



**Universiteit
Leiden**

Institute of Political Science

Women's Representation

Course code 6443HBP24Y

Blocks III and IV / 2025-2026

January 29, 2026

Instructor: Dr. Diana **Davila-Gordillo**

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Class Time: Tu and Th: 15:15–17:00

Office: Agora Building 5.B23

Office Hours: Tuesdays after class

Room: [see My timetable](#)

Course Description

This Bachelor Project Seminar explores the dynamics of women's political representation and power in national and international contexts. While the number of women in legislatures and executive positions has increased in recent decades, women's political careers often remain short-lived. Many women serve only a single term, facing structural and cultural barriers that hinder their entry, longevity, and influence in politics. As a result, women often remain "constant newcomers" to political office, struggling to gain and sustain political presence. In this seminar, we will examine the institutional, social, and political obstacles that shape women's participation in political life. We begin with theories of descriptive and substantive representation, then move to explore political ambition, candidate emergence, and the role of political parties in shaping access to power. We will also study gender quota laws, violence against women in politics, and the broader personal and professional costs of political engagement. Finally, we will assess what happens after women attain power: how they govern, how their presence affects policymaking, and how women influence politics from outside institutions through social movements and civil society. Students will conduct independent research related to women's political participation, drawing on theoretical and empirical readings and guided by the central question: What explains women's political presence and impact across different political systems and global contexts?

Learning objectives:

By the end of this seminar students will be able to:

- Identify the multiple barriers faced by women in politics and beyond.
- Evaluate the causes of women's underrepresentation in political institutions as well as their presence.
- Analyze the effect of gender and stereotypes on electoral politics, policymaking, and the supply and demand for candidates.
- Critically analyze empirical political science research.
- Develop clear and cogent arguments in writing.

Learning objectives (BAP):

By the end of this seminar students will be able to:

- Learning to apply concepts, theories and methods in a research project that fits within a framework that has been formulated by the teacher in advance;
- Conducting, and reporting on, a limited empirical or literature study.

See the [study guide](#) for the general content, aims, rules (including resubmission), structure, and assessment of the Bachelor Project. You can also consult the [Handbook](#) (also in Brightspace). This syllabus provides complementary information for this particular subproject.

Course Materials:

The readings for this seminar consist of scholarly articles and book chapters available on the internet or through the university library, find links in Brightspace. Assigned readings are listed on the following pages. If a reading or more is listed on a specific day, **you should read these texts before that date.**

Mode of Instruction:

During the first part of the BAP we will meet two times a week (Tuesdays and Thursday at 15:15 to 17:00). Tuesday's seminars will take place at **Wijnhaven - 2.59** and Thursdays' meetings will take place at **Schouwburgstraat - A2.03**. If slides are used during our meetings, they will be posted on Brightspace *after* the session. Students are expected to prepare and read the assigned course literature, attend class sessions, and actively participate in class discussions and exercises. I suggest you read the papers with the aid of the *paper summary template* that can be found [here](#) or in Brightspace. There are *two written assignments*: a white paper and a literature review essay. Additionally, all students will give a research pitch presentation based on one of the assigned articles and will also act as discussants for one presentation.

In the second phase of the BAP (weeks 6-7), students develop a thesis proposal. During this phase, we will focus on methodological, thesis-specific issues, such as finding and formulating

research questions, working with academic literature, developing a theory, and specifying a research design.

In the final phase of the BAP (weeks 8-16), students build on their thesis proposal to develop their own research project using quantitative methods (e.g., analysis of existing data sets) or qualitative methods (e.g., comparative case study). During this phase, regular class sessions are replaced by consultation hours with the instructor and peer group support sessions.

Office hours and communication:

Walk-in office hours will take place every Tuesday after class from 17:00 onward (Wijnhaven building room TBA). If the allocated times do not work for you, you can [email](#) me. [Here](#) are some tips and tricks for emailing your professors. If you are going to email me and my (long) last name seems too difficult to spell, you can address me as Dr. D.

Attendance:

This seminar requires that you manage your time well, keep track of the assigned readings, and, most importantly, attend and participate actively in every class session (part 1), and organize your work and time for the thesis (part 2). Plan your schedule around the class meeting, including avoidable conflicts, such as doctor's appointments or interviews.

Technology:

You may use your laptop in class to reference the readings or other class-related materials. Please do not use your laptops, phones, or other devices for browsing, texting, or social media, as it is distracting not only to you but to students around you as well. Please be mindful and respectful.

Debates and Discussions:

The topics of this course are subject to debate, and students are expected to have different ideas and perspectives. While productive discussions are highly encouraged, statements or comments that personally attack any individuals or groups will not be tolerated. If you have any particular sensitivities that might affect your ability to read, hear, watch, or discuss certain material, please notify me. Please be aware, however, that because of the nature of this class, I cannot guarantee that you will be completely shielded from the material you find disturbing.

House Rules:

This class is a partnership between me, your instructor, and you, the student. Together, we will build a supportive, respectful, and productive environment. Building this kind of environment requires mutual respect. We all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If aspects of this course prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together, we will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the course requirements.

Please let me know if you go by a name and/or pronoun that is different from what is on the class roster. Using correct names and gender pronouns is important to me, so please share those details with me and correct me if I make a mistake.

What do I expect from you to create an environment of mutual respect? I expect students to arrive to class prepared to contribute, meaning they have completed the readings and the necessary assignments. I also expect professional behaviour in class. Think of how you would behave at an important meeting. One arrives a few minutes early. One does not wander off, surf the web, explore social media, or text a friend. Repeated, unprofessional behaviour will be seen as a lack of engagement.

Lastly, writing a thesis is always challenging. I will work to support you as you navigate these challenges by providing guidance, feedback, and opportunities to ask questions and refine your ideas. At the same time, a successful thesis depends on your sustained effort and initiative. This means meeting deadlines, engaging seriously with feedback, and taking responsibility for the day-to-day work of research and writing. Thesis work is collaborative, but it cannot be done for you; your progress will reflect the extent to which you actively engage in the process. My goal is for you to leave this course not only with a completed thesis, but also with greater confidence in your ability to think independently and conduct research you can be proud of.

Important Deadlines

1. In-class presentation (research-pitch)use the sign-up sheet
2. White paper February 20
3. Literature review March 9
4. Thesis Proposal March 20
5. Thesis May 22

All written assignments, as well as the thesis proposal and the thesis, must be handed in electronically (via Brightspace) by 17:00.

Assignments, grades, and grading policy

Presentation 20%: The goal of this assignment is to help you start thinking in terms of research proposals. You will present an assigned article as if it were your own research proposal, pitching it to an audience that could potentially fund the project. This means you are not summarizing the article; instead, you are making the case for why this research matters and deserves support (as if you were conducting the research). A signup sheet will be posted in Brightspace, and you can access it [here](#). You will select the session and the paper you want to present. You also *must*

register to be a discussant on a different date and paper. Instructions for the presentation and discussion role are accessible on Brightspace and [here](#)

Quota paper 40%: This paper is meant to help you design effective legislation. You will write advice for a country's Quota law. Extended instructions are posted on Brightspace and can be found [here](#) and are posted on Brightspace.

Literature review 40%: You will write a literature review on a topic/theme of your choice, broadly related to the themes of the course. Your topic should be sufficiently focused to allow for a coherent discussion of the existing literature. You are expected to survey between 5 and 10 academic papers (journal articles and/or book chapters). These should be peer-reviewed and clearly relevant to your chosen topic. Extended instructions are posted on Brightspace and can be found [here](#) and are posted on Brightspace.

Late Assignments:

In the interest of fairness to all students, all deadlines for this course are final. This means that no late work is accepted without advance permission by the Board of Examiners. Work submitted after the deadline without permission will not be graded. If you cannot meet the deadline, please get in touch with the [Exam Committee](#). You should plan to contact the Exam Committee in advance, before the deadline.

Course Schedule

Seminar

Week 1

This week, we will start discussing descriptive and substantive representation and political ambition.

Tuesday Feb. 3: Introduction and descriptive and substantive representation

- Be prepared to answer these questions: What does it mean to be represented? Why is it different from descriptive representation? Is one more important than the other? Can we have one without the other? Who can represent your interests? Can someone who "looks" like you know what you need and want? If not, is their presence still important?

 Required readings:

- Read the syllabus

- Read this article: [Why Representation in politics matters](#) (the link is also posted in Brightspace)
- Mansbridge, Jane (1999). "Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent" yes"". *The Journal of politics* 61(3): 628–657
- Piscopo, Jennifer M (2011). "Rethinking descriptive representation: Rendering women in legislative debates". *Parliamentary Affairs* 64(3): 448–472
- Celis, Karen and Childs, Sarah (2012). "The substantive representation of women: What to do with conservative claims?" *Political Studies* 60(1): 213–225

Thursday Feb. 5: Political Ambition and running for office

- In this session we will discuss women's political ambition and what contributes to women running for office. Be prepared to answer the following questions: is ambition something to be ashamed of? If you have it, is it enough to achieve what you want? Are we all equally ambitious? Do different groups experience ambition differently? What would put you off your dreams?

Required readings

- Read this report [The Gender Gap in Political Ambition](#)
- Bos, Angela et al. (2022). "This one's for the Boys: How Gendered Political Socialisation Limits Girls' Political Ambition and Interest". *The American Political Science Review* 116(2): 484–501
- Bernhard, Rachel, Shames, Shauna, and Telle, Dawn Langan (2021). "To Emerge? Breadwinning, Motherhood, and Women's Decisions to Run for Office". *American Political Science Review* 115(2): 379–394
- Holman, Mirya R. and Schneider, Monica C. (2018). "Gender, race, and political ambition: how intersectionality and frames influence interest in political office". *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6(2): 264–280

Week 2

This week, we will discuss candidates, political parties, elections, and violence.

Tuesday Feb. 10: Parties and Candidates

- Be prepared to answer the following questions: is it possible to be seen and not heard? Why is this important? Would you join a political party and why?

Required readings

- Goyal, Tanushree and Sells, Cameron (2024). "Descriptive Representation and Party Building: Evidence from Municipal Governments in Brazil". *American Political Science Review* 118(4): 1840–1855
- Junqueira, Andrea and Cunha Silva, Patrick (2024). "Strengthening the party, weakening the women: Unforeseen consequences of strengthening institutions". *The Journal of Politics* 86(2): 734–748
- Cheng, Christine and Tavits, Margit (2011). "Informal influences in selecting female political candidates". *Political Research Quarterly* 64(2): 460–471

Thursday Feb. 12: Quotas, Elections, and Violence

- Be prepared to answer these questions: Do we need quotas? what benefits do they bring? Are there negative externalities? What does VAW-E look like? Why is it so important that we understand it and work toward its eradication? Is this violence always clearly visible? If not, why do you think it can "fly under the radar"?

Required readings

- Read this report: [Americas Quarterly Article: When Do Quotas in Politics Work? Latin America Offers Lessons.](#)
- * Listen to Mona Lena Krook present her book on Violence Against Women ([link](#))
- Aldrich, Andrea S and Daniel, William T (2024). "Gender quota adoption and the qualifications of parliamentarians". *The Journal of Politics* 86(2): 798–803
- Restrepo Sanín, Juliana (2022). "Violence against women in politics as an unintended consequence of democratization". *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 24(1): 16–39

Week 3

This week, we will discuss women candidates, voters, and women in the legislature.

Tuesday Feb. 17: women candidates and voters

- Be ready to answer these questions: How do electoral institutions and local contexts shape women's voter turnout? When does descriptive representation influence women's vote choice—and when does it not? How does gendered political violence reshape electoral participation and representation?

Required reading

- Chattha, Muhammad Khudadad and Lakhtakia, Shruti (2025). "The Gap Within: The Impact of Separate-Gender Polling Stations on Voter Turnout". *The Journal of Politics* 87(1): 382–387
- Churi, Juliana and Damerow, Anna (2023). "Closing the gap: How descriptive and substantive representation affect women's vote for populist radical right parties". *West European Politics* 46(5): 928–946
- Rivera, Andrés F, Tappe Ortiz, Juliana, and Koos, Carlo (2025). "Gender in elections: The consequences of killing women activists". *Journal of Peace Research* 62(5): 1565–1580

Thursday Feb. 19: Women in the legislature

- Be ready to answer these questions: What are the barriers women face *after* elections? Why are interruptions so bad?

Required reading

- Vallejo Vera, Sebastian and Gomez Vidal, Analia (2022). "The Politics of Interruptions: Gendered Disruptions of Legislative Speeches". *The Journal of Politics* 84(3): 1384–1402
- * Blog post: I'm Speaking! Interruptions in Legislative Speeches and Women's Strategic Behavior ([follow this link](#))
- Weeks, Ana Catalano and Masala, Francesco (2023). "Still "the Domain of Men?" Gender Quotas and Women's Inclusion in Local Politics in Italy". *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 48(3): 503–534
- Sanches, Edalina Rodrigues and Espírito-Santo, Ana (2025). "Who Gets to Speak? How Institutions and Political Careers Shape Gender Bias in South Africa's Parliamentary Debates". *Politics & Gender*: 1–25

 **QUOTA PAPER DEADLINE - SUBMIT VIA BRIGHTSPACE BY 17:00 ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20**

Week 4

This week, we will discuss women breaking the glass ceiling, prime ministers, ministers and presidents, and who deals with the broken shards of glass. We will also discuss social movements and other pathways women take to effect change.

Tuesday Feb. 24: Breaking the glass ceiling

- Be prepared to answer these questions: is it enough to make it to the top AKA breaking the glass ceiling? Are men and women getting the same positions? Do they have the same qualifications? Have you seen this disparity elsewhere? Do you expect women to welcome/help others to the top, or will they shut the door and leave others to deal with the broken glass?

 Required readings

- Escobar-Lemmon, Maria and Taylor-Robinson, Michelle M. (2009). "Getting to the Top: Career Paths of Women in Latin American Cabinets". *Political Research Quarterly* 62(4): 685–699
- O'Brien, Diana Z. et al. (2015). "Letting Down the Ladder or Shutting the Door: Female Prime Ministers, Party Leaders, and Cabinet Ministers". *Politics and Gender* 11: 689–717
- Liu, Yanjun and Wang, Zezhong (2024). "All the President's Women? Female Leaders, Family Ties, and Gendered Cabinet Appointments Worldwide". *Politics & Gender* 20(3): 669–700

Thursday Feb. 26: Women in social movements

- Be prepared to answer these questions: why is how we frame issues important? If you were (are) a policy entrepreneur, what are your options, and which would you choose? Can a social movement be truly and effectively inclusive?

 Required readings

- Páez-Bernal, Camila, and Miki Caul Kittilson, (2022) 'Gender and Political Participation', in Marco Giugni, and Maria Grasso (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Participation*, Oxford Handbooks
- Daby, Mariela and Moseley, Mason W. (2022). "Feminist Mobilization and the Abortion Debate in Latin America: Lessons from Argentina". *Politics and Gender* 18: 359–393
- Baldez, Lisa (2003). "Women's movements and democratic transition in Chile, Brazil, East Germany, and Poland". *Comparative Politics*: 253–272

Week 5

This week, we will discuss women in conflict and women in international relations.

Tuesday March 3: Women in Conflict

- Be prepared to answer these questions: How does centering women change our understanding of how rebel movements originate? What explains variation in women's political representation within rebel organizations? What roles do women play in rebel governance beyond combat, and why does this matter?

 Required readings


- Loken, Meredith (2024). "Gendering rebel origins: women as first movers during civil wars". *European Journal of Politics and Gender*: 1–21
- Brannon, Elizabeth L (2023). "Women's political representation in African rebel parties". *The Journal of Politics* 85(3): 812–825
- Thomas, Jakana L (2024). "Sisters are doing it for themselves: how female combatants help generate gender-inclusive peace agreements in civil wars". *American Political Science Review* 118(2): 831–847

Thursday - March 5: Women in International Relations

- Be prepared to answer this question: why do you think the stories (from the book) have come to light so recently? Do these texts mention certain forms of privilege? Is that important? Whose contributions become "hidden figures" in international human rights—and what mechanisms keep them invisible? In international negotiations, when do gender stereotypes function as a disadvantage versus a "chivalry" advantage, and what are the consequences for influence and outcomes? How do global hierarchies and gender norms shape which states can credibly claim a "feminist foreign policy," and what tensions arise between feminist goals and geopolitical strategy?

 Required readings

- ! Listen to this podcast [Hidden Figures in Women's International Human Rights](#)
- Adami, Rebecca and Plesch, Dan, eds. (2022). *Women and the UN: A new history of women's international human rights*. Routledge (**Read the Introduction, Preface, Chapter 1, 2, and 3**)
- Naurin, Daniel, Naurin, Elin, and Alexander, Amy (2019). "Gender stereotyping and chivalry in international negotiations: A survey experiment in the Council of the European Union". *International Organization* 73(2): 469–488
- Thomson, Jennifer (2022). "Gender norms, global hierarchies and the evolution of feminist foreign policy". *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 5(2): 173–190

 **LITERATURE REVIEW DEADLINE - SUBMIT VIA BRIGHTSPACE BY 17:00 ON MONDAY MARCH 9 BY 17:00**

Thesis Project

Week 6

This week, we will start working on your thesis proposal and thesis.

Tuesday - March 10: Research proposal workshop 1

- We will focus on: research Questions, Concepts, and the Logic of Inference in Qualitative and Quantitative Research. Prepare for an in-class activity: ● Write out an example research question in your own words. This can be your own question, for example, from a project you are considering working on, or it can be based on any academic article or book that you have read recently.

Required readings

- Curini, Luigi and Franzese, Robert (2020). The SAGE handbook of research methods in political science and international relations. Sage **Chapter 2**.
- Cyr, J. and Goodman, S.W. (2024). Doing Good Qualitative Research. Oxford University Press **Chapter 4**.
- Mahoney, James and Goertz, Gary (2006). "A tale of two cultures: Contrasting quantitative and qualitative research". *Political analysis* 14(3): 227–249

Thursday - March 12: Research proposal workshop 2

- We will focus on case selection and cross-case comparison.

Required readings

- Curini, Luigi and Franzese, Robert (2020). The SAGE handbook of research methods in political science and international relations. Sage **Chapter 59**.
- Slater, Dan and Ziblatt, Daniel (2013). "The enduring indispensability of the controlled comparison". *Comparative Political Studies* 46(10): 1301–1327
- Cyr, J. and Goodman, S.W. (2024). Doing Good Qualitative Research. Oxford University Press **Chapter 6**.

Week 7 This week, we will discuss research methods and workshop your proposals.

Tuesday - March 17: Research proposal workshop 3


- Teaching will focus on the methods needed given your research plans.

 Required reading (updated following needs)

- Beach, Derek and Rasmus B. Pedersen. 2013. Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chs. 1-2, pp. 1-22.
- Collier, David (2011). "Understanding process tracing". PS: political science politics 44(4): 823–830

Thursday - March 19: Research proposal writing workshop

- You will work on your research proposal in class.

 RESEARCH PROPOSAL DEADLINE - SUBMIT VIA BRIGHTSPACE BY 17:00 ON FRIDAY MARCH 20 BY 17:00

Weeks 9 to 16

- During these weeks, you will work on your full thesis. Regular office hours and peer writing groups will be organized based on students' needs and schedules. To ensure that you advance with the project on time, the following are deadlines for each section of the thesis. One-to-one meetings will be schedule after submissions.
- End of week 10 - April 10: Submit a revised literature review and theoretical framework.
- End of week 12 - April 24: Submit case selection, methods, and data collection.
- End of week 14 - May 8: Submit analysis, conclusions, and introduction.

 THESIS DEADLINE - SUBMIT VIA BRIGHTSPACE BY 17:00 ON FRIDAY MAY 22