GOVERNMENT 94IP
Identity, Politics, & Policy

Fall 2017
Thursday 2-4pm
Room: CGIS K109

Instructor: Dr. Ana Catalano Weeks
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OH: Th 4 – 5:30 or by appointment
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Course Description

What explains the meteoric shift in favor of same-sex marriage in advanced democracies over recent years? Why are gender quotas sometimes instituted to increase women’s representation, but reserved seats more commonly used for ethnic groups? How has the rise of far right parties affected policies towards immigrants? This course brings together different approaches to the study of identities – gender, sexuality, race, religion, and others – to explore the causes and consequences of policies related to group rights and equality in Western advanced democracies. Forms of identity are often studied separately. One of the goals of this course is to bring together different approaches to the study of identities -- from gender to race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and so on – to search for commonalities and intersectionality between them. In the first part of the course, we will consider several key explanations of policy change. In the second part of the course, we will apply these theoretical perspectives to specific policy issues facing different identity groups. The course takes a comparative perspective, aiming to understand the relative influence of key policy determinants across countries and issue areas.

This course also includes a significant methodological component, aimed at introducing students to the process of designing an original research project.

Course Goals

Students should come away from this course with a deep understanding of the role of identity in politics and policymaking, and why equality and identity-based policy has evolved differently in different contexts. Students will also improve critical analysis and written and oral communication skills. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain how and why policies related to identity and group rights vary across advanced democracies
• Develop their own perspectives of what we know and don’t know yet about the causes, consequences, and proposed solutions to inclusiveness in democracy, and debate these with peers
• Design a research proposal and present it to peers; give constructive feedback to peers on their proposals
• Write a research design paper consisting of an important puzzle, literature review, and proposed methodological approach, which students may build on if they decide to write a senior thesis

Readings

All readings will be available through Harvard library links in this syllabus, or posted on the course website for the appropriate week under the “Other Readings” tab on the left hand side. I recommend you install Harvard LibX to help access readings quickly (especially by using the right-click option to “Reload page via Harvard access”). http://library.harvard.edu/harvard-libx. Note that the readings on this syllabus are subject to change.

Assignments and Grading

This is a seminar, and as such your active participation in the course is vital to its success. Assignments are geared towards improving your critical analysis and communication skills. Your grade is based on five components:

1. **Class participation (10%)**: It is important to attend and participate in each class. Everyone has something to contribute. I expect students to come to class prepared to discuss the readings, for example by raising questions or comments about the material or relating your own experience or current events to the topic. Students are also required to read their fellow students’ response papers each week before class.

2. **Short response papers (4, each worth 5% of grade)**: Each student will write 4 short response papers (1-2 pages each) on the readings, to be posted on the course website on Wednesday (night before class) by midnight. Response papers should consist of: 1) critical analysis of the readings (evaluation based on their methodology, argumentation, logic, and your personal views); 2) questions that remain unanswered / you would like to discuss with your classmates, and 3) other possible research directions. You do not need to cover every reading, and can focus on 2-3 readings of interest in depth if you prefer (you must cover more than one). Students will be able to express a preference, and I will do my best to accommodate everyone’s preferences. Everyone will write a response paper in the final week.

3. **In-class presentation and discussion (15%)**: Each student will be responsible for leading discussion on the readings for one week. Students will start with a short presentation on the week’s reading assignments, identifying key puzzles, main findings, strengths and weaknesses, and relation to other themes in the course / ‘big picture’ (no longer than 15 min). At the end of the presentation, students will pose a few questions
that they would like the class to discuss. Students may prepare a few slides or use a handout of 1-2 pages. Students will be able to express a preference, and I will do my best to accommodate everyone’s preferences.

4. **Research proposal (15%)**: Students will write a 3-4 page research proposal for the final paper and discuss it in a small workshop with 3-5 peers. Students will have significant freedom to choose a topic of interest to them; it can be one of the policy issues we cover or something else related to identity politics and policy. I will schedule meetings with all students before proposals are due to discuss potential topics. The research proposal should cover the key puzzle or research question, what others have said about it, and your ideas for the design of a study that will answer the question of interest. The goal of small workshops is to provide constructive suggestions and comments on the research proposal, to help all students improve their work.

5. **Final research paper (40%)**: Building on the research proposals and feedback, students will write a final research design paper on a topic of their choice. The final paper should articulate your central hypotheses or arguments, review the most salient academic literature, and describe methods for the exploration of evidence. The paper should be between 15 and 25 pages.

**Absences and Late Assignments**

Absences must be accompanied by a formal note written by a doctor or your Resident Dean. If there is an anticipated scheduling conflict, the student will be able to write an extra response paper in lieu of attendance for **one class only, if agreed in advance**. Unexplained absences will result in late penalty equivalent to 1/3 of a letter grade for the final class participation grade (e.g., from an A to an A-).

Late assignments will not be accepted barring exceptional circumstances (family emergencies, medical illness), with a letter from your Resident Dean explaining the reason.

**Collaboration policy**

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential for academic work. For this course, you should free to discuss ideas for paper topics and sources with your classmates and others who might bring new and interesting perspectives. However, please ensure that all work you submit is the result of your own research and writing, and reflects your own approach to the topic. All students must use standard citation practice in the discipline and properly acknowledge any sources that have helped you with your work. I recommend using the Chicago Manual of Style’s author-date format. If you received help with your writing (e.g., feedback on drafts), please also acknowledge this assistance. Please speak with me if you have any questions about how to cite assistance.
Accessibility and Accommodations

If you are registered with the AEO, please submit your letter to me within the first two weeks of the term. I will make any reasonable accommodations to support the learning needs of all students. For further information please see: http://aeo.fas.harvard.edu/.

Weekly Plan at a Glance

- **Week 0 (Aug 31):** Course Introduction
- **Week 1 (Sept 7):** What is identity and why does it matter?
- **Week 2 (Sept 14):** Explanations: Culture
- **Week 3 (Sept 21):** Explanations: Political Institutions
- **Week 4 (Sept 28):** Explanations: Social Movements
- **Week 5 (Oct 5):** Explanations: Descriptive Representation
- **Week 6 (Oct 12):** Issues: Affirmative Action and Race in Politics
- **Week 7 (Oct 19):** Issues: Same-Sex Marriage and LGBTQ Rights
- **Week 8 (Oct 26):** Issues: Gender Quotas
- **Week 9 (Nov 2):** Issues: Multiculturalism
- **Week 10 (Nov 9):** Issues: Prostitution
- **Week 11 (Nov 16):** Issues: Immigration Policy and the Rise of the Far Right
- **Week 12 (Nov 30):** Wrap-Up & Research Proposal Workshops

Detailed Weekly Plan

**Week 0 (Aug 31):** Course Introduction

*Course intro & overview. Why study identity, politics, & policy? What is the current state of the political climate on ‘identity politics’? Strategies for reading in Political Science and this class.*

All students will take at least 1 IAT test, focusing on race, gender, religion, or sexuality: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html

Read 4 brief articles / op-eds on contemporary “identity politics” in the U.S.:


**Week 1 (Sept 7):** What is identity and why does it matter?

*What is group identity? How is it constructed? Which identities matter in politics? Should identity be relevant to politics and policy?*
Week 2 (Sept 14): Explanations: Culture

How do different cultural legacies affect the recognition and accommodation of identity groups? Which aspects of culture are relevant, and how do we measure them?


Methodological topic 1: What is political science?


Week 3 (Sept 21): Explanations: Political Institutions

Are certain institutional set-ups better for representing identity groups? What is the role of constitutions, electoral systems, and party systems in shaping policy?


**Week 4 (Sept 28): Explanations: Social Movements**

*What explains the formation of strong identity group movements? When are they successful at achieving policy goals?*


**Methodological topic 2: Descriptive and causal inference**


**Week 5 (Oct 5): Explanations: Descriptive Representation**

*Can increased numbers of identity groups in political office influence policies in the direction of group interests?*

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Chapter 1 Part II (The Structure of the Model, 2pgs) and Chapter 8. See course website.


Methodological topic 3: Developing a research question


Week 6 (Oct 12): Issues: Affirmative Action and Race in Politics

What explains the different approaches to affirmative action in the United States and other countries like Brazil or France? How do racial attitudes affect politics and policymaking?


Methodological topic 4: Conducting a Literature Review


Week 7 (Oct 19): Issues: Same-Sex Marriage and LGBTQ Rights
What factors led to the rise of same-sex marriage laws and other LGBTQ rights in Europe and the United States?


http://www.pewforum.org/2015/06/26/gay-marriage-around-the-world-2013/


Methodological topic 5: Building a Theory


**Week 8 (Oct 26): Issues: Gender Quotas**

What can explain the surprising upsurge of gender quota laws worldwide over the past few decades? Do quotas lead to less qualified candidates?


Methodological topic 6: Research Design I – choosing a methodology


**Week 9 (Nov 2): Issues: Multiculturalism**
What are the different approaches to group identity in public life across societies? Why do some countries embrace multiculturalism while others aim for assimilation?

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/10/28/philosopher-charles-taylor_n_12494828.html

Browse the Multiculturalism Policy Index: http://www.queensu.ca/mcp/


**Optional: see Ch 4 for U.S.


Methodological topic 7: Research Design II – case selection


Week 10 (Nov 9): Issues: Prostitution

Guest lecturer: Professor Max Waltman

**Content Notice: The readings for this week contain strong language, violence, and sexual content that may challenge or trigger you. Please talk to me if this will be difficult for you. An alternative assignment is available.

What are the different approaches to prostitution policy across countries, and how does it affect women?


**In-class exercise on the judicial politics of prostitution laws – materials to be circulated in advance.**


*How has the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment and far right parties affected policies towards immigrants?*


Methodological topic 8: Clear writing

Reading TBA

**Research Proposals due**

**No class Nov 23: Happy Thanksgiving !**

**Week 12 (Nov 30): Wrap-Up and Research Proposal Workshops**

**Class will meet from 2-3pm for a final wrap-up discussion. Each student will also meet in small groups for a one-hour workshop on research proposals at a time TBA this week.**

**Course wrap-up**

*Each student will write a response paper addressing one or more of these key questions, in light of what we have learned this semester. Use examples from the readings and current events.*

- How does identity matter to political outcomes (such as: descriptive and substantive representation, policy issues we covered)?
- How and why do countries address the claims of identity groups differently?
- What connections can we make across categories of identity (gender, race, religion, sexuality, class)?
• Are there important differences between groups that help or hinder group-based political power and representation? What about conditions in society?
• What are the looming questions that remain unanswered in this field, and how could research be designed to address them? (*Note: students should not write about their research proposal topics here.)

**Workshops**
*Students will meet in small groups to discuss research proposals on similar topics. Students will be responsible for reading all of the proposals in their group.*

*Final paper due date: Tuesday, December 12 by 11:59pm*