WS 320-4 – Changing the Game: Women, Power and Politics

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Lecture: Wednesdays 09:30 – 13:20 BLU 10021
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Course Description:
The historical record of women winning in power and politics in Canada is mixed. Strong municipal matriarchal dynasties have existed (Charlotte Whitton in Ottawa; Hazel McCallion in Mississauga; Diane Watts in Surrey) but there have been few female premiers, and even fewer prime ministers (Kim Campbell still holds the monopoly), although female leaders of minority parties (NDP or Green) do well. Why? What are the structural, cultural and just plain tactical impediments to women’s electoral success? How do the sisters of the travelling pants (Hillary Clinton’s self-deprecating joke), the enigmas of Condoleeza Rice or the caricatures of Sara Palin in US politics obscure our perception of the game? In teams, this class will explore whether the rules of the political game are rigged against women, what is to be done (with thanks to Krupskaya Lenin, the forgotten bride of the revolutionary leader) and how formal politics may be eschewed for informal, extra-parliamentary social movements or the safety of satire. Space—that is, the geopolitics of gender and power—and Time—the generational debates between feminists and post-feminists in democratic theory—will be compared and contrasted. Students will become comfortable mapping the dynamics of power from the grassroots to the apex, understanding the basics of design in campaign communication and the joy of rhetoric in rebuttal to the F* word. Rather than a glass ceiling in politics, there may be leaky pipes: self-selected exit from political life. But the paradox is that if their struggle to get elected is successful, women are among the most satisfied of incumbents with their service to public life in Canada, even if they have to pay their tailors more than their male counterparts to groom themselves for victory.

Course Texts and Courseware:
Required Texts:


Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Voluntary political/social service 20%
Action Group presentation 20%
Media Monitoring/Public Dissemination 10%

Final Research Paper:
Proposal 10%
Final 40%

Prerequisites: 30 credit hours

THE DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN’S STUDIES ENCOURAGES CLARITY OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION AND GOOD WRITING. STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED ON THESE SKILLS IN ALL COURSES GIVEN BY THE DEPARTMENT.

IN ADDITION, THE DEPARTMENT WILL FOLLOW POLICY T10.02 WITH RESPECT TO “INTELLECTUAL HONESTY,” AND “ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE” (WWW.SFU.CA/POLICIES/TEACHING)