

**Centre for the Study of the Americas
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University**

Course:	M.A. IRAS
Course No:	IA537
Course Title:	Women in US Society and Politics
Course Type:	Optional
Semester:	Winter
Course Teacher & Contact Details:	Name: Uma Purushothaman RoomNo.: 319 Email: umapurushothaman@mail.jnu.ac.in
Credits:	4
Contact Hours:	4 hours/week

Course Statement

Women in the US have made enormous strides in social, cultural, economic, and political spheres. Yet, the US fares poorly on many global gender indices. Moreover, factors such as ethnicity and class contribute to a fragmented experience among women, thwarting collective efforts towards equality. Thus, women in the US are not homogenous nor are their lived experiences the same. This course seeks to explore the role of women and the debates over their roles in US society and politics. The course is dedicated to understanding the incredibly varied roles and experiences of women in the United States concerning their contributions to society and political life. It covers many historical and contemporary gender-power-policy issues in such a way as to provide insight into women's rights and social issues as major topics for students. The course aims to immerse students in critical discourse on gender politics within the United States. Through an examination of various modules, students will gain insights into how gender shapes societal structures and influences policy-making processes.

The course is structured around four key modules:

- Understanding Gender and Power
- Equality and Empowerment
- Perspectives on Policy Issues
- Shifting Narratives on Women's Rights in the US since 2000

<p>Course Objectives</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To provide students with a foundational understanding of women’s roles in US society and politics throughout history ○ Explore the evolution of women’s political and economic participation, including voting rights, workplace participation, and representation in government and society. ○ Understand the cultural debates on women in US society ○ Analyse the different lived experiences of African American women and other women of colour ○ Investigate current challenges and opportunities facing women in US society, including issues like reproductive rights, pay equity, and violence against women
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <hr/> <p>Upon completion of this course, students will be able -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To critically analyse the role of women in US society and politics • To develop a critique of the challenges faced by women in the US • To discuss and explain the political and cultural context of the debates in US society on women • To evaluate the intersectionality of race and gender in the US
<p>Evaluation Methods</p> <hr/> <p>Midsemesterevaluation(50%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TermPaper– 30% • Presentation-20% <p>End semester evaluation (50%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EndSemesterExamination– 50 % <p>SIS Research Manual should be used as a guide for written assignments. This is available at https://www.jnu.ac.in/sites/default/files/SIS_Research_Manual_0.pdf</p> <p>Students must maintain high degree of academic integrity, which includes abstaining from copying and plagiarism. For details on plagiarism and research ethics, refer to SIS ResearchManual.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Course Outline <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The course seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of women in

US society and politics. Towards this end, the following key discussions will be held:

Module 1: Understanding Gender and Power

- This unit will explore the conceptual frameworks that underpin the study of women in US society and politics, namely
- Gender and Identity
- Patriarchy and Power: A historical and political lens
- Feminist movement and Political Impacts
- Feminist Civil Society
- Changing American Demographics, Identity and Society

Module 2: Equality and Empowerment

- This module focuses on understanding how the concepts of equality and empowerment have evolved over a period of time by concentrating on historical case studies and contemporary case studies for each of these concepts viz.
- The US Constitution- a re-reading to understand embedded discrimination
- Participation in the workforce and movement for Equal Wages
- Empowerment through the judiciary [Roe v Wade (1973), Griswold v. Connecticut (1965), Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson (1986)]
- Reproductive Rights, Women in Sports, Media, and Business

Module 3: Perspectives on Policy Issues

- This module studies the different feminist perspectives on various policy issues in the US. The module will cover the key approaches of liberal feminism, radical feminism, and intersectional feminism on the following important issues:
- Workplace Equality
- Reproductive Rights
- Violence against Women
- Employment

Module 4: Contemporary Debates on Women's Rights in the US

- This module examines the political debates and cultural contexts for understanding the debates on:
- Women's health and reproductive rights; Reproductive justice beyond abortion
- Childcare, Maternity Leave, Equal Wages;

- Intersectionality- Experiences of African American and other women of colour

Readings

Module 1: Understanding Gender and Power

Essential Readings

- Brickell, C. (2006), “The Sociological Construction of Gender and Sexuality”, *The Sociological Review*, 54(1), 87-113, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2006.00603.x>
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé, (1991), “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”, *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6): 1241-1299
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*, (Ed. Colin Gordon), New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Friedan, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique*, New York: Norton.
- hooks, bell, (1984), *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, Boston: South End Press.
- MacKinnon, Catharine A., (1991), *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Peake, Linda, (2010), “Gender, race, sexuality” in Smith, S., Pain, R., Marston, S., & Jones, JP (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Social Geographies*: 55-77.

Additional Readings

- Caldwell, V. F., & Crenshaw, K. W. (1995), *Critical Race Theory: The key writings that formed the movement*, New York: The New Press.
- Davis, Angela Y. (1983), *Women, Race, and Class*, New York: Random House.
- Fox, B.J. (1988), “Conceptualizing ‘patriarchy’”, *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*, 25: 163-182. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-618X.1988.tb00101.x>
- Hooks, Bell. (1987). *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, London: Pluto Press.
- Kang, M., Lessard, D., Heston, L., & Nordmarken, S., (2017), *Introduction to women, Gender, Sexuality studies*, UMass Amherst.
- Kimmel, Michael, (2013), *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an*

Era, United States: Public Affairs.

- Kroger, J. (1997), "Gender and identity: The intersection of structure, content, and context", *Sex roles*, 36: 747-770.
- Miller, P. (2017), *Patriarchy*, London: Routledge.
- Steinem, G., & Ruchira Gupta. (2014), *The essential Gloria Steinem reader : As If Women Matter*, New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
- Williams, S. H. (1997), "A feminist reassessment of civil society", *Indiana Law Journal*, 72(2): 417-447.

Module 2: Equality and Empowerment

Essential Readings

- Bezanson, R. P. (1993), "Emancipation as freedom in Roe v. Wade", *Dickinson law Review* 97(3): 485-512.
- Cobble, D. S. (2011), *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America*, United Kingdom: Princeton University Press.
- DuBois, E. C. (1987), "Outgrowing the Compact of the Fathers: Equal Rights, Woman Suffrage, and the United States Constitution, 1820-1878", *The Journal of American History*, 74(3): 836–862. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1902156>
- Ritter, Gretchen, (2006), *The Constitution as Social Design: Gender and Civic Membership in the American Constitutional Order*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Schwarzenbach, Sibyl A. and Smith Patricia (Eds), (2004), *Women and the U.S. Constitution: History, Interpretation, and Practice*, Columbia: Columbia university Press.
- Sullivan, K. M. (2002), "Constitutionalizing Women's Equality", *California Law Review*, 90(3), 735–764. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3481236>
- Wesley, J. M. (2013), "Foregrounding the "War on Women": Right-Wing Conservatism and Progressive Policies", *Race, Gender & Class*, 20(3/4), 40–63.

Additional Readings

- Bailey, M. J. (2005). More Power to the Pill: The Impact of Contraceptive Freedom on Women's Labor-Force Participation.
- Baldez, L., Epstein L, and Martin A. D. (2006), "Does the U.S. Constitution Need an

Equal Rights Amendment?”, *The Journal of Legal Studies* 35(1): 243–83. <https://doi.org/10.1086/498836>.

- Francis, L. P. (1993), “Title IX: Equality for Women's Sports?”, *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 20(1), 32-47.
- Heckman, D. (1992), “Women & (and) Athletics: A Twenty Year Retrospective on Title IX”, *University Miami Entertainment. & Sports Law Review*, 9, 1
- May, E. T. (2010), *America and the pill: A history of promise, peril, and liberation*, New York: Basic Books.
- Thomas, T. A. (2019), “From 19th Amendment to ERA: Constitutional Amendments for Women’s Equality”, *Insights on Law & Society*, 20(1): 12-18.

Module 3: Perspectives on Policy Issues

Essential Readings

- Ahn, S., Kim, J., & Kang, W. (2019), “Low Female Political Representation in the US: An Institution-Based Explanation”, *Journal of International and Area Studies*, 26(1): 65–88.
- Carroll, Susan J. and Richard L. Fox (2012), *Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics* (3 ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chrisler, J. C., & Ferguson, S. (2006), “Violence against women as a public health issue”, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1087(1), 235-249.
- Fulton, S. A., Maestas, C. D., Maisel, L. S., & Stone, W. J. (2006), “The sense of a woman: gender, ambition, and the decision to run for Congress”, *Political Research Quarterly*, 59(2): 235–248. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290605900206>
- Mesok, E. (2016), “Sexual violence and the US military: Feminism, US empire, and the failure of liberal equality”, *Feminist Studies*, 42(1), 41-69.
- Nelson, Jennifer (2003), *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement*, New York: New York University Press.
- Rowland, R., & Klein, R. D. (2013), “Radical feminism: Critique and construct”, In *Feminist Knowledge* (RLE Feminist Theory) (pp. 271-303), London: Routledge.
- Sanbonmatsu, K (2020), “Women’s Underrepresentation in the U.S. Congress”, *Daedalus*, 149(1): 40–55.
- Snell, M. (1979), “The Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts: Their Impact in the Workplace”, *Feminist Review*, 1, 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1394749>
- Thomsen, Danielle M., and Aaron S. King, (2020), “Women’s Representation and the Gendered Pipeline to Power”, *American Political Science Review*, 114 (4): 989-1000.

Additional Readings

- Bedard, M. (1990), “Domestic Violence: Feminist Responses” [Review of Domestic Tyranny: The Making of American Social Policy against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present; Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence; Terrifying Love: Why Battered Women Kill and How Society Responds; Women, Policing, and Male Violence: International Perspectives; Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse, by E. Pleck, L. Gordon, L. E. Walker, J. Hanmer, J. Radford, E. A. Stanko, K. Yllo, & M. Bograd], *NWSA Journal*, 2(3): 464–475.
- Katzenstein, M. F. (1990), “Feminism within American Institutions: Unobtrusive Mobilization in the 1980s”, *Signs*, 16(1): 27–54.
- Palmer, B. (2001). “To Do Justly”: The Integration of Women into the American Judiciary, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 34(2): 235–239.
- Remiche, A. (2015), “When Judging Is Power: A Gender Perspective on the French and American Judiciaries”, *Journal of Law and Courts*, 3(1), 95–114.
- Satz, Debra, (2017), “Feminist Perspectives on Reproduction and the Family”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy online*.
- Yodanis, C. L. (2004), “Gender Inequality, Violence Against Women, and Fear: A Cross-National Test of the Feminist Theory of Violence Against Women”, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 19(6): 655-675.

Module 4: Contemporary Debates on Women’s Rights in the US

Essential Readings

- Davis, A. Y. (2020), *Women, race & class*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Hartmann, S. M. (2017), “Divided We Stand: The Battle over Women’s Rights and Family Values That Polarized American Politics”, *The American Historical Review*, 122(5):1655–1656. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/122.5.1655>
- Kellogg, Laura Cornelius (2015), *Our Democracy and the American Indian and Other Works*, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- McCormack, S. W. (2016), “Overtaxing the Working Family: Uncle Sam and the Childcare Squeeze”, *Michigan Law Review*, 114(4): 559–617.
- Reiss, F. (2021), “Child Marriage in the United States: Prevalence and Implications”, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 69(6): S8–S10.
- Swick, A., & Moore, E. (2018), “The (Mostly) Good News on Women in Combat: What is the state of female combat integration across the military services?”, [online

Web], Accessed 30 May 2024, URL: <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/an-update-on-the-status-of-women-in-combat#:~:text=The%20Navy%20and%20Air%20Force,fewer%20combat%20and%20infantry%20jobs>.

- Weeden, K. A., Gelbgiser, D., & Morgan, S. L. (2020), “Pipeline Dreams: Occupational Plans and Gender Differences in STEM Major Persistence and Completion”, *Sociology of Education*, 93(4): 297–314. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48588758>
- West, R. (2009), “From Choice to Reproductive Justice: De-Constitutionalizing Abortion Rights”, *The Yale Law Journal*, 118(7): 1394–1432.

Additional Readings

- Billups, S., Thelamour, B., Thibodeau, P., & Durgin, F. H. (2022), “On intersectionality: visualizing the invisibility of Black women”, *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41235-022-00450-1>
- Chelsea Griffis. (2017), “In the Beginning Was the Word”: Evangelical Christian Women, the Equal Rights Amendment, and Competing Definitions of Womanhood, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 38(2): 148–172. <https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.38.2.0148>
- Ferrell, R. M. (1974), “The Equal Rights Amendment to The United States Constitution — Areas of Controversy”, *The Urban Lawyer*, 6(4): 853–891.
- Kyvig, D. E. (1996), “Historical Misunderstandings and the Defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment”, *The Public Historian*, 18(1): 45–63. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3377881>
- Lawson, D. W., Lynes, R., Morris, A., & Schaffnit, S. B. (2020), “What does the American public know about child marriage?”, *PLoS ONE*, 15(9). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0238346>
- Ziegler, M. (2009), “The Framing of a Right to Choose: Roe v. Wade and the Changing Debate on Abortion Law”, *Law and History Review*, 27(2): 281–330.

Primary Readings for Course

- Beauvoir, Simone De, (1956), *The Second Sex*, London: Jonathan Cape.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (2009), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, New York: WW Norton & Company.
- *The US Constitution*