**Women in Western Political Thought**

**POLS 1824 V**

**Spring 2020**

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The Political Theory Project

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**Introduction**

Much of the tradition of western political philosophy has either ignored or justified the subordination of women, despite elucidating principles of alleged universality. This course challenges the traditional “canon” of western political thought by recovering a long—and often forgotten—history of debates, ideas, and texts written by, about, and for women.

This course will feature texts written by both men and women from a wide range of historical and intellectual contexts, from philosophers and playwrights of Ancient Greece, to early modern feminist thinkers, to late-nineteenth century social activists and writers. We will examine these texts with specific reference to the lives and status of women in society. What is the nature of man—and woman? What does it mean for women to be political subjects and citizens? What is the proper role of women in social and political life? And how does including women in the history of political thought shape our fundamental assumptions about *doing* political theory and politics?

This course is intended for upper-division (junior and senior) undergraduate students, though freshman and sophomore are welcome to attend. Its methodological approach emphasizes close readings of texts in their historical context, but also draws on the approaches of contemporary feminist political philosophy as a framework for discussion and debate. While there are no prerequisites for this class, it does assume some familiarity with thinkers and ideas from the western “canon”—i.e., Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Smith etc. While I will often cover “the basics” of these thinkers and their ideas (i.e., context, life, key arguments), students wishing to take this class may wish to meet with me beforehand or consult the supplementary readings.

**Required Texts**

PDF versions of book chapters, peer-reviewed articles, and primary source readings will be uploaded to the course Canvas page. The works listed below are required for the course. They can be purchased from your favorite online or brick-and-mortar bookseller.

Mary Beard, *Women and Power: A Manifesto.* [Amazon Link.](https://www.amazon.com/Women-Power-Manifesto-Mary-Beard/dp/1631494759/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=women+and+power&qid=1561479690&s=books&sr=1-2)

Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (available for free online

through the Brown Library). [Amazon Link.](https://www.amazon.com/Women-Western-Political-Thought-Moller/dp/0691158347/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=women+in+western+political+thought&qid=1561479711&s=books&sr=1-1)

Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies.*  [Amazon Link](https://www.amazon.com/Book-City-Ladies-Penguin-Classics/dp/0140446893).

Euripides, *Medea,* ed. James Morwood. [Amazon Link.](https://www.amazon.com/Medea-Other-Oxford-Worlds-Classics/dp/0199537968/ref=sr_1_7?keywords=euripides+medea&qid=1561479788&s=books&sr=1-7)

Aristophanes, *Lysistrata,* trans. Jeffrey Henderson. [Amazon Link](https://www.amazon.com/Aristophanes-Lysistrata-Focus-Classical-Library/dp/0941051021/ref=sr_1_4?keywords=aristophanes+lysistrata&qid=1561479933&s=books&sr=1-4).

Sophie De Grouchy, *Letters on Sympathy*, translated by Sandrine Berges with an introduction, glossary, and commentary by Sandrine Berges and Eric Schliesser. [Amazon Link.](https://www.amazon.com/Sophie-Grouchys-Letters-Sympathy-Engagement/dp/0190637099/ref=sr_1_1?crid=22ARGDO3KQNF7&keywords=sophie+de+grouchy%27s+letters+on+sympathy&qid=1573488674&sprefix=sophie+de+grouchy+letters%2Caps%2C159&sr=8-1)

**Writing Designation**

As a writing-designated course, this course will hone students’ analytical writing skills in two major written assignments (details below). Students will be required to meet with the instructor to discuss their plans for writing and will receive ample feedback throughout the course. Additional tutorial sessions for supervised writing will also be held outside of the scheduled meeting time.

The Sheriden Center for Teaching and Learning also hosts a variety of resources for students who might want additional support for writing. Students can schedule an appointment with one of the Sheridan writing tutors for additional feedback and guidance on their assignments. For more information, visit <https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/programs-services/writing>

**Assignments and Grading**

*Weekly attendance and participation (20%):* You are expected to attend weekly

seminars and be an active participant and listener. You will be assessed not on how *much*

you speak but on the *quality* of your contributions, your interpretive charity to others, and your openness to different persuasions and interpretations. You are allowed 2 “no questions asked” absence during the semester before your participation grade is impacted. For every absence above the first two, your participation grade falls a third (i.e., A to A-, A- to B+).

*Presentation (20%)* As part of the weekly participation requirement,students will be required to do one short presentation that “sets the scene” for the thinker(s) for that week’s reading. This presentation should be about 10-15 minutes long and provide details about the historical, intellectual, and social context of the thinker and text(s) in question (rather than purely biographical information). Students should be prepared to discuss or address questions on how the author is influenced by or influences his/her immediate context in various capacities.

*3 Text “Gobbets” (30%, 10% each):* Over the course of the semester, students will submit 3 “mini essays” (500-800 words) that clearly and concisely interpret a passage from a given text. The passages will be posted on Canvas each week. The aim of this assignment is to hone student’s abilities in close reading and interpretation of a text.

While you are only required to submit 3 gobbets, you may choose to submit an additional 4th. I will take the 3 highest grades to count towards this portion of your final grade.

*Final Project (30%):* The final project will be a 5-8 page “practicum” that takes the form of a proposal/memo based on one of the thinkers we have read. More details will be distributed later in the semester. No outside research will be necessary, but the project will require creativity and very clear, persuasive writing. Students will meet with the instructor to discuss their project in advance, and a short in-class presentation of their proposals will take place during reading week.

**Students with Disabilities**

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. If you have a documented disability or require specific accommodations, please speak to me in person. You may also wish to contact Brown’s Student and Employee Accessibility Services (401-863-9588, [seas@brown.edu](mailto:seas@brown.edu)) for more information about the accommodation process and further services.

**Academic Integrity**

From the Brown academic code: “Academic achievement is ordinarily evaluated on the basis of work that a student produces independently. Students who submit academic work that uses others' ideas, words, research, or images without proper attribution and documentation are in violation of the academic code. Infringement of the academic code entails penalties ranging from reprimand to suspension, dismissal, or expulsion from the University.

“Brown students are expected to tell the truth. Misrepresentations of facts, significant omissions, or falsifications in any connection with the academic process (including change of course permits, the academic transcript, or applications for graduate training or employment) violate the code, and students are penalized accordingly. This policy also applies to Brown alums, insofar as it relates to Brown transcripts and other records of work at Brown.

“Misunderstanding the code is not an excuse for dishonest work. Students who are unsure about any point of Brown's academic code should consult their courses instructors or an academic dean, who will be happy to explain the policy.”

Please review the Brown Academic Code [here](http://brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/curriculum/documents/academic-code.pdf):

**Office Hours**

Day/Time **Wednesdays, 3-5pm.**

My office is located in the Political Theory Project (8 Fones Alley), room 108

\*\*Adjustments due to COVID-19\*\* I am happy to meet for “virtual office hours.” Email me to set an appointment.

**Schedule**

Jan 28: Introduction/Shopping Week

* Mary Beard, *Women and Power*
* Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review,* vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 1986), 1054-1075
* Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought,* Introduction.

Feb 4: The Nature of (Wo)Man

* Aristotle, *Politics,* Book I
* Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* Books 1, 5, and 8
* Hippocrates, *Peri Parthenon* (“On the Diseases of Young Girls”)
* Okin, Chapters 1-4 (focus on 1 and 4)

Feb 11: Performing Gender in Ancient Athens

* Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*
* Euripides, *Medea*
* Alyssa Milano and Waleisah Wilson, “Why the time is now for a [#SexStrike,” CNN News.](https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/13/opinions/alyssa-milano-sex-strike-now/index.html)
* Donna Zuckerberg, [“Sex Strikes have always been about patriarchal power, not women’s rights,” *The Washington Post*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/sex-strikes-have-always-been-about-patriarchal-power-not-womens-rights/2019/05/17/89dcd3ea-77f0-11e9-b7ae-390de4259661_story.html?utm_term=.261f436f453c)

Feb 18: \*\*No Class—President’s Day Holiday\*\*

Feb 25: The Virtues of Woman

* Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405)
* Broad and Green, Chapter 2 (on Christine de Pizan)

Mar 3: Equality and Hierarchy

* Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, Part I* (1694) and *Reflections upon Marriage* (1706)*,* selections.
* Teresa M. Bejan, “’Since All the World is mad, why should not I be so?’ Mary Astell on Equality, Hierarchy, and Ambition.” *Political Theory* (online, 2019).

Mar 10: Women’s Rights are Human Rights

* Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792): Chapters 1-4, 7-8, 13
* The Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen (1789)
* [BBC *In Our Time:* Mary Wollstonecraft](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b00pg5dr)

Mar 17: \*\*cancelled due to COVID-19\*\*\* ☹

Mar 24: “Spring Break”

Apr 3: Sympathy and Society

* Sophie de Grouchy, *Letters on Sympathy* (1798), including editors’ introduction.
* Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759)*,* selections

Apr 10: Women and Liberalism

* Harriet Taylor Mill, “The Enfranchisement of Women” (1851)
* J.S. Mill, “[The Admission of Women to the Electoral Franchise,”](https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/mill-the-collected-works-of-john-stuart-mill-volume-xxviii-public-and-parliamentary-speeches-part-i) (May 20, 1867)
* J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women,* Chapters 1-4 (1869)
* Background on Taylor Mill and J.S. Mill: [The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/harriet-mill/)

Apr 17: Suffrage

* Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al, “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions” (1848)
* Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?” (1851)
* Susan B. Anthony, “Suffrage and the Working Woman,” (1871) and excerpts from the Trial of Susan B. Anthony (1872)
* Frederick Douglass on Women’s Suffrage (1888)
* Judith Shklar, “American Citizenship: Voting.” *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (1989)

Apr 24: Women and Economics

* Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (1898), selections
* Katrine Marçal, *Who Cooked Adam Smith’s Dinner?* Chapters 1-3, 5, 9-10, epilogue
* The New York Times: [Women’s Unpaid Labor is Worth $10,900,000,000,000](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/04/opinion/women-unpaid-labor.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage)

May 1: FINAL PRESENTATIONS

**Additional Reading Resources**

Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green, *A History of Women’s Political Thought in Europe, 1400-1700.* (2009)

Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green, eds., *Virtue, Liberty, and Toleration: Political Ideas of European Women, 1400-1800.* (2007)

Karen Green, *A History of Women’s Political Thought in Europe, 1700-1800.* (2014)

Carole Levin and Patricia A. Sullivan, eds. *Political Rhetoric, power, and Renaissance women.* (1995)

Alan Ryan, *On Politics.* 2 vols. (2012)

Arlene W. Saxonhouse, *Women in the History of Political Thought: Ancient Greece to Machiavelli.* (1985)

Mary Shanley and Carole Pateman, eds. *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* (1991)

Lisa Pace Vetter, *The Political Thought of America’s Founding Feminists*. (2017)

Merry E. Wisener-Hanks, *Gender in History: Global Perspectives.* (2001)

Merry E. Wisener-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe.* (1993)