

Mainstreaming Gender, Race, and Sexual Orientation in the Teaching of Political Science

Introduction

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As we know, teaching has three aspects: instructors, students, and the material taught. Within the current academic generation, the first two of these have changed significantly in North American universities. Unevenly, often without much attention, faculty and student populations have been transformed. Recently, the pace has speeded up, as both law and morality make the academy respond actively, if sometimes reluctantly, to the continuing need for equity. But as members of marginalized groups increasingly take their places in post-secondary education it has become clear that something is out of sync between those who teach, those whom they teach, and what is taught.

Gender, and my own experience, can serve to show both progress and problems. I never had a woman instructor in political science, and I had few women companions in my classes at any level. When I began teaching, almost 30 years ago, I was the only woman in my department. In the same department, today, about 15% of the instructors, and half of the students, are women. This is definitely an improvement, even if we have some distance to go in respect to faculty. Nevertheless, gender issues have had virtually no impact on the content of most political science courses at my university. We have courses on Women and Politics, but political science is still about Political Man. And this is far from atypical.

The first university response to increased student and faculty diversity was to establish programs such as Women's Studies, Black Studies, and Gay and Lesbian Studies. Within these relatively sheltered enclaves, it was possible to develop new perspectives and new material. Moving new approaches out of their fruitful isolation into the cen-

tral curriculum is the logical next step. Whether we talk about "mainstreaming" or "creating an inclusive curriculum" the goal is straightforward enough: to present students with balanced, nonexclusionary versions of knowledge. Courses about X and Politics or X in Politics are needed, but there is even more need for explicit recognition, in all subject areas, of how politics involves everyone.

It is a very long time since I started teaching courses in Women and Politics. For the past five years, I have been involved in an even more complex project: developing an Introduction to Political Science that will be able to take due account of gender and also of race, sexual orientation, and the other structures of power that are the context and often the content of politics. It is hard work. Students and teaching assistants alike often find it an alienating exercise, and resource materials are scarce. More and more, I felt I needed help.

In 1993, I therefore proposed to the Women's Caucus for Political Science a session on "Mainstreaming Gender, Race, and Sexual Orientation in the Teaching of Political Science." A remarkable group of panelists was assembled from a wide range of academic settings: large universities and small colleges, institutions that had historically been all male or all female but had now become coeducational, private and public establishments, ones that were predominantly Black or White in respect to students and faculty.

The presentations in turn represented the stages and versions of mainstreaming. Martin Gruberg, author of the first modern study of women in American politics, recounted how he had from a very early date included the study of

women in the study of politics and also how he had assisted and prodded his colleagues to do the same. Helene Silverberg described how, as a beginning instructor, she combined teaching about race and gender in an environment where neither were very varied. Spike Peterson provided a theoretical presentation of the contribution of feminist analysis to the understanding of relations of domination and subordination; she also outlined a classroom exercise that makes vivid to students the workings of structural discrimination. Finally, Jewel Prestage, speaking from the perspective of a long-time instructor in a historically Black, coeducational college, discussed the need for adequate research on African American women.

In the vigorous discussion that followed, attention focused on one part of the teaching triad: the student. Like the presentations, the comments centered on gender and race. And race was discussed as Black and White, with no differentiated consideration of any other version such as Asian or Latino/Latina studies or students. The relative invisibility of gay and lesbian students was mentioned, but their situation and the relevant instructional material and strategies were largely subsumed in more generalized discussions. In all this, we had, I think, a reflection of the current state of both political science and politics in North America (see Gates 1993).

During the discussion, Marianne Githens, coeditor with Prestage of one of the earliest books on the political behavior of both Black and White American women, spoke eloquently from the audience. She expressed her concern about the impact on minority students of approaches that delineated the causes of marginalization but of-

ferred no hope for empowerment. By optimistic contrast, one of my former students, E. Joyce Parker, suggested that all students can use for their own purposes the core concepts and texts of even an unreconstructed political science. It was a *very* vigorous discussion.

Since not every member of the APSA could be present, it seemed worthwhile to generate some permanent record. What follows is a somewhat shortened version of the session, edited down in consulta-

tion with each speaker. The essays are printed in their order of appearance in the panel session; panelists' suggestions for material to use in mainstreaming are included.

As facilitator for this composite piece as well as the panel session, I thank all the participants again. The opinions, as presented, are those of the individual authors. We hope that our perspectives will interest and, above all, help our colleagues.

Reference

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. 1993. "Backlash?" *New Yorker*, May 17, 42-44.

About the Author

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Incorporating A Women's Studies Dimension Into Mainstream Political Science Courses

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In more than 30 years of teaching, I have taught a multitude of courses. Almost from the start, I was able to use women's studies material in my classes. Some courses were by their nature heavily dependent on a women's dimension (Women and the Law, seminar on Women's Liberation, field trip classes on the European Women's Rights Movement) while others, like Police-Community Relations, had possibilities that I exploited.

More important are the limited number of courses I teach on a regular basis. For example, my course on the Legal Rights of the Disadvantaged deals with the civil rights of women and other groups, incorporating topics that had been part of the Women and the Law course (which I discontinued offering because of an anemic enrollment). In it, I look at a spectrum of organizations that provide help for the underdog, as well as the constitutional framework and areas of equity concern (education, employment, reproductive freedom, domestic relations, public accommodations, governmental services, criminal justice), treatment in the media.

For mainstream courses, I use a number of topics to blend in a women's studies component. For

American Government, this means mainly the sections on the Constitution but also those on civil liberties and civil rights as well as on interest groups and political parties. For Introduction to Law, I found that material on women fits well into the sections on the history of law, on private legal systems, on "Big Brother and the Law," and also on philosophies of law and legal reasoning. In my course on Civil Liberties, I deal with women's rights as human rights under the section about the justifications for civil liberties; under freedom of expression I include impact on women; and under defendants' rights I discuss crimes against women and women in the criminal justice system. Finally, in a course on American Political Parties, I discuss women in the sections on the political process as a whole, interest groups, parties and elections, and voting behavior (including the gender gap).

A number of years ago I undertook to be a resource person for my departmental colleagues regarding recent literature and audiovisual aids on women and politics. From time to time I prepared annotated listings of items that they might be able to use in their courses. I also volunteered to be a guest lecturer in their courses. The response was

underwhelming, so I thought there would be some interest in finding out what, if anything, my political science colleagues at Oshkosh now do with respect to integrating a women's studies dimension into their courses.

I sent a short questionnaire to the other department members, all male, and received the following responses. One colleague mentioned that in his Introduction to Politics he discussed the population problem and women in the Third World. Another included in his course on American government some discussion of gender issues including abortion as well as (women's) civil rights, women's interest groups, and gender behavior. A public administration course included some consideration of affirmative action, comparable worth, and pay equity issues in the public sector. State and Local Government looked at civil rights and female participation in decision making in legislative bodies; Congress in the American Political System looked at the Black caucus and gender representation in Congress; and Modern Political Thought had the students read and discuss Mill's *The Subjection of Women*.

Courses taught by my colleagues in which they did not integrate a women's studies dimension in-