POLS 4330 – Women and the Law

Spring 2026 (3 Credit Hours)

Course Description

This course explores legal and social constructions of gender by introducing case law, federal legislation, scholarly essays, podcasts, and films concerning women and sexual inequality in the United States. We explore how legal and political institutions contribute to and reinforce social constructions of gender, race, class, and identity. Special attention will be paid to social movements, particularly those concerned with suffrage, gender discrimination, gender-based violence, reproduction, gender identity, and marriage. We will also examine feminist theories and feminist critiques born out of (and often, responsible for shaping) the struggle for equality and justice.

Course Information

Instructor: Professor Christine (Chris) Bailey

Department of Political Science and Public Management

Email: baileyc1@apsu.edu

Class Schedule: MWF: 1:25 – 2:20, Clement 128

Office Phone Number: (931) 221-7197

Office: Clement Building 143B

Office Hours: Mon/Wed 11:00 am – 1:00 pm [in person], Zoom by appointment [online]

Zoom: https://apsu.zoom.us/j/6463412650

Course Learning Objectives

This course is designed for students to improve their skills in a multitude of areas, including:

- Practice critical thinking skills and written communication
- Develop research skills and comprehension of case law and legislation
- Generate logical arguments and critiques
- Build a foundational understanding of feminist theory, legal theory, and gendered issues in the law and politics

Required Materials

As I am cognizant of the limited nature of student resources, all required materials for this course are free for you to access. There is no textbook for this class. Instead, the course materials consist of book chapters, newspaper articles, readings from academic journals, podcasts, and videos. These materials are available on this course's D2L page. The readings and course lectures are all required and are listed in the course schedule. Readings and course lectures for each week must be completed during the week they are assigned in the course schedule. I recommend reviewing the weekly materials in the order they appear in the syllabus. If you have any questions about the course materials, please come to my office hours or email me at the email address listed in the Contact Information section of this syllabus.

Communication Policy

Class communication will primarily be via email. The best way to contact me directly is by email at baileyc1@apsu.edu. **DO NOT email me in D2L**. I do not check this frequently, so your correspondence may get missed if you use the mail feature in D2L. If needed, Zoom video conferences, phone calls, or office visits can be scheduled via email. Please be sure to check your APSU email and D2L on a regular, if not daily, basis.

I will respond to student emails within 48 hours Monday through Friday from 9:00-5:00. Response times may vary during weekends and holidays.

Statement of Academic Freedom

- Students have the right to engage in polite, reasoned disagreement with the professor and other students with no penalty to their grades whatsoever.
- Everyone has the right to participate in a learning environment that emphasizes mutual respect, tolerance, and free inquiry.
- This class is a forum for critical discussion in pursuit of the truth. Both the professor and students have the right to challenge any beliefs, world-views, ideology, or attitudes, even those that many hold sacred.

Divisive Concepts Statement

APSU is committed to the free and full exchange of ideas and perspectives that is central to the educational enterprise. We are also committed to encouraging students — and all people — to be exposed to, and think critically about, sensitive topics and issues. This is an essential element of higher education and necessary to better prepare students for community participation and robust civic engagement. Curricular materials on concepts including but not limited to racism, sexism and classism may be presented and discussed in this class; while students are expected to master course content, it is not expected that students endorse or subscribe to any theory or viewpoint.

Minors in the Classroom

Minors (any non-student under the age of 18) accompanying staff, faculty, students or visitors on campus are not permitted in the classroom.

Service Animals in the Classroom

Consult Policy 3:007 Animals on Campus for appropriate situations allowing service animals in the classroom.

Technology Requirements

- Web Browsers - Online course content is delivered through the D2L learning management system which is accessible through any web browser; however, Distance Education recommends the most up-to-date versions of Google Chrome or Apple Safari. Please use the D2L System Check to ensure that your web browser is properly configured.

- Free Microsoft Office 365 - You will need software for word processing. Currently enrolled APSU students receive access to Microsoft Office 365 for free and can install it on up to 5 compatible PCs or Macs. Additional information is available through the GOVSTECH website. Contact GOVSTECH at govstech@apsu.edu with questions.

Technology Skills Required for the Course

- Accessing and navigating D2L
- Sending/receiving email
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office

Technology Assistance

- For Austin Peay email and OneStop login issues, contact (931) 221-HELP (4357) or govstech@apsu.edu. Go to GovsTech for more information.
- For D2L questions/concerns, contact (931) 221-6625 or online@apsu.edu. Go to Distance Education for more information.
- Distance education has put together a list of resources for you to help you navigate online courses. Find it here.
- You can locate university policies related to the accessibility and privacy policies of D2L, Turnitin, and other approved university technology vendors here.

Grading & Assessment Policies

Assignments & Assignment Weights

Introductory Quiz (10%)

DUE: Friday 1/23 by 11:00 am (CST)

Each student must complete an introductory quiz in D2L during the first week of class. You MUST read the course syllabus in it's entirety before beginning the quiz. The quiz is **due Friday 1/23 by 11:00 am** (CST) for federal attendance reporting purposes, therefore it cannot be submitted late or made up. It is imperative you complete this assignment by the due date to avoid being dropped from the class.

Attendance and Participation (30%)

As this is a 4000-level class, participation is vital for you to grasp the material. You are expected to come to class, actively participate in the discussion, comment on the readings, and engage in the discussion with your fellow students. You must sign the sign-in sheet for each class. However, if I catch you texting or inappropriately using classroom technology (shopping on Amazon, scrolling through Instagram, etc), you will receive a "zero" grade for attendance and participation for that day.

Legal Controversy Dossiers (50%)

DUE: See Calendar of Assignments and Course Schedule Below

Students will participate in a semester-long seminar-style project focused on real-world controversies at the intersection of women and the law. Each student will prepare a dossier and lead one class session by serving as a seminar chair on a specific legal issue involving women and the law, such as gender-based school or employment discrimination, reproductive rights, or LGBTQ-related issues. Students will prepare a short briefing document for their classmates and will be responsible for framing the legal issue, guiding the discussion, and helping the class analyze how law constructs and regulates gender, power, and inequality. The emphasis of this project is on discussion leadership, critical engagement, and collective learning, mirroring the structure of advanced academic seminars and legal workshops.

Grading Breakdown of Dossier Assignments:

- Interest Assignment (10%)
- Outline of Briefing Document (20%)
- Briefing Document (25%)
- Discussion Presentation and Facilitation (45%)

Final Exam (10%)

A final exam will be given during the university-scheduled exam time on **May 7th between 10:30 am and 12:30 pm**. The exam will be inclusive of all material covered in the course. The exam will not be open-note, so it is imperative that you study for the exam.

Grading Scale

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89%
- C = 70-79%
- D = 60-69%
- F = 59% and under

To calculate your percentage/letter grade at the end of the course, multiply the points per assignment by their associated weight and sum the resulting totals. This will give you the percentage associated with the letter grades. In order to pass a course in Political Science, you must achieve a "D" or better grade.

Calendar of Assignments

- Intro Quiz: 1/23
- Dossier Interest Assignment: 1/25
- Dossier Briefing Outline: 2/20
- Dossier Briefing Document: 48 hours prior to your presentation
- Dossier Presentation and Discussion: date assigned to you
- Dossier Responses: Before class on day of presentation
- Final Exam: 5/7 from 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Testing Procedures

The Final Exam will be held during the time designated by the University.

Assessment of Written Work

The largest writing component of this course are the assignments associated with the Legal Controversy Dossiers. I will provide detailed instructions for each of the assignments associated with the dossier. Grades will be issued based on your compliance with the instructions.

University Attendance Policy

The Department of Education requires that all universities receiving federal financial aid report attendance on the 14th day of classes each semester. Please be aware that if you do not attend class or manifest your attendance online through the submission of academic work within the first 14 days, you will be dropped

from the class by the university and may be liable for repayment of any received financial aid for the course.

Instructor Grading and Feedback Response Time

All assignments and exams will be graded, and the grades will be posted in D2L within two weeks of the due date.

Late and Missing Work Policy

All course deadlines are carefully crafted to ensure I can provide feedback on your work in a timely manner. Therefore, late assignments will not be accepted this semester.

Statement of Academic Integrity

Familiarize yourself with the university policy regarding academic integrity. Do not violate it. Any form of cheating will be referred to the Dean of Students and dealt with in accordance with the university policies described in the Student Handbook: University Academic Policies.

The following is the definition of Academic Misconduct from APSU's Policies and Procedures Manual:

1. Plagiarism. The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images or works of another person as one's own without proper attribution.
2. Cheating. Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or aids in any academic exercise or test/examination. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.
3. Fabrication. Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
4. Facilitation or Collusion. Assisting or attempting to assist another to violate a provision of the institution's student code of conduct regarding academic misconduct.

Academic and Classroom Misconduct

Students are expected to always conduct themselves appropriately. Academic and classroom misconduct will not be tolerated. Students must read the "Code of Student Conduct" in the new Student Handbook for an understanding of what will

be expected of them within the academic setting. APSU Policy 3:005 Student Academic and Classroom Misconduct will be followed in reporting any suspected cases of academic misconduct.

Rules Governing the Use of Artificial Intelligence

In recognition of the increasing prevalence of AI tools in academic settings, this course implements a policy on AI usage that balances technological advancements with the need for genuine learning and skill development.

Students may utilize AI tools (such as ChatGPT or Claude) under the following guidelines:

- AI tools are permitted solely for initial brainstorming and idea generation in the early stages of projects or assignments.
- All AI-generated content must be clearly marked and submitted separately from the student's own work. This separation allows for transparency in the ideation process.
- Students are required to expand upon, critique, or refine AI-generated ideas in their own words. The goal is to use AI as a springboard for your own critical thinking, not as a substitute for it.
- The final submission for any assignment must be entirely the student's own work, without direct AI assistance. This ensures that the core academic skills this course aims to develop are being practiced and demonstrated.
- Students must include a brief reflection (approximately 250-300 words) on how they used AI in their ideation process and how it influenced their final work. This reflection serves as both a metacognitive exercise and a means of accountability.
- Students are FORBIDDEN from using AI to take notes for the course. This course represents my intellectual property, and I do not consent to having that property uploaded to any AI platform.

All students are *required* to keep evidence of written work generation including document editing history. If I strongly suspect you have inappropriately used AI, I will request these records. Adherence to this policy is considered part of the course's academic integrity requirements. Violations may be treated similarly to other forms of academic misconduct as outlined in the syllabus. If you are found to have inappropriately used AI for any of the written assignments, you will

receive a zero for that assignment. Additionally, I will not accept any further written assignments from you for the remainder of the semester. In most cases this means you will also receive a zero for all subsequent writing assignments.

Students with questions about the appropriate use of AI tools should consult with the instructor before using them for any assignment.

Copyright, Note Selling, and Recordings

The lectures and course materials, including lecture slides, assignments, tests, outlines and similar materials are protected by U.S. copyright laws and by university policy. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own use in this class. You may also share those materials with another student who is registered and enrolled in this course. You may NOT reproduce, distribute, upload, or display any lecture notes or recordings or course materials in any other way– whether or not a fee is charged – without my express written consent. If you do so, you may be subject to disciplinary action under the APSU Code of Student Conduct. This does not pertain to accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), although recordings or sharing of course materials and notes for ADA accommodations should not be distributed beyond the students receiving the accommodations. Similarly, you own the copyright to your original papers and exam essays. If I am interested in posting your answers or papers on the course website, I will ask for your written permission. **Students may not record this course without the permission of the instructor.**

Students with Disabilities

Any student who has a disability that may affect his/her academic performance is encouraged to make an appointment with me to discuss this matter, or you may contact Student Disability Resource Center; telephone 221-6230; tty 221-6278; fax 221-7102.

Academic Support

- University Support

The university has a broad array of resources to help students succeed. These are detailed in the following document. If you need to borrow a laptop, get research

and writing help, find a health care provider, or get tech support, the university has you covered.

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments

A few notes about reading the course schedule:

- Please do the readings in the order listed on the syllabus
- All readings can be found on D2L
- Readings must be completed by class time on the date listed in the schedule
- The schedule will be updated with presentation and course content dates after the Dossier Interest Assignment is completed and presentation dates are assigned.

Module 1: Course Introduction

- Wednesday 1/21- Course Introduction
  - **Read** the syllabus
  - **Complete** Introductory Quiz
- Friday 1/23- Dossier Introduction
  - **Complete** Dossier Interest Assignment
- Monday 1/26 – **NO CLASS (Snow Day)**
- Wednesday 1/28 – **NO CLASS (Snow Day)**
- Friday 1/30 – Legal Controversy Meetings (Zoom)
- Monday 2/2 - What is Gender?
  - **Read** West and Zimmerman 1987: "Doing Gender."
    - ***NOTE: Give yourself plenty of time to read this article; it is quite dense. My sincere apologies, as the roughest article we will read all semester is the first.***

Module 2: Waves of Feminism

- Wednesday 2/4– Waves of Feminism and Wave One
  - **Read** Article: Types of Feminism: The Four Waves https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/types-of-feminism-the-four-waves/

    - **Watch** Video: Mary Wollstonecraft: A Vindication of the Rights of Woman https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YocoUuAZvCA
    - **Read** Article: "Declaration of Sentiments" from Women's Rights Convention 1848 https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/declaration-of-sentiments.htm
- Friday 2/6 –Dossier Workshop
- Monday 2/9- Wave Two
    - **Watch** Video: "The Meaning of Life According to Simone de Beauvior" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ws2Y2cWme8c
    - **Read** Article: "The Feminine Mystique" Work by Betty Friedan https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Feminine-Mystique
    - **Read** Article: Reinheimer, 2005: Book Review of "Women's Lives, Men's Laws."
    - **Read** Article: Adrienne Rich https://www.britannica.com/biography/Adrienne-Rich#ref1333863
- Wednesday 2/11 – Wave Three
    - **Read** Article: McIntosh, 1991: Book Review of "Gender Trouble"
    - **Watch** Video: Judith Butler gender performance: https://youtu.be/Bo7o2LYATDc
    - **Watch** Video: Introduction to Gender Schemas https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtTv47BHFtE
    - **Watch** Video: Kimberle Crenshaw Defines Intersectionality: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWP92i7JLlQ
    - **Read** Article: What is Abolition Feminism and Why Do We Need it Now? https://nonprofitquarterly.org/what-is-abolition-feminism-and-why-do-we-need-it-now/
- Friday 2/13 - Wave Four
    - **Watch** Video: What would De Beauvoir Make of #Metoo? https://youtu.be/6TnREP_nYrc
- Monday 2/16 – Dossier Workshop

Module 3: Gender Discrimination

- Wednesday 2/18 – Voting Rights

- **Read** Article: "Sojourner Truth" https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/sojourner-truth.htm
- **Read** Article: "Women's Suffrage: The Struggle for the Right to Vote https://www.theworldwar.org/learn/about-wwi/womens-suffrage
- **Read** Summaries:
  - Baker v. Carr (1962)
  - Richardson v. Ramierez (1974)
  - Brnovich v. DNC (2021)

- Friday 2/20 – Gender Discrimination
  - **Read** Article: "Equal Protection Cases Based on Gender" https://constitution.findlaw.com/amendment14/annotation06.html
  - **Listen** Podcast: "Sex Appeal," NPR's More Perfect: https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolabmoreperfect/episodes/sex-appeal
  - **Read** Summaries:
    - Reed v. Reed (1971)
    - Frontiero v. Richardson (1973)
    - Weinberger v. Weisenfeld (1975)
    - Loving v. Virginia (1967)
    - Stanley v. Illinois (1972)
  - **Complete** Dossier Outline
- Monday 2/23 – McKenzie Wright – Gender Discrimination in Healthcare

- Wednesday 2/25– Work, Employment, and Title VII
  - **Read** Article: "What You Need to Know About Title VII of the Civil Rights Act" https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/en/insights/articles/what-is-title-vii-civil-rights-act
  - **Read** Summaries:
    - Bradwell v. The State (1872)
    - Westcoast Hotel v. Parrish (1937)
    - Cleveland Board of Ed v. LaFleur (1974)
    - Clinton v. Jones (1997)
    - Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire (2007)
- Friday 2/27 – Jeffrey Luss – DEI vs. Meritocracy

- Monday 3/2 – Education and Title IX
  - **Read** Article: "The 14th Amendment and the Evolution of Title IX" https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/14th-amendment-and-evolution-title-ix
  - **Read** Article: Sharrow 2017 "Female Athlete" Politic: Title IX and the Naturalization of Sex Difference in Public Policy"
  - **Read** Summaries:
    - Grove City College v. Bell (1983)
    - United States v. Virginia (1996)
    - NCAA v. Smith (1999)
    - Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Ed (2005)
- Wednesday 3/4 - Noah Janecek – Austin Peay's Diversity Policy

Module 4: Reproduction, Abortion, Family

- Friday 3/6 - Reproduction and Abortion
  - **Read** Article: Forced Sterilization Policies in the U.S. Targeted Minorities and Those with Disabilities- and Lasted into the 21st Century https://theconversation.com/forced-sterilization-policies-in-the-us-targeted-minorities-and-those-with-disabilities-and-lasted-into-the-21st-century-143144
  - Watch Video: OB-GYNs Weigh the Legal Impact of Abortion Bans https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000008489880/abortion-bans-maternal-health.html
  - **Read** Summaries:
    - Buck v. Bell (1927)
    - Skinner v. Oklahoma (1942)
    - Griswold v. Connecticut (1965)
    - Roe v. Wade (1973)
    - Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992)
    - Schenck v. Pro-Choice Network (1997)
    - Dobbs v. Jackson W.H.O. (2022)
- Monday 3/9 – Friday 3/13- **NO CLASS (Spring Break)**
- Monday 3/16 – Cassidy Boyd – Contraception as Abortion?
- Wednesday 3/18- Tyanna Tukes – Is Abortion Murder?
- Friday 3/20 – Family

    - **Read** Book Chapter "Heroes of Their Own Lives"
- Monday 3/23 – LaNaya Nelson – Exemptions to Child Abuse/Neglect

Module Five: Violence Against Women Act

- Wednesday 3/25 – Domestic Violence
    - **Read** Article: Abolfazli, Lela. 2006. "The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)." Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law. 7(3): 863-882.
- Friday 3/27 – Angelina Vazquez – Domestic Violence and Child Custody
- Monday 3/30– Violence Against Children
    - **Read** TBA
    - **Read** Summaries
        - U.S. V. Comstock (2010)
- Wednesday 4/1 – Zyonna Bell -Bullying and Murder
- Friday 4/3 – **NO CLASS (APSU Holiday)**
- Monday 4/6 – Sex Crimes
    - **Read** Article: Mackinnon, Catherine. 2000. "Disputing Male Sovereignty: On United States v. Morrison." Harvard Law Review. 114 (1): 135-178.
    - Read Summaries
        - Coker v. Georgia (1977)
        - U.S. v. Morrison (2000)
        - U.S. V. Comstock (2010)
        - Millbrook v. United States (2013)
        - Paroline v. U.S. (2014)
- Wednesday 4/8 – Rafael Kenney – AI-Generated Revenge Porn

Module Six: LGBTQ Rights

- Friday 4/10 – Sodomy and Marriage
    - **Listen:** NPR Podcast, More Perfect Season 1, "The Imperfect Plaintiffs": https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolabmoreperfect/episodes/imperfect-plaintiff
    - **Read** Summaries
        - Bowers v. Hardwick (1986)
        - Lawrence v. Texas (2003)
    - **Read** Article: Keck 2009. "Beyond Backlash: Assessing the Impact of Judicial Decisions on LGBT Rights" Law and Society Review

    - **Read** Article: “Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas Says Gay Rights, Contraception Rulings should be Reconsidered After Roe is Overturned.” https://www.cnbc.com/2022/06/24/roe-v-wade-supreme-court-justice-thomas-says-gay-rights-rulings-open-to-be-tossed.html
    - **Read** Article: “Biden Signs Respect for Marriage Act, Reflecting His and the Country’s Evolution.” https://www.npr.org/2022/12/13/1142331501/biden-to-sign-respect-for-marriage-act-reflecting-his-and-the-countrys-evolution
    - **Read** Summaries
        - Romer v. Evans (1996)
        - Goodridge v. Department of P.H. (2003)
        - Hollingsworth v. Perry (2013)
        - Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)
- Monday 4/13 – Family
    - **Read** Article: Acosta 2017. “In The Event of Death: Lesbian Families’ Plans to Preserve Stepparent-Child Relationships.”
- Wednesday 4/15 – Nyla Lee – Same-Sex Parental and Adoption Rights
- Friday 4/17 – Transgender Discrimination
    - **Read** Article: Davis 2014 "Sex-Classification Policies as Transgender Discrimination: An Intersectional Critique" Perspectives on Politics
    - **Read** Article: Sharrow 2017 "Female Athlete" Politic: Title IX and the Naturalization of Sex Difference in Public Policy” (re-visit reading from week 2)
    - **Read** Summaries
        - Gloucester County School v. Grimm (2017)
        - Bostock v. Clayton County (2020)
- Monday 4/20 – Moboya Forbes: Transgender Sports Participation

Module Seven: Women in Government and Judicial System

- Wednesday 4/22 – Women in Politics
    - **Read** Article: Lawless 2015: “Female Candidates and Legislators”
    - **Read** Article: “Language and Gender: The Mass Media’s Portrayal of Two U.S. Presidential Candidates.” https://escholarship.org/uc/item/08z6p11f#

    - **Read**: Beckwith, 2007. “Numbers and Newness: The Descriptive and Substantive Representation of Women”
- Friday 4/24 – Tai Hubbard: Gender Bias in Politics
- Monday 4/27 – Women in the Judiciary
    - **Read** Article: DRI Task Force on Women Who Try Cases. 2004. “A Career in the Courtroom: A Different Model for the Success of Women Who Try Cases.” http://www.dri.org/docs/default-source/dri-white-papers-and-reports/women-in-the-courtroom-(2004).pdf?sfvrsn=6
    - **Read** Article: Nelson et al 2019. "Perceiving Discrimination: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation in the Legal Workplace."
    - **Read** Article: Boyd 2013 “She’ll Settle It?”
    - **Read** Summaries
        - Hoyt v. Florida (1961)
- Wednesday 4/29 – Kailen McGaughy – Harassment of Judges
- Thursday 5/7 – Final Exam (10:30 am – 12:30 pm)

Caveat

This syllabus is not a contract. The instructor reserves the right to make changes as necessary to this syllabus. If changes are made during the term of the course, the instructor will immediately notify students of such changes both by email communication and posting both notification and nature of change(s) on the course announcements page in D2L.