Sex, Markets, and Power
Political Science 427
Monday/Wednesday 10:30-11:45

Frances Rosenbluth
304 Brewster Hall
432-5256

Course Description: This course considers how women’s socio-economic status and political power has varied across time (in historical perspective) and place (in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas). We will employ three analytical lenses to help us interpret what we see: biology, markets, and power. These lenses will help us understand how issues specific to women relate to debates in mainstream political economy. How does the sex with which you were born matter, and why? How do different forms of economic production affect the distribution of resources between men and women? What generates and sustains power structures that are relatively patriarchal or matriarchal or mixed? We will examine a range of substantive issues that concern women in a wide range of societies to gauge which kinds of explanations are the most persuasive.

Course Requirements:
1. 3 short (3-5 page) papers, handed in at the beginning of any three weeks of the course, that grapple with the question posed in the syllabus.
2. A one-hour in-class midterm exam (30% of grade).
3. An 8-page take home exam.

Course Schedule and Readings:

Part I: Theoretical Lenses

Week 1. Introduction: Sex, Markets, and Power

Week 2. Why Sex Matters
Q: What is the strongest case for the argument that biology matters for human behavior? What is the strongest case you can make that it does not?

Week 3. Markets

*Q:* What is good about economic division of labor? What are the costs, and who bears them? How should we evaluate the costs and benefits?


Week 4. Power

*Q:* What does it mean to be politically powerful? How can women achieve political power?


**Part II: Substantive Issues**

Week 5. Hunter-Gatherers

*Q:* What can we learn about ourselves by knowing more about hunter-gatherers?


Week 6. Sex and Society

*Q:* What accounts for the similarities across cultures in sexual stereotyping and gender roles? What accounts for the differences?


**Week 7. Marriage and Family Structure**

*Q: Generations of feminists, inspired by the work of Friedrich Engels, have viewed marriage as a woman’s ball and chain. Evaluate this claim.*


**Week 8. Motherhood** *Note: Midterm exam this week.*

*Q: How and to what extent does sex affect parenting style? Does it matter?*


**Week 9. Woman and Development**

*Q: Is economic development good or bad for women? What is the case on both sides?*


**Week 10. Woman and the Labor Market**

*Q: Where does gender wage inequality come from? What can be done about it? Evaluate the consequences of different solutions.*

• Margarita Estevez-Abe. 2002. “Gendering Varieties of Capitalism”

Week 11. Women and Politics

Q: Why are women underrepresented in formal political institutions? What difference does it make?

• Bang-Soon Yoon. 2001. “Democratization and Gender Politics in South Korea,” in Kelly, Bayes, Hawkesworth, and Young, eds., Gender, Globalization, and Democratization (Rowan and Littleman), chapter 10.

Week 12. Women in the Global Economy

Q: How does global economic integration affect women and men differently?


Week 13. Policy Prescriptions and Wrap up

Q: What are the trade-offs among different policy options? Devise a set of government policies and evaluate their distributional consequences.