**GOVT 84.12**

***The United Nations Treaty on Women’s Rights and Its Critics***

Professor Lisa Baldez

Dartmouth College

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Information

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Office Hours: W 9-11 and 4:15 to 5, and by appointment.

Classroom: Berry 370

Course Description

The course will focus on US ratification of the United Nations treaty on women's rights, the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, known as CEDAW. The United Nations adopted CEDAW in 1979; since then, 187 countries have ratified it. Countries that ratify CEDAW commit to an obligation to pursue “all available measures” to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of life. The US is one of only 7 countries in the world that have not ratified this treaty—along with Iran, Palau, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Tonga. US failure to ratify CEDAW is surprising given the prominent role that the United States played in promoting women’s rights within the United Nations and in drafting the convention itself. US failure to ratify CEDAW is not for lack of trying: the US Senate has held hearings on CEDAW ratification five times—in 1988, 1990, 1994, 2002, and 2010. CEDAW enjoys both strong support and strong opposition in the United States. The course will examine broader questions about gender and American politics by looking through the lens of the history and politics surrounding CEDAW. We will examine the history of women’s rights within the UN, the development of the treaty, US efforts to ratify it, and what impact it would likely have in the US if it were ratified. In this class you will engage in close and critical readings of assigned texts, demonstrate an understanding of the kinds of claims that authors make about the ways in which gender is or has been relevant to American politics and critically evaluate the kinds of evidence they provide to support those claims, and conduct research and write research papers on various questions related to CEDAW. Our aim will be to produce papers that inform public debate and contribute to the academic literature.

Assigned Readings

You can access all the material required for this course online, via the Blackboard site.

Assignments

Class Participation 5% daily

Blog Posts 30% most class meetings

CEDAW Position Paper 5% Tuesday, February 5 at 2pm

Annotated Bibliography 10% Thursday, January 31 by midnight

Prospectus 10% Tuesday, February 19 at 2pm

Symposium Presentation 10% March 5 or March 7 during class

Final paper 30% March 13, noon

**\*\*YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL REQUIREMENTS TO PASS THIS CLASS\*\***

1. **Class Participation 5%**

This class is a seminar that will include discussion, work during done class time and some lecture. Close reading of the assigned material is only the first step of learning. Much of the work of processing information and generating ideas takes place through talking, listening and debating. I expect you to arrive on time every day. I expect you to participate regularly. I expect you to do all the assigned reading, think about how the readings address the discussion questions, and come to class prepared to engage. If you miss a class, you miss whatever discussion and learning we do that day. Class is a collective endeavor that cannot be "made up."

There are three components to your participation grade.

* 1. *Show up, on time.* Class attendance is required and there are no excused absences. If you miss a class, you miss whatever discussion and learning we do that day. Class is a collective endeavor that cannot be "made up."
  2. *Make quality contributions to class discussion*. Your comments should demonstrate that you have done the reading and have thought about it prior to coming to class. This doesn’t necessarily mean bringing polished pearls of wisdom to class. It means you have something to say about the material and are not bullshitting, for lack of a more polite term. I strongly encourage you to ask questions about what you do not understand or what doesn’t make sense to you
  3. *Listen carefully to your peers.* Listening is an underdeveloped skill for many of us. We will talk about how to strengthen this skill and develop ways to demonstrate how well you listen and respond to each other.

1. **Blog Posts 30%**

You will do ten different kinds of writing exercises over the course of the term. I am calling them “blog posts” because you will post most of them in a blog format that everyone will read. They will not be graded but you need to do a good enough job on them to get credit. The posts should demonstrate engagement with the assigned material for that particular class. Use perfect spelling and grammar. If I’m not satisfied with the quality of one of your posts, I may ask you to redo it. These exercises allow you to practice writing, to get your ideas flowing, and to enhance the depth of your engagement with the material in class. Many of these entries are “practice” for graded assignments. The specific instructions for each one are posted on the blackboard site.

The purpose of the blog posts is to get you to engage the assigned readings actively before you come to class and to provide a basis for your engagement with each other. The specific guidelines for each post, and the due date for each, will be posted under “Class Meetings” on the Blackboard (bb) site. **Upload your post by 12pm on the day of class.**

1. **CEDAW Position Paper 5%**

We will hold a debate on US ratification of CEDAW. Each of you will be assigned “pro” or “con” and you will write a 2-3 page position paper to prepare. The paper is due at the **beginning of class on Tuesday, February 5.** Upload your paper to blackboard.

**4. Annotated Bibliography 10%**

Choose five academic journal articles on your topic (they can be from your list of 10). Write a one-paragraph annotated bibliography entry for each of them that does the following:

a.     Concisely summarizes the central question and main argument

b.     Describes the methodology

c.      Assess the main strengths and weaknesses of the scholarship

d.     Analyzes its relevance to your research paper.

Upload your entries to the wikiography by **midnight on Thursday, January 31.**

**5. Prospectus 10%**

Write a 5-page prospectus (overview) of the paper. Use perfect spelling, grammar and punctuation. You’re your sources correctly and include a properly formatted bibliography. Upload the prospectus by **the beginning of class on Tuesday, February 19**.

**6. Symposium Presentation 10%**

Prepare and deliver a 10-minute formal presentation on your research paper. You will use the comments you get on your presentation to write your final paper. The symposium format is designed to give you an opportunity to present your ideas, to stimulate intellectual discussion about the topic and to provide feedback on individual proposals.

**8. Final paper 30%**

The end product is a 15-page research paper on some aspect of CEDAW. Upload to Blackboard by March 13 at noon.

Class Meetings

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| T Jan 8 | Introduction | What is CEDAW and why teach a course (or write a book)  about it? What do you want to achieve in this course? |
| Th Jan 10 | The United Nations' Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) | Read: US Constitution and Text of CEDAW <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>  Blog Post #1:  Post three questions or comments about the text of the treaty. We will discuss and answer these in class. |
| T Jan 15 | CEDAW Jurisprudence | Read: CEDAW General Recommendations.  Briefly review Nos. 1-18; read Nos. 19-25  Blog Post #2: Choose one of the following:  How might the US comply with General Recommendation No. 23?  Consider the conception of equality in CEDAW in comparison to the conception of equality in the United States Constitution.. Are the two conceptions of equality similar or different? Which one do you prefer? Why?  How do you make sense of Article 5? What does it mean? What kinds of policies does it correspond to?  Does CEDAW guarantee a women’s right to abortion? |
| Th Jan 17 | Equal Rights Amendment | Read: Mansbridge, Chs. 1-6  Blog Post #3: How is ERA like CEDAW, and how is the ERA debate like the CEDAW debate? Post two passages from Mansbridge, one you like or have "special knowledge" about and one you don't like, don't understand, or have a question about. Briefly explain why (for each). |
| T Jan 22 | Equal Rights Amendment | Read: Mansbridge, Chs. 7-12  Blog Post #4: Using insights from Mansbridge, devise a strategy to mobilize support for US ratification of CEDAW. List a couple of bullet points to highlight your main ideas and come to class prepared to elaborate. |
| Th Jan 24 | Research Workshop | Blog Post #5: Generate a bibliography of 10 academic sources and upload it to the wikiography. Take one of your ten sources and write an annotated bibliography of it. |
| T Jan 29 | The US Should Ratify CEDAW | Read: Koh, CEDAW 2012, Verveer, Afghan, DOJ  Blog Post #6: Make a list of all the arguments in support of US ratification. Which points do you find the most persuasive? |
| Th Jan 31 | The US Should Not Ratify CEDAW | Read: Senate Minority Report, Heritage, Hoff-Somers  Blog Post #7: Make a list of all the arguments opposed to US ratification. Which views have merit and which do not?  \*\*Annotated bibliography due by midnight |
| M Feb 4 to  F Feb 8 | Meetings with Professor Baldez |  |
| T Feb 5 | Debate: Should the US Ratify CEDAW? | \*\*CEDAW Position Paper due by beginning of class |
| Th Feb 7 | Why hasn’t the US ratified CEDAW? | Read: Baldez Ch. 4  Blog post #8: Comments on my chapter  Post your comments here and then be prepared to talk about them in class.  I will conduct class tomorrow as a symposium on the chapter. This is a typical academic forum in which people read the paper beforehand, the author introduces the paper by discussing the broader context and saying a couple of things about the research, and then people jump in with their questions, comments and suggestions.   I recognize you may feel uncomfortable critiquing the work of your professor. Don't. If you want to impress me, don't toady\* me—challenge me. When you read this paper, imagine that I'm a peer who has asked you to read her paper and provide some feedback. A nice way to frame critical feedback is : (1) you did a good job with XX and (2) YY could be better. You can ask questions, ask about areas you don't understand or want to know more about, line edit, edit for style, make suggestions about restructuring the chapter, highlight internal contradictions, etc. |
| T Feb 12 | Impact of CEDAW: Qualitative Data | Read: Byrnes and Freeman 2012  Blog Post #9: The articles we read for today provide different ways of measuring the impact of CEDAW.  Briefly discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. |
| Th Feb 14 | Impact of CEDAW: Quantitative Data | Read: Englehart and Miller, Simmons  Blog Post #10: The articles we read for today provide different ways of measuring the impact of CEDAW.  Briefly discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. |
| T Feb 19 | Research Workshop | \*\*Prospectus due by beginning of class |
| Th Feb 21 | The Periodic Reporting Process | Blog Post #11: Choose a country: Read all the components of the periodic reporting process for a single country: the summary records of the "constructive dialogue" between government officials and the CEDAW experts, the country report itself, the questions posed by the CEDAW committee and the government's responses to it; shadow reports submitted by NGOs, and the concluding comments offered by the CEDAW committee. Explain the extent to which reading this material (1) confirmed what you already knew about the CEDAW process, (2) surprised you, and/or (3) raised new questions for you.  --OR--  In what ways, if any, could these concluding comments serve to put pressure on the government to act in accordance with the recommendations? How useful are they for realizing the goals of CEDAW? |
| T Feb 26 | TBA |  |
| Th Feb 28 | Prep for symposium |  |
| T March 5 | Symposium, Part I |  |
| Th March 7 | Symposium, Part II |  |
| W March 13 | \*\*Final paper due | Upload by noon |

Class Policies

1. **The Honor Principle**. All Dartmouth students have agreed to conduct themselves in accordance with the Standards of Conduct in general and with the Academic Honor Principle in particular. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you plagiarize, you risk failing the class and having your case brought before the Committee on Standards. Read the code again, here: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~uja/honor/> We will discuss the ways in which the Honor Principle is relevant to the work you will do in class and I am more than happy to answer any questions you have about it.
2. **X-Hours**. I will use x-hours as needed, to make up classes that have to be rescheduled or if we are falling behind. I let you know in advance when x-hours will be held.
3. **Late assignments** (even an hour late) will be penalized one-third grade per day. This includes weekends. If you think you might have a problem with this, you should contact me before the assignment is due. If an emergency prevents you from handing in an assignment in on time, please let me know as soon as you can, preferably before the due date. I will grant extensions only under extremely unusual circumstances.
4. **Using laptops and other electronic devices in class.** You may use your laptop to take notes during lectures, but not during discussions. Do not access email or the Internet during class. Out of courtesy to your colleagues, please do not use computers or cell phones during class.
5. **Blackboard web site.** This syllabus provides an overview of our schedule for the term, but the real structure of the course is the Blackboard web site. I use blackboard to post lecture outlines (*outlines*, i.e., not the full text), links that are relevant to material in class, announcements, copies of all handouts, regular feedback and any changes to the schedule
6. **Learning Disabilities**. Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.
7. **Religious Observance*.*** Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate measures.