PRELIMINARY COURSE SYLLABUS

Gendering Politics

Feminist and Intersectional Approaches to Political Analysis

Bachelor Seminar | Winter Semester 2026/27 | 6 ECTS

Instructor	Dr. Kristi Winters
Module / course number	SM Vertiefung Politikwissenschaft (1335BSVPW1) / Course number to be confirmed
Course and examination language	English
Time	Tuesdays, 17:45–19:15
Teaching period	13 October 2026–2 February 2027
Location	Building 211, Seminar Room S103 (provisional)
Contact hours	2 SWS: 30 teaching units × 45 minutes = 22.5 clock hours
Email	kristi.winters@gesis.org
Office hours	By appointment

This syllabus is preliminary. The schedule, readings, room and assessment deadlines may be updated before teaching begins.

Course description

Political science frequently treats concepts such as citizenship, security, work, representation, poverty and political participation as if their meanings were self-evident and their application were gender-neutral. Feminist political analysis has demonstrated that these concepts (and the institutions and measurements built around them) often rest on assumptions about gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, nationality and family life.

This seminar introduces students to gender as a category of political analysis and to intersectionality as both a theoretical and methodological approach. The course begins with the social construction of political reality and the relationship between concepts, categories and construct validity. It then examines feminist critiques of conventional political science, including challenges to the distinction between public and private life and to established understandings of citizenship, work, power, security and political participation.

In the second part of the course, students learn how intersectional analysis can identify relationships and experiences obscured by single-axis approaches. They apply these analytical tools to substantive political issues including war and security, poverty and welfare, unpaid and paid labour, democratic participation, political representation and contemporary anti-gender mobilization.

The course combines short lectures, discussion of required readings, empirical examples and applied seminar exercises. Students will learn not only about feminist and intersectional theories but also how to use them to formulate research questions, evaluate concepts and measurements, and analyse political problems.

Recommended prerequisites

No previous study of gender politics is required. Students should have a basic background in the social sciences and be able to read, discuss and write academic material in English. Perfection in spoken or written English is not expected.

Relevance for the study programme

This course is offered within SM Vertiefung Politikwissenschaft. It engages classic and current political-science research questions, applies theoretical approaches and qualitative and quantitative methods, and develops elements of research design through empirical and conceptual analysis.

Learning objectives

In accordance with the module learning objectives, students will apply political-science theories and methods to structured analytical problems, develop and justify independent positions, present and discuss findings in English, organise their work independently, and use feedback to improve it.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Explain how gender can be used as a category of political analysis.
- Distinguish between essentialist and social-constructionist accounts of political categories.
- Identify gendered and otherwise exclusionary assumptions within apparently neutral political concepts.
- Explain construct validity and evaluate whether empirical indicators adequately represent political concepts.
- Describe major feminist critiques of conventional political science.
- Explain intersectionality as a theory of power and social relations.
- Distinguish intersectional analysis from the simple addition of demographic variables to a study.
- Reformulate research questions and research designs using feminist and intersectional approaches.
- Apply these approaches to substantive political problems.
- Develop and justify independent analytical positions.
- Present and discuss findings in English and use feedback constructively.
- Construct, justify and communicate an evidence-based feminist or intersectional political analysis.

Course format and participation

Teaching and learning method: seminar. The course comprises 15 weekly meetings of 90 minutes. This corresponds to 30 teaching units of 45 minutes and 22.5 clock hours of contact time (2 SWS). The total module workload is 180 hours (6 ECTS), including contact time and independent study. There will be no teaching during the University's Christmas recess, 23 December 2026–6 January 2027.

Most sessions will combine:

1. A short introduction to the week's central concepts
2. Discussion of the required reading
3. Examination of an empirical example or political case
4. An applied individual or group exercise
5. Reflection on the implications for political research

Students are expected to complete the required readings before each meeting and participate constructively in seminar discussions and exercises. Perfect comprehension of every text is not expected: questions, disagreements and difficulties interpreting the readings are part of the learning process. Course readings and other materials will be made available through ILIAS.

Combined examination

The module is assessed through a combined examination consisting of a presentation (30%) and a term paper (70%). Both components must be completed in English and passed individually. The combined examination is passed only when both components receive a passing grade.

1. Presentation: applied feminist or intersectional conceptual analysis — 30%

Each student will select a political issue, institution, policy or research study and prepare a feminist or intersectional conceptual analysis. Students will present their analyses during the final two seminar meetings and provide constructive feedback on another student's work.

The analysis should include:

- A concise description of the case
- Identification of the concepts and categories used to understand it
- Analysis of assumptions or exclusions embedded in those concepts
- Identification of relevant intersecting structures or relations of power
- A preliminary argument explaining how a feminist or intersectional approach changes the analysis

2. Term paper — 70%

Students will submit an approximately 4,000-word term paper applying feminist or intersectional conceptual analysis to a political question of their choice. The precise submission deadline, examination-registration deadline and formal requirements will be announced through KLIPS and ILIAS; the published deadlines are binding.

The paper should:

- Formulate a clear political research question
- Define and critically evaluate its principal concepts
- Engage with relevant course literature
- Identify the institutions and relations of power shaping the issue
- Consider how multiple social positions or structures interact
- Use appropriate empirical evidence
- Explain what the feminist or intersectional analysis reveals that a conventional or single-axis analysis would miss

The applied case analysis, presentation and peer feedback are designed to support the development of the final term paper.

Preliminary course schedule

The schedule and readings may be revised before the beginning of teaching. Any changes will be communicated through ILIAS.

Session	Date	Topic	Applied seminar activity
1	13 Oct.	**Gendering politics and political concepts**	Identify hidden gender assumptions in familiar political concepts and introduce the course's common analytical framework.
2	20 Oct.	**The social construction of political reality**	Examine how categories such as "family," "citizen," "worker" and "political leader" are socially produced and treated as natural.
3	27 Oct.	**Concept formation, measurement and construct validity**	Apply Goertz and Mazur's guidelines to define and evaluate alternative conceptualizations of participation, security, poverty or political knowledge.
4	3 Nov.	**Feminist critiques of political science: what counts as political?**	Use the public/private distinction to identify experiences, activities and relations excluded from conventional political analysis.
5	10 Nov.	**Sex, gender, bodies and institutions**	Apply the gendering-concepts framework to formally neutral institutional categories and rules with gendered or unequal consequences.
6	17 Nov.	**Intersectionality as theory I: categories and relations of power**	Examine why gender cannot be analysed independently of race, class, sexuality, disability, nationality and other relations of power.
7	24 Nov.	**Intersectionality as theory II: rethinking political concepts**	Construct an intersectional concept map and identify what a single-axis conceptualization excludes or obscures.
8	1 Dec.	**Intersectionality as method I: research questions and categories**	Evaluate whether a research question and its analytical categories genuinely capture intersecting relations of power.
9	8 Dec.	**Intersectionality as method II: research design and measurement**	Redesign a conventional single-axis political study using Goertz and Mazur's conceptual guidelines and an intersectional framework.
10	15 Dec.	**Gendering war, conflict and security**	Examine how definitions of security determine whose threats, experiences and political agency become visible.
11	22 Dec.	**Gendering poverty, welfare and political economy**	Examine how concepts, indicators and units of analysis shape understandings of poverty, work, care and economic dependency.
—	29 Dec. / 5 Jan.	**No sessions**	University Christmas recess.
12	12 Jan.	**Gendering democracy, participation and representation**	Apply the framework to evaluate how democracy, participation and representation are conceptualized and measured.
13	19 Jan.	**Anti-gender politics and conceptual contestation**	Analyse how political actors construct and contest the meanings of "gender," "equality," "family," "freedom" and "ideology."

Session	Date	Topic	Applied seminar activity
14	26 Jan.	**Student presentations I: applied conceptual analysis**	Present a feminist or intersectional analysis of a political concept, institution, policy or problem and receive peer feedback.
15	2 Feb.	**Student presentations II and course synthesis**	Complete the presentations and explain how conceptual revision changes the resulting political analysis.

Core and indicative readings

Core required text

Goertz, Gary, and Amy G. Mazur, eds. 2008. *Politics, Gender, and Concepts: Theory and Methodology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Politics, Gender, and Concepts is the core required text for this seminar. Selected chapters provide the common conceptual and methodological framework used throughout the course. Additional required readings apply or extend this framework to specific political problems; all other readings are supplementary.

The core text is available electronically through the University and City Library of Cologne catalogue: https://katalog.ub.uni-koeln.de/portal/databases/id/uni/titles/id/991055793291306476.html?l=en

The complete list of required and supplementary readings will be provided in the updated syllabus and through ILIAS.

Indicative supplementary readings

The preliminary intellectual foundation includes:

- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality*. Selected extract.
- Scott, Joan W. 1986. “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.” *American Historical Review* 91(5): 1053–1075.
- Waylen, Georgina, Karen Celis, Johanna Kantola, and S. Laurel Weldon. “Gender and Politics: A Gendered World, a Gendered Discipline.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*.
- Okin, Susan Moller. “Gender, the Public, and the Private.” In *Feminism and Politics*.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989(1): 139–167.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. Selected work on intersecting systems of power and the matrix of domination.
- Hancock, Ange-Marie. Selected work on intersectionality as a research paradigm.
- Weldon, S. Laurel. Selected work on intersectionality and comparative politics.
- Enloe, Cynthia, or Tickner, J. Ann. Selected work on feminist approaches to international relations and security.
- Selected feminist scholarship on welfare states, production, social reproduction, and care.
- Celis, Karen, Sarah Childs, and other selected scholarship on political representation.
- Kuhar, Roman, David Paternotte, and other contemporary scholarship on anti-gender mobilization.

Registration, examination and course materials

Registration for the course and registration for the examination are separate procedures and must both be completed by students through KLIPS by the applicable deadlines. Instructors cannot register students for either the course or the examination. Registration or deregistration after the relevant deadline is not possible.

Students who are not registered for the examination are not entitled to complete or receive a grade for either component of the combined examination.

Course announcements, readings, assignments and submission links will be provided through ILIAS.

Use of generative AI

Generative AI may be used only where its use supports, rather than replaces, the student's own intellectual work. Students remain responsible for the accuracy, argumentation, evidence and sources in all submitted work.

Any substantive use of generative AI must be disclosed. This includes identifying the tool used, the purpose for which it was used and the parts of the work it helped to produce or revise. AI-generated material is not a scholarly source and may not be cited as evidence. Students must comply with the University and Faculty regulations in force at the time of submission.

Accessibility and an inclusive learning environment

The seminar is intended to provide a respectful environment for intellectual disagreement and collaborative learning. Students should engage critically with arguments while treating other participants with respect. Students who encounter barriers to participation or require accommodations are encouraged to contact the University's relevant support service and to speak with the instructor so that appropriate arrangements can be discussed.

Provisional status

This preliminary syllabus has been prepared for course registration. The course number, room confirmation, examination-registration and submission dates, and detailed weekly reading list will be added or updated before teaching begins. The most recent version will be made available through KLIPS and/or ILIAS.