatically assigns scores to letter grades).

**University Policy on Religious Holidays:** Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. There will be no penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations or other work.

**Academic Integrity:** The GW Code of Academic Integrity applies to all work in this class. It states: "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." For the remainder of the code, see: [http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html). Also related to this policy, full and appropriately formated citation of all sources is required for all written work for this course.

**SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM**

**Disability Support Services (DSS):** Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: [http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/)
University Counseling Center: 202-994-5300  The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include crisis and emergency mental health consultations, confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices

Writing Center: http://www.gwu.edu/~gwriter/ for additional assistance with written assignments.

Security: In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF TOPIC AND READINGS
Unless otherwise indicated, readings will be on Blackboard under FILES. For a few topics, minor changes in the assigned readings may be announced.

Jan. 12  Introductions
Jan. 19  No class, MLK holiday
Jan. 26  Title IX (Education): Old conflicts and new applications
        McBride, ch. 5 for background & overview

Feb. 2  Reproductive Rights: Continuing Controversies
        McBride, ch. 4 for background & overview (very important)

Feb. 9  Marriage, Sex, & Childbearing
        • Sawhill, Generation Unbound, whole book
        • McBride, ch. 6 on U.S. family law, optional

Feb. 16  No class, University holiday
Feb. 23  **LGBT Policies**
Bosia, Michael J. "Strange fruit: Homophobia, the state, and the politics of LGBT rights and capabilities." *Journal of Human Rights* 13, no. 3 (2014): 256-273. (or substitute)
Also recommended and on Blackboard:
Moodie-Mills, Aisha C. *Jumping beyond the broom: Why black gay and transgender Americans need more than marriage equality.* Center for American Progress, 2012.
McBride, background pp. 270-275

Mar. 9  No class, spring break

Mar. 2  **Equal Opportunity & “Diversity Management” in the Workplace**
• Dobbin, *Inventing Equal Opportunity*, whole book but extra attention to ch. 7, 8.
• McBride, for Mar. 2-23, ch. 7, 8, & pp. 290-2 of ch. 10 (important)

Mar. 16  **The Globalizing Labor Market Context**
Gottfried, *Gender, Work, and Economy*, whole book

Mar. 23  **Cross-national Perspectives on Work-family policies**
Additional readings TBA; also review McBride ch. 8

Mar. 30  **Welfare and Poverty**
Chapters on Blackboard from *When Welfare Disappears* by Kenneth Neubeck (Routledge, 2006)
Plus 3 short readings from diverse perspectives:
Randy Albelda, “Different anti-Poverty Programs, Same Single-Mother Poverty, Fifteen Years of Welfare Reform” (left feminist)
Blank, Rebecca M. "Was welfare reform successful?." *The Economists' Voice* 3, no. 4 (2006). (Moderate)

Apr. 6  **Sexual and Domestic Violence**
• Additional readings on Blackboard tba
• McBride, background & overview, ch. 10

Apr. 13  **Sex Work and Sex Trafficking**
• Additional readings on Blackboard tba
COURSE REQUIREMENTS IN DETAIL

1. Class Participation: Due weekly; 20%. All students are expected come to class well prepared to actively participate in the discussion each week.

2. Posting Discussion Questions: Due weekly, for a total of 10 times. The goal of this assignment is to help you think about the readings before we meet for class. What did you think were the most interesting or provocative issues raised by the readings? Do you think the readings “speak to” or compliment each other in ways that bear discussing? How might we think about the policy issue differently having read these articles? What aspects of a gender analysis are evident or missing? Although I would like you to have 2-4 substantive questions, it is fine to include additional factual/comprehension questions as well, so that I know in advance if there are things you didn’t understand. These questions must be posted on Blackboard (using the blog) by noon on the day of class, so that your classmates and I have a chance to see your thoughts before we meet that evening. You are most welcome but not required to use the blog to share your thoughts beyond posting your questions. Pay attention to any additional guidance provided in class or on blackboard.

3. Ten minute policy update presentation with brief handout. Due the week the topic is on the syllabus. 10%. The goal is to bring everyone up-to-date on important policy and political developments on your topic that are not already covered in the assigned readings. Supreme Court decisions and actions by Congress and the President are most important, but for some topics, such as abortion and same sex marriage, recent state level developments are also highly relevant.
   • Explain what each development is about, how it is gender-relevant (if not obvious), where things stand to date, why it is important, what groups are on each side and what are the arguments on each side.
   • Use primary sources such as legislation and court decisions when relevant along with secondary sources.
   • Very briefly note how the policy developments you cover are related to the readings.
   • If two students have the same topic, make sure your presentations cover different items.
   • If your presentation goes over 10 minutes, not including Q & A, your grade may be negatively affected. Sticking to 10 minutes max. is especially important on dates when 2 people are presenting.
   • Unless we have technology for power point presentations, provide a paper handout (suggested length 1-2 pages) with major points and sources. You may use the WSTU copier, if needed, during my office hours before class.
   • You don’t have to hide your own opinions, but unlike the policy briefing paper, your recommendations are not the focus of this assignment.
   • Pay attention to any additional guidance provided in class or on blackboard.
4. Policy briefing paper, 3-5 pp., due the week the topic is covered. 15%
If you are also presenting that week, you may turn in the paper later in the week – Thursday, at latest. There will be links on Blackboard for several descriptions, models, and guidelines for writing a policy brief. The goal is to write a professional level, persuasive policy recommendation. The format includes identifying the problem, reviewing existing policy and alternative options, and making a compelling case for your recommendation based on supporting evidence and aimed at a specific audience. For your paper to be eligible for a full A grade, you will need to use, discuss, and appropriately cite relevant primary sources and relevant scholarly secondary sources, but you are not at all limited to such sources. You might be asked to say a few words about your policy recommendations in class, but no formal presentation is needed. Pay attention to any additional guidance provided in class or on blackboard.

5. Panel presentation related to final paper. 5%. Due one of last 2 sessions. Students will be grouped in panels of 4 with somewhat related topics. Each student will have 10-12 minutes to present. An abstract of at least 1 page is due on Blackboard in advance, by Apr. 25. More details on the presentations and the final papers will be discussed in class.

6. Final written paper, 15-25 pages, on a policy related to the course. Due May 5. 40%
Choose any topic related to gender and policy as applied to one of the following four options.

(a) How a gender policy is shaped; how a policy is gendered: How do we explain the specific historical development of x policy in the United States (or in another country)? Dobbin’s book is an example of this type of research and analysis. You may focus on a specific time period.

(b) Intersectional analysis of a policy impact: How has the impact of a given policy (or policy debate or proposal) failed to address and/or differentially affected a specific often-marginalized group of women (such as a specific race or ethnic group, or LGBT women, or immigrant women, or low-income women, etc.), or a racial/ethnic, class, immigrant or other group within the LGBT community?

(c) Gender (and/or gendered) policy framing: How and why is the discourse and framing of a given policy debate important? What does it reveal about conceptions of gender and/or sexuality? The articles by Rosenthal on Title IX and Price on emergency contraceptives are examples of this type of paper. For this option, some type of original and systematic analysis of primary source material is required.

(d) Conceptual/analytic frameworks for studying gender policy: Compare and contrast several competing theoretical or conceptual or analytic frameworks that scholars have used for studying public policy. Explain and critically assess the application of each framework for you chosen policy topic. At least one of your frameworks should be explicitly feminist or gender-focused and at least one should be “mainstream” (in the sense of not explicitly feminist or gender-focused).