

GOVT 81.25

Defying Convention: 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: TBA

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	10%	daily
Blog Posts	20%	most class meetings

Choose topic/10 sources	ungraded	week of Monday, February 4
CEDAW Position Paper	10%	Tuesday, February 5, 2pm
Annotated Bibliography	10%	Saturday, February 16, midnight
Prospectus	10%	Saturday, February 24, midnight
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 10%

There are three components to your participation grade.

- a. *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."
- b. *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
- c. *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.

2. Blog Posts 20%

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 8am on the day of class.

3. CEDAW Position Paper 20%

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. Choose a topic no grade

The main assignment for this course is a research paper. You will write the paper in stages over the semester. First, you will come up with a general topic you'd like to learn more about. Locate 10 academic sources and create a formal bibliography. Upload to the Wikiography. Schedule a time to meet with me to discuss the viability of your topic. The meetings will take place the week of Monday, February 4 (sign-ups on Blackboard).

5. 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 Saturday, February 16.**

6. Prospectus (30%)

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 **midnight on Saturday, February 23.**

7. 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

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/
T Jan 15	CEDAW Jurisprudence	Read: CEDAW General Recommendations. Briefly review Nos. 1-18; read Nos. 19-25
Th Jan 17	Equal Rights Amendment	Read: Mansbridge, Chs. 1-6
T Jan 22	Why Women, Not Gender?	Read: Rosenbaum, something on lgbt
Th Jan 24	Equal Rights Amendment	Read: Mansbridge, Chs. 7-12
T Jan 29	The US Should Ratify CEDAW	Read: Koh, CEDAW 2012, Verveer, Afghan, DOJ
Th Jan 31	The US Should Not Ratify CEDAW	Read: Senate Minority Report, Heritage, Hoff-Somers
M Feb 4 to F Feb 8	Meetings with Professor Baldez	Generate a bibliography of 10 academic sources and upload it to the wikiography before your meeting with Professor Baldez
T Feb 5	Debate: Should the US Ratify CEDAW?	
Th Feb 7	Why hasn't the US ratified CEDAW?	Read: Baldez Ch. 4 Blog post
T Feb 12	Impact of CEDAW: Qualitative Data	Read: Byrnes and Freeman 2012 Blog post
Th Feb 14	Impact of CEDAW: Quantitative Data	Read: Englehart and Miller, Simmons Blog post
Sat Feb 16	Annotated bibliography due	Upload to blackboard by midnight
T Feb 19	Skype Interview	
Th Feb 21	The Periodic Reporting Process	Choose a country: read periodic report, questions and answers, NGC shadow reports, and CEDAW Committee response
Sat Feb 23	Five-page draft due	Upload to blackboard by midnight
T Feb 26	Skype Interview	
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
	CEDAW Committee meets in New York, July 9-30, 2012	http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws51.htm

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.