

**COM 595-002 WS 510-001 SPECIAL TOPICS:  
GENDER & POLITICAL COMMUNICATION  
University of Alabama Spring 2003**

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**T Th 12:30-1:45  
Phifer Hall 345**

**Dr. Janis L. Edwards**

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**Office hours: T Th 2-3**

**Wed 1:30-2:30**

**And by appt**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In addition to being an important dynamic in contemporary culture in general, gender issues figure prominently in contemporary political discourse. Campaign rhetoric is infused with implicit messages about masculinity, as political leadership has long been predicated on masculinized ideals of speech, conduct, and character. Even so, women have been increasingly involved in the American political sphere during the past 100+ years, starting with the campaign for voting rights and continuing with increased integration in political leadership roles. The question and possibility of a woman president has become more profound in recent years. While the issue of women in political life is a worthy subject, this course takes a somewhat broader view of gender issues, to consider the tensions between masculine imperatives and possible “feminization” of politics that affect both men and women as leaders and as voters. While this is not a course in feminist history or “feminism,” per se, feminist theory is necessarily involved in the course content, as it lays the foundation for gender studies.

The goal of this course is to engage students in a discussion of the variety of ways gender issues intersect with American politics, in terms of leaders, voters, and the symbolic roles of women. We will study these issues as rhetorical constructions that emerge from candidate and politician behavior, media representation, and public perceptions. Through lecture, readings, examples, and reports of current research, we will explore seven major areas of concern:

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- The historical aspects of women’s participation in American politics
  - The implications of voter orientations and the “gender gap”
  - The relationship between gender ideals and political policy and style
  - The media’s role in enforcing cultural imperatives of gender expectations
  - Differences in rhetorical behavior between male and female pols
  - The symbolic roles of women as evidenced in the “office” of First Lady
  - The implications of the increased presence of women in political leadership roles and the question of a woman as President
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## REQUIRED TEXTS

Pippa Norris. *Women, Media, and Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

M. Margaret Conway, Gertrude A. Steuernagel, and David. W. Ahern. *Women and Political Participation: Cultural Change in the Political Arena*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1997.

Robert P. Watson, ed. *Anticipating Madame President* (forthcoming)

And other readings as assigned (available on reserve in the Phifer Hall Reading Room)

## MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

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1. Two midterm exams 30%
  2. Extended abstracts on 2 assigned readings of key research with an oral report to the class 20%
  3. A 7-10 page paper on a course topic area 30%
  4. Participation in a mini-seminar during the semester, with assigned readings and/or topics 20%
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## COURSE POLICIES

Students are expected to attend class as scheduled.

Students are expected to take exams as scheduled. No make-up exams will be offered except by prior arrangement for compelling reasons.

Standards for submission of written material: All written material must be typed, double-spaced, and in a conventional typeface. Minimal hand corrections are permitted. **STAPLE TOGETHER YOUR PAGES. UNSTAPLED PAPERS ARE UNACCEPTABLE. NO REPORT COVERS/NO COVER PAGES!** Your name and the assignment label should appear at the top right corner of your paper. Papers should be submitted in class on the day assigned. **PAPERS NOT CONFORMING TO THESE REQUIREMENTS WILL RECEIVE A 10-POINT DEDUCTION---NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Research citations should be in MLA or APA style.

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule outlines a basic plan for the course. Deviations may be necessary.

\* Readings in Watson To Be Assigned

*Week 1, 2 1/9-1/16* Gender studies: a background

*Week 2- 4 1/16-2/8* The History of Women's Political Participation PN 10,11  
Women in Political Leadership Today

*Week 5 1/30-2/4* Researching Women & Politics

\* BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES DUE Tuesday Feb 4

*Week 5, 6 2/4-11* Men and Women as Political Participants read: CSA  
(and the Gender Gap) PN 5,6

\* MIDTERM # 1 Thursday, February 13

Week 7-8 2/18-27 Political leadership:  
Pathways to leadership  
Masculine imperatives and the heroic monomyth  
Symbolic Woman

Week 8-11 2/27-3/18 Communicating gender read: PN 3  
Feminine style  
Self-presentation in televisuals  
Videostyle

MIDTERM #2 Thursday March 18

\* MARCH 20 GRADUATE STUDENT SEMINAR; UNDERGRADUATES ARE NOT REQUIRED TO ATTEND CLASS ON THIS DAY

Week 12-3/25-27 The Symbolic Role of the First Lady Read: PN 9

APRIL 5-13 SPRING BREAK

Week 13-14 4/1-15 Media Representations of Women (and Men) in Politics  
Read: PN 4,7,8 \* \* \* CRITICAL QUESTION

DUE Thursday, APRIL 17

\* LITERATURE REVIEWS DUE Thursday, April 24

Week 14-17 4/17-5/1 *The "Petticoat Watch" : A Woman President?*

\*\*\*\*\*FINAL EXAM Tuesday, MAY 6 11:30-2:00

## GRADUATE READINGS Gender & Political Communication Spring 2003

1. E. Michele Ramsey. "Inventing Citizens During World War I: Suffrage Cartoons in *The Woman Citizen*." *Western Journal of Communication* 64:2 (Spring 2000), pp. 113-147. **Thursday 1/23**
  2. Karrin Vasby Anderson. "'Rhymes with Rich': 'Bitch' as a Tool of Containment in Contemporary American Politics." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 2:4 (1999), pp. 599-623. **Tuesday, Feb. 18**
  2. Marcia Lynn Whitaker, Hedy Leonie Isaacs. "The Maleness of the American Presidency." In *Women In Politics: Outsiders or Insiders?* Lois Duke Whitaker, ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999; pp. 221-232. **Tuesday, Feb 18**
  3. Kathleen Hall Jamieson. *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1995; pp. 3-52 (chapters 1 & 2). **Tuesday, Feb. 18**
  4. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. "The Rhetorical Presidency: A Two-Person Career." In *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*. Ed. Martin J. Medhurst. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1996; pp. 179-195 **Tuesday, March 23**
  5. Janis L. Edwards and Huey-Rong Chen. "The First Lady/First Wife in Editorial Cartoons: Rhetorical Visions Through Gendered Lenses." *Women's Studies in Communication* 23:3 (Fall 2000); pp. 367-391. **Tuesday, March 23**
  6. Shane Miller. "The Woven Gender: Made for a Woman, but Stronger for a Man." *The Southern Communication Journal*. \_\_\_\_\_; pp. 217-227. **Tuesday, Feb 27**
  7. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles: "Gendered Politics and Presidential Image Construction: A Reassessment of the 'Feminine Style' ." *Communication Monographs* Vol 63 (December 1996); pp. 337-353. **Tuesday, Feb. 27**
  8. David Niven and Jeremy Zilber. "Do Women and Men in Congress Cultivate Different Images? Evidence From Congressional Web Sites." *Political Communication* 18:4 (Oct-Dec 2001); pp. 395-405. **April 15**  
And...  
Kevin B. Smith. "When All's Fair: Signs of Parity in Media Coverage of Female Candidates." *Political Communication* 14:1 (Jan-March 1997); pp. 71-82. **April 15**
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