

Global Gender Issues

Instructor: Alex Avery (she/her)
Thursdays 12:30pm-3:30pm
3 credit hours

Course Description

Global Gender Issues examines how gender shapes political power, inequality, violence, and resistance across societies around the world. The course approaches gender not as a “women’s issue,” but as a system of power that affects women, men, and LGBTQ+ people in interconnected ways. Through weekly, three-hour class meetings that combine discussion, short lectures, and reflection, students will explore how gender inequalities emerge and persist, how they influence political participation and representation, how gender shapes experiences of conflict and violence, and where marginalized groups exercise political power and agency. Readings are discussed for their core ideas rather than technical detail, and short written assignments support critical thinking and reflection. The course emphasizes respectful dialogue, careful listening, and connecting global patterns to lived experience in order to better understand how power and inequality are reproduced, and challenged, in political systems.

Course Objectives

- Explain how gender operates as a system of power that shapes political inequality, participation, and representation.
- Identify and compare key ways gender influences political behavior, institutions, and policy outcomes, including differences across race and sexuality.
- Analyze how gender shapes experiences of violence and conflict, recognizing both vulnerability and agency among actors.
- Evaluate institutional and collective efforts, such as social movements, policy reforms, and representation strategies, designed to reduce gender-based inequalities.
- Demonstrate critical thinking and respectful engagement through written reflections and in-class discussions that thoughtfully respond to course readings.
- Apply course concepts to real-world cases by connecting global gender issues to historical examples, contemporary politics, and lived experience.

Prerequisites

No prerequisites.

Required Materials

All required readings for this course will be provided in the course reader and will also be uploaded as PDF files to Canvas.

Course Assignments

1. Reading Assignments (25% of final grade)

For each class students will complete short written reflections responding to the assigned readings. These reflections are designed to help you engage with the material and prepare for class discussion.

- Length: 1-1.5 pages (double spaced, 12pt font)
- Due: By **9:00 AM** on the day of class
- Submission: Submit on canvas under the corresponding week

Each reflection will ask you to respond to one or more guiding prompts, such as identifying a key argument, reflecting on how the readings, or raising a question for discussion. Reflections are graded on completion and thoughtful engagement, not on grammar or writing style.

Students may miss up to two reading reflections during the semester without penalty. These are intended to provide flexibility for unforeseen circumstances and do not require advance notice. **In addition, students are not required to submit a reading reflection on the day they serve as discussion leader**, as preparation for discussion leadership replaces the reflection for that week. Additional missed reflections beyond these will affect the final grade.

2. Discussion Leadership (15% of final grade)

Each student will help lead class discussion once during the semester. This assignment is designed to encourage shared responsibility for learning and active participation.

On your assigned day, you will:

- Prepare 2–3 discussion questions based on the readings
- Briefly summarize one reading for the class
- Help facilitate discussion with the instructor

You will submit a one-page discussion preparation sheet by 9:00 AM on the day you lead. Students do not submit a reading reflection during the week they serve as discussion leader. This assignment is graded on preparation and effort, not on public speaking ability.

3. Midterm Analytical Essay (25% of final grade)

The midterm assignment is a take-home written exam designed to assess your understanding of key concepts from the first half of the course (Units 1–2).

- Length: 3-5 pages (double spaced, 12pt font)
- Format: Open notes and open readings
- Due: **March 13th 3:00pm**

Students will choose from a set of essay questions that ask you to explain, compare, and apply course concepts such as gender as power, inequality, representation, intersectionality, and violence. **The full set of prompts will be provided at least one week before the due date.** The midterm focuses on clarity of ideas, use of course readings, and analytical thinking rather than memorization.

4. Final Research Presentation (35% of final grade)

The final assignment for this course is a short research presentation on a topic related to gender and politics. This presentation allows you to explore a research question in depth and share your findings with the class.

- Length: 10-15 minutes
- Format: Individual or in pairs
- Presentation Materials: PowerPoint slides or other pre-approved format
- Due: **April 30th in class**

Students may choose to complete the presentation individually or with one partner. Paired presentations should demonstrate shared responsibility, with both students contributing to the research and presentation.

Students will select a research topic connected to course themes, such as gender and political participation, gender and conflict or violence, LGBTQ+ politics, masculinity and political power, or women's movements and leadership. Presentations should clearly explain the research question, situate it within course concepts, and draw on scholarly sources. Students will work with the research support team to identify and gather materials.

To support success, the presentation will include two required checkpoints before the final presentation:

- Research topic and question proposal **due April 3rd 3:00pm**
- Brief annotated bibliography **due April 17th 3:00pm**

These checkpoints are graded on completion and are designed to help you develop a strong and well-organized presentation.

Presentations are evaluated based on clarity, engagement with course concepts, use of evidence, organization, and the ability to communicate ideas effectively. Public speaking style or technical polish is not the focus of grading.

5. Participation (Expected but Not Graded)

Active participation is an important part of this course and is expected of all students. Participation includes coming to class prepared, engaging with the readings, listening respectfully to others, asking questions, and contributing thoughtfully to discussions and activities. Students are not evaluated based on how often they speak, but on their overall engagement with the course material and with one another.

Participation is not graded. However, regular engagement is essential for understanding the material and for creating a successful, collaborative, and engaging classroom environment. The quality of class discussions depends on everyone's preparation and willingness to participate, and students are encouraged to contribute in ways that feel comfortable and meaningful to them.

Grading Scale

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage of Final Grade
Reading Reflections	9AM before every class	25%
Midterm Take-Home Essay	March 13 3PM	25%
Discussion Leadership	Once during the semester	15%
Research Topic Proposal	March 27 3PM	35% (Final Presentation)
Annotated Bibliography	April 17 3PM	
Final Research Presentation (10–15 minutes)	April 30—in class	

Letter Grade	Percentage Range
A+	97–100
A	94–97
A–	90–94
B+	87–90
B	84–87
B–	80–84
C+	77–80
C	74–77
C–	70–74
D+	67–70
D	64–67
D–	60–64
F	0–60

Attendance

Regular attendance is expected, as class sessions emphasize discussion and collective learning. This course recognizes that Department of Corrections (DOC) issues may occasionally prevent students from attending class.

Excused absences include illness, medical or legal appointments, facility lockdowns, and other DOC-related disruptions outside a student's control. Students will not be penalized for excused absences.

Unexcused absences include avoidable conflicts, appointments that could be scheduled at another time, or unexplained absences. Students may not be able to pass the course with more than three unexcused absences.

Students should notify the instructor in advance when possible about a scheduled absence, or as soon as possible afterward if advance notice is not feasible. Lecture materials will always be posted to canvas after class for review.

Late Work

For extenuating circumstances (circumstances that are out of a student's control), there will be no penalty for late work. For non-extenuating circumstances (lack of preparation or procrastination on the students' part), **there will be 5% penalty every 24 hours an assignment is late**. Only days when student's have access to the classroom to submit to canvas will be counted.

School of Continuing & Professional Studies and Washington University Polices

Course Evaluations

Students will complete anonymous course evaluations at the end of each semester. These course evaluations will be distributed and collected by a member of the core PEP team to ensure anonymity.

Academic Integrity

Effective learning, teaching, and research all depend upon the ability of members of the academic community to trust one another and to trust the integrity of work that is submitted for academic credit or conducted in the wider arena of scholarly research. Such an atmosphere of mutual trust fosters the free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential.

In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please contact your instructor to discuss the issue. Faculty, students, and administrative staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at WashU.

Here is a partial list of some of the forms plagiarism can take:

- Verbatim copying without acknowledgement – copying a whole paragraph or larger sections; in effect, claiming that the writing is your own.
- Copying select phrases without acknowledgement – using your own words to pad the selectively copied words of others.
- Paraphrasing text without acknowledgement – rewriting text in your own words, but using the idea or argument as your own.
- Final drafts that contain plagiarism will receive a zero, and may result in failure of the assignment or of the entire course.

Grades of “Incomplete”

Grades of incomplete are rare and are reserved for medical crises or other documented emergencies occurring late in the semester. Incompletes are reserved for students who were otherwise making satisfactory progress in the course before the emergency and will be allowed at the instructor’s discretion.

Academic Accommodations

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Washington University in St. Louis supports the rights of enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity and, in compliance with federal, state, and local requirements, is committed to reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities for whom accommodations may be necessary should coordinate these accommodations with their course instructors and Site Administrator (Savannah Sowell [sowell@wustl.edu] or Chels Fabian [chels@wustl.edu]). Preferred Name and Gender-Inclusive Pronouns: To affirm each person’s gender identity and lived experiences, we must ask and check in with others about pronouns. This simple effort can make a profound difference in a person’s experience of safety, respect, and support.

Inclusive Learning Environment

The best learning environment—whether in the classroom, studio, laboratory, or fieldwork site—is one in which all members feel respected while being productively challenged. At Washington University in St. Louis, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive atmosphere, in which all participants can contribute, explore, and challenge their own ideas as well as those of others. Every participant has an active responsibility to foster a climate of intellectual stimulation, openness, and respect for diverse perspectives, questions, personal backgrounds, abilities, and experiences, although instructors bear primary responsibility for its maintenance.

A range of resources is available to those who perceive a learning environment as lacking inclusivity, as defined in the preceding paragraph. If possible, we encourage students to speak directly with their instructor about any suggestions or concerns they have regarding a particular instructional space or situation. Alternatively, students may bring concerns to another trusted advisor or administrator (such as an academic advisor, mentor, department chair, or dean).

Religious Holiday Class Absence Policy

As home to students, faculty, and staff of all the world's major religions and as a non-sectarian institution, Washington University in St. Louis values the rich diversity of spiritual expression and practice found on campus. It is therefore the policy of the university that students who miss class, assignments, or exams to observe a religious holiday should be accommodated as follows:

1. absences should be counted as excused in any course in which attendance is a measure of academic performance;
2. reasonable extensions of time should be given, without academic penalty, for missed assignments;
3. exams should be reasonably rescheduled without academic penalty.

To ensure that accommodations may be made, students who plan to miss class for a religious holiday must inform their instructors in writing before the end of the third week of class, or as soon as possible if the holiday occurs during the first three weeks of the semester. Absence for religious reasons does not lessen students' responsibility for course work or material covered during their absence. It is incumbent on the student who misses a class to catch up on any material discussed and assignments given during that class period. If you believe you have not received a reasonable accommodation despite engaging with your instructor on the topic, please follow the course grievance process outlined by your school.

Semester Schedule

The schedule and readings may be adjusted as the semester progresses; students will be given advance notice of any changes.

UNIT 1: GENDER, POWER, & INEQUALITY

This unit introduces gender as a system of power, examining how gender inequalities emerge, persist, and shape political life across societies.

January 15 — Why Gender Matters

Readings:

- Koester, Diana. 2015. "Gender and power." Development Leadership Programme Concept Note 4.
- Htun, Mala. 2005. "What It Means to Study Gender & the State." *Politics & Gender* 1(1): 157-66.
- Ayoub, Phillip M. 2022. "Not that Niche: Making Room for the Study of LGBTIQ People in Political Science." *European Journal of Politics & Gender* 5(2): 154-172.

January 22 — Origins of Gender Inequality

Readings:

- UNDP Serbia. 2020. "Gender Differences: How Society Shapes Our Gender Roles from the Earliest Age," United Nations Development Programme (blog), <https://www.undp.org/serbia/blog/gender-differences-how-society-shapes-our-gender-roles-earliest-age>
- Sanday, Peggy Reeves. 1981. *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality*. NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams. 1989. "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics." *U. Chi. Legal Forum*. pp. 139-167.
- Avery, Alex and David Carter. Working Paper. "The Long-term Effects of Habsburg Borders on Gender Attitudes." *Under Review*.

Optional:

- Sanday, Peggy Reeves. 1981. *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality*. NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 8.
- Damann, TJ, J Siow, M Tavits. "Persistence of gender biases in Europe." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 120 (12): e2213266120.

January 29 — Gendering Politics

Readings:

- Paxton, Pamela. 2000. "Women's Suffrage in the Measurement of Democracy: Problems of Operationalization." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35 (3): 92-111.
- Gottlieb, Jessica, Guy Grossman, and Amanda Lea Robinson. 2018. "Do Men and Women Have Different Policy Preferences in Africa? Determinants and Implications of Gender Gaps in Policy Prioritization." *British Journal of Political Science* 48(3): 611-636.
- Vries, C.E.D. and O'Brien, D.Z., 2026. Women and the wall: gender attitudes and political engagement in unified Germany. *The Journal of Politics*, 88(1), pp.205-220.

UNIT 2: GENDER & POLITICAL POWER

This unit explores how gender shapes access to political power, representation, and policy, as well as the institutional efforts designed to address unequal participation.

February 5 — Gender & Political Representation

Readings:

- Fox, Richard L. and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2004. "Entering the Arena? Gender and the Decision to Run for Office." *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (2): 264-280
- Holman, M.R. and Schneider, M.C., 2018. Gender, race, and political ambition: how intersectionality and frames influence interest in political office. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 6(2), pp.264-280.
- UN Women. 2024. "Five Actions to Boost Women's Political Participation," UN Women (news explainer), September 2024, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/09/five-actions-to-boost-womens-political-participation>

Optional:

- Bos, Angela L., Jill S. Greenlee, Mirya R. Holman, Zoe M. Oxley, and J. Celeste Lay. 2022. "This One's for the Boys: How Gendered Political Socialization Limits Girls' Political Ambition and Interest." *American Political Science Review*, 116(2): 484-501.
- Clayton, Amanda, Amanda Lea Robinson, Martha C. Johnson, and Ragnhild Muriaas. 2020. "(How) Do Voters Discriminate Against Women Candidates? Experimental and Qualitative Evidence From Malawi." *Comparative Political Studies*, 53(3-4): 601-630.

February 12 — No Class

February 19 — Combating Unequal Representation (Quotas Part 1)

Readings:

- Krook, Mona Lena. 2010. Chapter 1 from *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hughes, M.M., Krook, M.L. and Paxton, P., 2015. Transnational women's activism and the global diffusion of gender quotas. *International Studies Quarterly*, 59(2), pp.357-372.
- Clayton, A. and Zetterberg, P., 2018. Quota shocks: Electoral gender quotas and government spending priorities worldwide. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(3), pp.916-932.

Optional:

- Besley, Timothy, Olle Folke, Torsten Persson, and Johanna Rickne. 2017. "Gender Quotas and the Crisis of the Mediocre Man: Theory and Evidence from Sweden." *American Economic Review* 107(8): 2204-2242

February 26 — Combating Unequal Representation (Quotas Part 2)

Readings:

- Krook, Mona Lena. 2010. Chapters 2 & 3 from *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bush, Sarah, Daniela Donno, and Pär Zetterberg. 2023. “International Rewards for Gender Equality Reforms in Autocracies.” *American Political Science Review*, 1-15.
- O’Brien, Diana Z. 2015. “Rising to the Top: Gender, political performance, and party leadership in Parliamentary Democracies.” *American Journal of Political Science* 59(4): 1022-1039.

Optional:

- Sanbonmatsu, Kira. “Electing women of color: The role of campaign trainings.” *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 36.2 (2015): 137-160.

March 5 — Gender & Public Policy

Readings:

- True, J., 2003. Mainstreaming gender in global public policy. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 5(3), pp.368-396.
- Ayoub, P.M., 2015. Contested norms in new-adopter states: International determinants of LGBT rights legislation. *European Journal of International Relations*, 21(2), pp.293-322.
- UN Women. 2024. “Intersectional Feminism: What It Means and Why It Matters Right Now,” UN Women (explainer article), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/intersectional-feminism-what-it-means-and-why-it-matters-right-now>

March 12 — No class (work on your midterm!)

UNIT 3: GENDER, VIOLENCE, & CONFLICT

This unit examines how gender shapes experiences of violence and conflict, highlighting both vulnerability and agency during and beyond periods of war.

CONTENT WARNING: The next couple of weeks involve heavy discussions of violence, particularly sexual violence during war.

March 19 — Victimization during Armed Conflict

Readings:

- McKay, S. (1998). The effects of armed conflict on girls and women. *Peace and Conflict*, 4(4), 381-392.
- Cohen, D. K. (2013). Explaining rape during civil war: Cross-national evidence (1980–2009). *American Political Science Review*, 107(3), 461-477.
- Kreft, Anne-Kathrin, and Mattias Agerberg. 2024. "Imperfect Victims? Civilian Men, Vulnerability, and Policy Preferences." *American Political Science Review* 118(1): 274 - 290.

Optional:

- Wood, E. J. (2006). Variation in sexual violence during war. *Politics & society*, 34(3), 307-342.

March 20 — Midterm Essay Due by 3PM

March 26 — Agency and Participation in Armed Conflict

Readings:

- Haeri, M., & Puechguirbal, N. (2010). From helplessness to agency: examining the plurality of women's experiences in armed conflict. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 92(877), 103-122.
- Thomas, Jakana L., and Kanisha D. Bond. 2015. "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations." *American Political Science Review* 109(3): 488-506.
- Karim, S., & Beardsley, K. (2016). Explaining sexual exploitation and abuse in peace-keeping missions: The role of female peacekeepers and gender equality in contributing countries. *Journal of Peace Research*, 53(1), 100-115.

Optional:

- Wood, R. M., & Thomas, J. L. (2017). Women on the frontline: Rebel group ideology and women's participation in violent rebellion. *Journal of Peace Research*, 54(1), 31-46.
- Cohen, D. K., & Karim, S. M. (2022). Does more equality for women mean less war? Rethinking sex and gender inequality and political violence. *International organization*, 76(2), 414-444.

April 2 — Beyond the Battlefield

Readings:

- Krook, Mona Lena., and Juliana Restrepo Sanín. 2019. "The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment against Female Politicians." *Perspectives on Politics* 18 (3): 740-755

- Håkansson, Sandra. 2021. "Do Women Pay a Higher Price for Power? Gender Bias in Political Violence in Sweden." *The Journal of Politics* 83.2: 515-531.
- Moran, L.J. and Sharpe, A.N., 2004. Violence, identity and policing: The case of violence against transgender people. *Criminal justice*, 4(4), pp.395-417.

Optional:

- Hagen, J.J., 2016. Queering women, peace and security. *International Affairs*, 92(2), pp.313-332.

April 3 — Research Proposal Due by 3PM

April 9 — In-class Midterm Review & Final Project Workshop

UNIT 4: GENDER BEYOND WOMEN

This unit expands the study of gender beyond women, focusing on masculinity, sexuality, and LGBTQ+ politics as central dimensions of political power.

April 16 — Men & Masculinity in Politics

Readings:

- McDermott, M. L. 2016. Chapter 3 from *Masculinity, Femininity, and American Political Behavior*. New York City: Oxford University Press.
- Clayton, Amanda, Diana Z. O'Brien, and Jennifer M. Piscopo. 2024. "Founding Narratives and Men's Political Ambition: Experimental Evidence from US Civics Lessons." *British Journal of Political Science* 54(1): 129-151.
- Kim, Jeong Hyun, and Yesola Kweon. 2022. "Why Do Young Men Oppose Gender Quotas? Group Threat and Backlash to Legislative Gender Quotas." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 47(4): 991-1021.

Optional:

- Jarnegård, Elin, and Rainbow Murray. 2018. "Revisiting Forms of Representation by Critically Examining Men." *Politics & Gender* 14.2: 265-270.

April 23 — LGBTQ+ in Politics

Readings:

- Ayoub, Phillip M., Douglas Page, and Sam Whitt. 2021. "Pride amid Prejudice: The Influence of LGBT+ Rights Activism in a Socially Conservative Society." *American Political Science Review* 115(2): 467-485.

- Reynolds, Andrew. 2013. "Representation and Rights: The Impact of LGBT Legislators in Comparative Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 2: 259-274.
- Harrison, Brian F., and Melissa R. Michelson. 2019. "Gender, Masculinity Threat, and Support for Transgender Rights: An Experimental Study." *Sex Roles* 80(1): 63-75.

April 24 — Annotated Bibliography Due by 3PM

UNIT 5: GENDERED POLITICAL ACTIVISM

This unit examines the formal and informal spaces where women exercise political power, shape participation, and transform institutions.

April 30 — Where Women Hold Power

Readings:

- Collins, Mona Morgan and Valeria Rueda. *Becoming Political: How Marching Suffragists Facilitated Women's Electoral Participation in England*, CEPR Discussion Paper No. 18641. CEPR Press, Paris & London. <https://cepr.org/publications/dp18641>
- Daby, Mariela, and Mason W. Moseley. 2022. "Feminist Mobilization and the Abortion Debate in Latin America: Lessons from Argentina." *Politics & Gender* 18(2): 359-393.
- *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* — in-class documentary

May 7 — Final Research Presentations