

GWS/HIS 395:

American Women from Suffrage to the White House

Fall 2024

Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00-3:50

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:30-11:00

Course Description: In 1920, an amendment to the US Constitution extended the right to vote to American women. By this time, women already were active political actors, including several who had made a run for the presidency. Although women would continue to be significant players in formal and informal political spaces, it would be another century before a woman would be successfully elected to the office of Vice President. The presidency itself has remained elusive. This course considers women's political presence, activism, achievements, exclusions, and expectations throughout the period from suffrage to the present day. At the heart of our conversations will be a careful questioning of what it might mean and what it might take to have a woman president.

Course Objectives:

- To historicize the current presidential election through the lens of US women's history
- To understand and appreciate the various ways women have been political actors throughout the 20th century
- To practice reading and discussing history texts
- To create a personal archive documenting current discussions surrounding women and the presidency

Course Text:

Stacie Taranto and Leandra Zarnow, eds. *Suffrage at 100: Women in American Politics since 1920*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020. (Available for purchase at the College Bookstore and the usual online vendors. A hard copy is on reserve at Burling Library.)

The Ungrading Philosophy and Our Work for the Semester

This course is ungraded. Well, sort of. You will receive a final grade for the course that will appear on your transcript. It is up to you to determine what this course grade will be. How does this happen? First, everyone has a B+ right now and can only lose that B+ if you do not complete the activities listed below. Some of the activities do have a level of assessment required. You will be the one who does this assessment. I will explain more about this later. Second, you have the option to pursue an A, which will require successfully completing several additional activities. Once again, you will assess whether your performance tracks as “successful completion.”

Why are we doing this? Why not just have me do the usual kind of grading that we are all familiar with? The goal of ungrading is to shift our collective energy away from an obsession with numerical “feedback” and instead to start from the premise that you are working very hard to learn a lot and give you the sort of qualitative feedback that has been shown to actually help you improve your thinking, writing, or presenting skills. I hope this will be a meaningful experience that helps each of us re-think how grades influence our work habits.

If you are wondering, “How will I know if I’m on the right track?” For each assignment, you will receive qualitative feedback on your work - either in the form of a voice memo or a note on your work. I will provide rubrics that let you know what you need to include in your work for it to be considered complete. So long as your work is complete and on time, I will count it as finished and give you feedback. If something goes awry with an assignment because you misunderstood the requirements, we can work out a revision to bring it up to a “complete” level. Below I describe the fundamental requirements for a B+, and what you will need to do if you are aiming for an A.

In order to maintain your B+ in the course, you must complete the following:

- Robust engagement with the course content. What is robust engagement? In short, I expect students to come to class having completed the assigned preparatory work, thought about its content, and formulated ideas and questions for class discussion. As I’m sure most of you realize, participation is not the same as attendance. Attendance is simply showing up. Simply attending and not participating will negatively impact your grade

status (in other words, simply observing the conversation and activity taking place around you will lower your grade, moving you away from the B+ you currently have).

Participation is...well...participating. Engaging. Diving in. It means sharing your own thoughts, listening to your classmates share their thoughts, and having a dialogue about all of this thinking. Some days you may feel less engaged than others, and that is okay, but on the measure, you should leave class sessions feeling as though you just had a meaningful conversation with your peers and instructor. You will complete a self-assessment of your participation in weeks 4 and 11 of the course.

- Your Class Journal. Each student will receive a blank journal at our first meeting. This journal is a tool for you to use to create an archive of your thinking in our course. At times, I will also ask you to make additions to the journal based on our class discussions and other moments of inspiration. (Please bring your journal to each class meeting so that you will be able to complete these additions!) The journal is where you should record summaries of the assigned material, questions that you have, and thoughts that percolate during class discussions. You can also record observations about things you see or read about that relate to the course themes. Please remember that I will be reading these journals, so only share things that you are comfortable with me reading and knowing about. I will collect the journals at our individual meetings in Week 13 and return them to you during the class meetings in Week 15.
- A 10-12 minute presentation in which you Answer an Unanswered/Unanswerable Question related to the course themes. We will collectively brainstorm these Questions during our class meeting in Week 11, and then you will identify one that you want to address. You will then have several weeks to research your answer to this Question. During the last week of class, each student will make a presentation, using PowerPoint, WeVideo, or similar software that shares their Question and their Answer to it. We will have one-on-one meetings in Weeks 11 and 13 to discuss your progress on this endeavor. You will complete a self-assessment on this research and presentation.

In order to earn an A in the course, you must successfully complete all of the following:

- You will conduct oral histories with three people regarding their thoughts related to the course themes. As a class, we will devise the oral history questions and discuss how to

conduct an ethical oral history at the end of Week 6. Everyone who chooses to do the oral histories will use the same questions. The oral histories will be conducted during Week 7 and discussed in class Week 8. You should choose three people who offer some real demographic diversity, whether age, their relationship to you, their social/economic background, etc. In other words, don't just choose three people from your friend group! In addition to sharing your results in class, you will write a short (500 words) summary of what you learned from them. This will be submitted on the day of discussion.

- Take a turn leading/co-leading class discussion. More details on this later. You will complete a self-assessment of your performance.
- Offer an analytic profile of one of the “Real Contenders” -- the women who have sought or secured party nomination for the presidency. Your profile should introduce us to this candidate, giving us a sense of who she was, her experience, and the views she brought to the race, and how her candidacy (for the nomination or the presidency) was received. You should give us a sense of whether/how she influenced party politics. Your presentation should be 10 minutes and will take place on a date that is appropriate for your chosen profile. You may use WeVideo, Powerpoint, or similar platforms. Or you may choose to provide a printed handout to accompany your presentation. There is flexibility here. You will complete a self-assessment on this research and presentation.

General Policies and Information:

- **Community and Accountability:** This classroom is a community of individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences coming together to learn. In order for this course to be a productive learning environment, it is imperative that we all treat one another with respect and courtesy. Please receive all comments in a spirit of generosity, imagining that they were spoken with the best possible intentions before reacting or responding. Likewise, be aware that your word choice or tone might convey meaning that you do not intend. Let yourself be open to correction with grace and gratitude. That said, I will not tolerate harmful, aggressive, disrespectful, or discriminatory language of any sort. Students who regularly disrupt the class in any way will have their course grade penalized at the discretion of the instructor. If you are asked to modify your behavior, please do so. As members of this community, you each are responsible for informing me

if at any point a classmate's behavior is impairing your ability to concentrate and learn in this class. This is not asking you to police one another, but to take responsibility for defending your right to a productive learning environment. Bottom line: let's all treat each other with the same respect and courtesy we would like to receive.

- Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities partner with the Office of Disability Resources to make academic accommodation letters available to faculty via the accommodation portal. To help ensure that your access needs are met, I encourage individual students to approach me so we can have a discussion about your distinctive learning needs and accommodations within the context of this course. If you have not already worked with the Office of Disability Resources and believe you may require academic accommodations for this course, Disability Resources staff can be reached via email at access@grinnell.edu, by phone 641-269-3089, or by stopping by their offices on the first floor of Steiner Hall.
- I encourage students who plan to observe holy days that coincide with class meetings or assignment due dates to consult with me in the first three weeks of classes so that we may reach a mutual understanding of how you can meet the terms of your religious observance and also the requirements for this course.
- Grinnell College is committed to compliance with Title IX and to supporting the academic success of pregnant and parenting students and students with pregnancy related conditions. If you are a pregnant student, have pregnancy related conditions, or are a parenting student (child under one-year needs documented medical care) who wishes to request reasonable related supportive measures from the College under Title IX, please email the Title IX Coordinator at titleix@grinnell.edu. The Title IX Coordinator will work with Disability Resources and your professors to provide reasonable supportive measures in support of your education while pregnant or as a parent under Title IX.
- If you have other needs not addressed above, please let me know soon so that we can work together for the best possible learning environment. In some cases, I will recommend consulting with the Academic Advising staff:
<http://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/academic-advising>. They are an excellent resource for developing strategies for academic success and can connect you with other

campus resources. If I notice that you are encountering difficulty, and I have reached out to you and not received a response, or if you have missed multiple class sessions or are not meeting our class objectives repeatedly, I will submit an academic alert via Academic Advising's SAL portal. This notifies you of my concern, along with the Academic Advising team and your advisor(s), so that they can reach out to you with additional offers of support.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1

Thursday 8/29 Introductions

Week 2

Tuesday 9/3 Thinking about American women as political actors

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, "Introduction"
- Read Taranto and Zarnow, "Chapter 1: A History of Women in American Politics and the Enduring Male Political Citizenship Ideal"

Thursday 9/5 Victoria Woodhull Day

- Read: Fitzpatrick, Ellen. "'A Very Conspicuous Person': Victoria Woodhull," *The Highest Glass Ceiling: Women's Quest for the American Presidency*. Harvard University Press, 2016. <https://doi-org.grinnell.idm.oclc.org/10.4159/9780674496057>
- Read: Frisken, Amanda. "Chapter 2: 'A Shameless Prostitute and a Negro,'" *Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution: Political Theater and the Popular Press in Nineteenth Century America*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. https://grinnell.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01GCL_INST/17ql8au/cdi_proquest_miscellaneous_36885374

Week 3

Tuesday 9/10

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, Chapters 2 and 3

Thursday 9/12

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, Chapters 4 and 5

Week 4

Tuesday 9/17

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, Chapters 6 and 7

Thursday 9/19

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, Chapters 8 and 9
 - DUE: 1st Participation Self-Assessment via Blackboard
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Week 5

Tuesday 9/24

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, Chapters 10 and 11

Thursday 9/26 Shirley Chisholm Day

- Read Tarnato and Zarnow, Chapter 12
- Read Curwood, Anastasia. "Black Feminist Power Politics on Capitol Hill," *Shirley Chisholm: Black Feminist Power Politics*. University of North Carolina, 2023.
https://grinnell.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01GCL_INST/1g018f9/alma991011323404704641
- Watch "Chisholm '72: Unbought and Unbossed," (2004) available via Kanopy in the Burling databases. <https://www.kanopy.com/en/grinnell/video/5568398>

Week 6

Tuesday 10/1

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, Chapter 13
- Watch: "1977 National Women's Conference: A Question of Choices," (1977) Available online via Texas Archive of the Moving Image https://texasarchive.org/2013_02597

Thursday 10/3

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, Chapters 14 and 15

Week 7

Tuesday 10/8. Class Will Not Meet Today. Please use this time to conduct and process your oral histories.

Thursday 10/10 Class Will Not Meet Today. Please use this time to conduct and process your oral histories.

Week 8 How Close We've Come...

Tuesday 10/15 Discussion of Oral Histories

Thursday 10/17 Hillary Rodham Clinton Day

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, Chapters 16 and 17
- Watch "Hillary Rodham Clinton: From Wellesley to the White House," (1994) available via Academic Video Online in the Burling databases
https://grinnell.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01GCL_INST/1g018f9/alma991011087843504641

FALL BREAK

Week 9

Tuesday 10/29

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, Chapters 18, 19, and 20

Thursday 10/31

- Read Taranto and Zarnow, Chapter 21

Week 10

Tuesday 11/5 Election Day!

Thursday 11/7 Whatever Happens, Let's Talk About It...

Week 11

Tuesday 11/12 Today we will talk about our Unanswered Questions

Thursday 11/14 Class Will Not Meet Today. Instead, We Will Have Individual Meetings to Discuss Your Projects. (see sign up sheet in OneDrive). ALSO DUE: 2nd Participation Self-Assessment via Blackboard

Week 12

Tuesday 11/19 Preparation Day. Class Will Not Meet.

Thursday 11/21 Preparation Day. Class Will Not Meet.

Week 13

Tuesday 11/26 Individual Meetings to Discuss Your Projects (see sign up sheet in OneDrive). ALSO DUE: Bring your journal to our meeting to submit it for my review.

Thursday 11/28 Thanksgiving Holiday. Class Will Not Meet. Please use this time to take care of yourself in some way.

Week 14

Tuesday 12/3 Preparation Day. Class Will Not Meet.

Thursday 12/5 Preparation Day. Class Will Not Meet.

Week 15

Tuesday 12/10 Presentations

Thursday 12/12 Presentations

DUE Saturday 12/14: Self-assessment of presentation via Blackboard
