Gender and Development

POL 357/ SPI 314/ GSS 399/ SAS 357
Fall 2026

Professor: Tanushree Goyal

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Contact Information

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Office Hours: Book on Calendly.

Lecture hours: Monday and Wednesday 3:30-4:20 pm at A71 Louis A Simpson. The first precept meeting on Thur 10th Sep will be jointly conducted by the professor and teaching assistant.

Precepts: Monday 12:15-1:05pm RH 006.

Course Description

This course offers a comprehensive introduction to gender and development, examining the causes and consequences of gender inequality across diverse societies and over time. It analyzes institutional and policy initiatives aimed at understanding and reducing gender disparities, with particular attention to why some interventions succeed while others fail or produce unintended effects. The course is organized around two core principles. First, it emphasizes rigorous, evidence-based research which mainly uses empirical and econometric tools to analyze gender inequality and to assess the effects of policies and institutions. Second, it focuses on substantive questions of global significance and scale. By the end of the course, students will have learned how to use empirical evidence to understand gender inequality globally, and how to evaluate competing claims about its causes, consequences, and policy implications.

Email and office hours

You are always welcomed to **sign up** for an office hour, which is generally until 45 minutes before and until 1 hour after lectures on Monday and Wednesday. The link to sign up is https://calendly.com/tgoyal/15min. Please note a signup is mandatory.

In general, you should email me ONLY for substantive queries. For all logistical queries such as regarding canvas, accessing readings, class schedule, and a general first point of contact - please reach out to the teaching assistant.

Assessment

- Attendance is highly encouraged and almost essential for acing the quiz. Quizzes will contain some material only discussed during lectures.
- Participation (10%) - Beyond class and precept, attendance and participation in guest lectures comprises 4 points.
- Mid-term class quiz (15%) and Final class quiz (15%)- Pen and paper quizzes conducted in-person during lecture hours, containing multiple choice questions, fill-in-the-blanks, and brief 1-3 sentence answers.
- Take-home Mid-term paper (30%) and Final paper (30%) - Take home 2500 words paper described in course outline.

Note on quantitative readings

Some readings use formal economic models or advanced econometric methods. This is not a methods course. You are not expected to understand mathematical derivations or to have prior training in microeconomic theory, and we will not spend class time working through formal models. Instead, focus on the substantive argument and the intuition the model is intended to clarify. For example, in the household week, you should understand why treating the household as a single decision-maker may be problematic, what shapes bargaining power between household members, and how factors such as income, employment, property rights, social norms, or family structure may affect household decisions.

Similarly, you are not expected to have prior training in causal inference or to understand every aspect of the statistical analysis in a paper. You should, however, become comfortable interpreting the main regression tables and figures. Lectures and precepts will help develop these skills to the extent needed for the course: identifying the outcome and comparison being studied, interpreting the direction and substantive magnitude of the main result, and understanding whether the research design supports a descriptive or causal claim. The goal is to understand what the evidence shows, how it supports the argument, and what its limitations are, not to master the underlying statistical methods.

South Asia certificate & Economics Cognate

To earn South Asia credit/certificate, your mid-term must focus on a South Asian country. For Economics cognate credit, your final paper must go beyond descriptive evidence and include an additional section conducting observational analysis or hypothesis testing using

quantitative data. Alternatively, you may choose to replicate an existing quantitative study where data is publicly available, but the replication must include a clear and substantively meaningful extension.

Guest speakers

Fall 2026: The Fall 2026 course has three guest speakers. Our first guest speaker is Professor Jennifer Piscopo, Professor of Gender and Politics and Director of the Gender Institute at Royal Holloway, University of London. You can read more about her research here. Our second guest speaker is Professor Wei Ho, Mathematician and the director of the WAM program at the Institute for Advanced Study. You can read about her research here. Our third guest speaker is Professor Mona Lena Krook, Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University. You can read more about her research here.

AI use

Princeton has academic-integrity rules governing the use of generative AI, while instructors determine what uses are appropriate within individual courses. There is also no settled consensus about the most effective way to incorporate AI into undergraduate learning.

My approach in this course is not to police your use of AI. I am setting out below what I consider appropriate and inappropriate uses, but I will not use AI-detection tools, try to infer AI use from your writing style, or investigate whether a weak assignment was produced with AI. I will **grade** the work you submit on its intellectual quality.

This distinction is important. In my experience, inappropriate or unsophisticated AI use often produces exactly the weaknesses that these assignments are designed to reveal: superficial engagement with the literature, generic ideas, weak arguments, inappropriate empirical strategies, fabricated or inaccurate information, and verbose overdone prose that sounds plausible without saying very much. If those problems appear in your assignment, I will grade them accordingly. I do not need to determine whether they arose because you used AI or because you did the work poorly yourself.

Sophisticated AI use can, at this stage, produce much better work, and using AI well itself requires judgment and effort. But even when AI improves the final product, using it to perform the central intellectual tasks of the course can prevent you from developing the cognitive, writing, and critical-thinking skills that those assignments are intended to cultivate. Most importantly, it takes away the joy of creative struggle involved in figuring something out for yourself. Functionally, developing those skills is also what will eventually allow you to use AI well.

For that reason, I consider it inappropriate in this course to use AI to generate research ideas or questions; conduct literature reviews; summarize or rephrase scholarly work in place of reading and processing it yourself; develop arguments or hypotheses; devise an empirical strategy; interpret substantive findings; or write or substantially rewrite your assignment. These are the intellectual tasks I want you to practice yourself.

I am much more permissive about purely technical uses of AI. You may use it to typeset a document; make code more readable; check, debug, or improve code; or write code to download, clean, merge, and analyze data using an empirical strategy that you have developed yourself. You remain responsible for understanding and verifying everything the code produces. Coding is an important skill, but developing coding proficiency is not

a primary learning objective of this course, which is why I draw the line differently here. With every written assignment you will write a maximum of 500 words memo, and be candid in disclosing your AI use. Tell me what you used and what you used it for. If you have decided to not use AI in any form, you must declare that too. The basic principle is therefore: I will help you understand what kinds of AI use I think undermine the purpose of the course, but I am not going to turn myself into an AI detective. You are responsible for how you use these tools, and I will evaluate the quality of the paper that you ultimately submit. Below is excerpted from the university's Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities.

2.4.6 General Requirements for the Acknowledgment of Sources in Academic Work - As defined in section 2.4.7, generative artificial intelligence (AI) is not a source, since its output is not produced by a person. If generative AI is permitted by the instructor (for brainstorming, outlining, etc.), students must disclose its use rather than cite or acknowledge the use, since it is an algorithm rather than a source. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with and adhering to course and departmental policies regarding the use of generative AI. Inappropriate uses of the results of generative AI on any work submitted to fulfill an academic requirement, such as directly copying the output, representing output generated by or derived from generative AI as their own, exceeding the parameters specified by the instructor, or failing to disclose its use, would constitute violations of academic integrity.

Source: https://rrr.princeton.edu/students-and-university/24-academic-regulations

Course architecture and thesis

The course proceeds in two broad parts. The first examines women's political inclusion: how women gained political rights, why they remain underrepresented in office, what institutions such as gender quotas can change, and whether women's representation affects policy, legitimacy, participation, and political knowledge.

The second turns to the wider social and economic foundations of gender inequality, examining education and STEM, gender norms, household bargaining and unpaid care, violence, fertility, technology, and women's careers and labor-force participation. Across both parts, the course asks students to connect institutions, incentives, norms, and individual behavior to observed gender disparities. The course advances two central theses. First, gender inequality is not merely an abstract or normative concern: it is measurable across a wide range of political, social, and economic outcomes, and empirical evidence can establish both its scale and its consequences while helping us evaluate which explanations and interventions are most convincing. Second, political institutions and women's equal political participation are themselves central to development. Development is not reducible to economic growth; who has political rights, representation, and influence over collective decisions shapes the policies, institutions, and distribution of resources that determine broader economic and social outcomes.

Weekly Plan

- **Week 2 (Sep 9th) - Introduction to Gender and Development**
  - Sen, A. (2001). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press. Introduction and Chapter 8, "Women's agency and social change."
  - Duflo, E. (2012). Women empowerment and economic development. *Journal of Economic Literature, 50*(4), 1051–1079.
  - Browse: World Economic Forum. (2025). *Global gender gap report 2025*.

- **Week 3 (14th Sep week)- Why do women get political rights?**
  - How women got voting rights
    1. Teele, D. L. (2018). *Forging the franchise: The political origins of the women's vote*. Princeton University Press. Introduction.
    2. What early disenfranchisement reveals about the challenges of women's political incorporation in an improbable democracy: Shani, O. (2021). Women and the vote: Registration, representation and participation in the run-up to India's first elections, 1951–52. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, 44*(2), 228–246.
    3. Optional: Przeworski, A. (2009). Conquered or granted? A history of suffrage extensions. *British Journal of Political Science, 39*(2), 291–321.
  - Why do men and autocrats adopt gender quotas?
    1. Krook, M. L. (2009). *Quotas for women in politics: Gender and candidate selection reform worldwide*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 2, "The adoption of gender quotas."
    2. Bjarnegård, E., & Zetterberg, P. (2022). How autocrats weaponize women's rights. *Journal of Democracy, 33*(2), 60–75.
    3. Tripp, A. M. (2019). *Seeking legitimacy: Why Arab autocracies adopt women's rights*. Cambridge University Press. Introduction.

- **Week 4 (21st Sep week)- Why fewer women enter politics and what enables them to run for office?**
  - The scale of the problem: Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2025). *Women in parliament in 2025*.
    1. Fox, R. L., & Lawless, J. L. (2010). If only they'd ask: Gender, recruitment, and political ambition. *The Journal of Politics, 72*(2), 310–326.
    2. Piscopo, J. M. (2019). The limits of leaning in: Ambition, recruitment, and candidate training in comparative perspective. *Politics, Groups, and Identities, 7*(4), 817–828.
  - The most effective reforms: Gender quotas
    1. Hughes, M. M., Paxton, P., Clayton, A. B., & Zetterberg, P. (2019). Global gender quota adoption, implementation, and reform. *Comparative Politics, 51*(2), 219–238.

2. Besley, T., Folke, O., Persson, T., & Rickne, J. (2017). Gender quotas and the crisis of the mediocre man: Theory and evidence from Sweden. *American Economic Review, 107*(8), 2204–2242.

– The other effective reform: Local office. See: *Women's representation in local government: A global analysis*.

1. Goyal, T. (2025). Local political representation as a pathway to power: A natural experiment in India. *American Journal of Political Science, 69*(2), 516–530.
2. Iversen, T., & Rosenbluth, F. M. (2011). *Women, work, and politics: The political economy of gender inequality*. Yale University Press. Chapter 6.

– Optional browsing: Solutions with mixed success

* Candidate training programs and non-profits. See for example, Emily's list, Run For Something in the U.S; Renova BR in Brazil; Emerging leader's foundation in Kenya.
* Candidate collectives and political action committees. Read for example, One seat, multiple representatives? A novel political idea takes off in Brazil and Rep. Ocasio-Cortez Launches Political Group To Boost Progressive Candidates and optionally watch documentary: Knock down the house

Precept: Choose a country

- **Week 5 (28th Sep week)– How do women influence politics and policy?**

– Women act as role models and their presence improves procedural legitimacy.

1. Beaman, L., Chattopadhyay, R., Duflo, E., Pande, R., & Topalova, P. (2009). Powerful women: Does exposure reduce bias? *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 124*(4), 1497–1540.
2. Clayton, A., O'Brien, D. Z., & Piscopo, J. M. (2019). All male panels? Representation and democratic legitimacy. *American Journal of Political Science, 63*(1), 113–129. Optional followup: Clayton, A., O'Brien, D. Z., & Piscopo, J. M. (2026). Electoral gender quotas and democratic legitimacy. *American Political Science Review, 120*(1), 123–140.
3. Campbell, D. E., & Wolbrecht, C. (2025). *See Jane run: How women politicians matter for young people*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1.

– Women enter politics and advocate for women's interests.

1. Miller, G. (2008). Women's suffrage, political responsiveness, and child survival in American history. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 123*(3), 1287–1327.
2. Chattopadhyay, R., & Duflo, E. (2004). Women as policy makers: Evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India. *Econometrica, 72*(5), 1409–1443. Interesting to watch: Pahel - Women Leading Change
3. Betz, T., Fortunato, D., & O'Brien, D. Z. (2021). Women's descriptive representation and gendered import tax discrimination. *American Political Science Review, 115*(1), 307–315.

– Women build organizational capacity that changes how institutions work.

1. Goyal, T. (2026). *Representation from below: The grassroots origins of women's political power in India*. Cambridge University Press. Introduction.

- **Week 6 (5th Oct week)– Women's turnout is at par with men, what explains that evolution?**
  - Evolution of the gender gap in turnout
    1. In early Sweden: Boix, C., Magyar, Z., & Muñoz, J. (2025). Turnout, family, and gender norms: The political incorporation of women in Sweden, 1921–1960. *World Politics, 77*(2), 242–287.
    2. In contemporary India: Goyal, T. (2026). *Representation from below: The grassroots origins of women's political power in India*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6 (proofs available on canvas).
  - We have a guest lecture by Jennifer Piscopo on 7th October. Chapter 1 of her book is available on canvas.

  Precept - Course recap for mid-term quiz.

- **Week 7 (12th Oct week)– Women's engagement beyond the vote**
  - What explains women's political engagement beyond voting?
    1. When do women mobilize collectively? Baldez, L. (2002). Why women protest: Tipping, timing, and framing. In *Why women protest: Women's movements in Chile*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
    2. How matrilineality lowers non-electoral participation gaps: Robinson, A., & Gottlieb, J. (2021). How to close the gender gap in political participation: Lessons from matrilineal societies in Africa. *British Journal of Political Science, 51*(1), 68–92.
    3. Why gender gap in non-electoral domains persist: Prillaman, S. A. (2023). *The patriarchal political order: The making and unraveling of the gendered participation gap in India*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
  - In-class pen and paper mid-term quiz is held on 14th October.
  - **Mid-term paper due Oct 22nd 6pm ET**– Focusing on your country, describe gender gaps in political representation, using at least one and up to 3 original plots that demonstrate the point clearly and visually. You must discuss and highlight some variation - temporal, local vs higher-level offices, or geographic in your country. Use the readings to hypothesize or explain why these gender gaps exist in your country and discuss whether quotas and what type of quotas have been implemented in your country to address these gaps.

    Next engage in comparing your country. Describe gender gap in various forms of political participation, knowledge, or efficacy measures (women's electoral turnout (mandatory), participation in protests, political ambition etc.) in your country. Plot bar charts or maps to compare it to: 1) regional and world average (e.g. South Asia or Latin America average) 2) countries within the region (e.g., Nepal/ Bangladesh or Brazil/ Chile etc.) 3) cross-nationally.

Select three papers from the course-list or peer-reviewed journals on the topic of gender gap in women's political participation **in your country/region** and cite/ review how these papers explain the gender gaps you have plotted. The mid-term must not exceed 2500 words.

- Precept focuses on the mid-term assignment. Discuss gender gaps in political participation using online survey data tools during the precept, laying some prep work for the mid-term assignment.

- **Week 8 (26th Oct week)– Why so few women in STEM, why it matters, and what lowers access barriers.**

  1. Browse for background on gender gaps in education: Evans, D. K., Akmal, M., & Jakiela, P. (2020). Gender gaps in education: The long view.
  2. Leslie, S.-J., Cimpian, A., Meyer, M., & Freeland, E. (2015). Expectations of brilliance underlie gender distributions across academic disciplines. *Science, 347*(6219), 262–265.
  3. Cimpian, J. R., Kim, T. H., & McDermott, Z. T. (2020). Understanding persistent gender gaps in STEM. Science, 368(6497), 1317–1319.
  4. Koning, R., Samila, S., & Ferguson, J.-P. (2021). Who do we invent for? Patents by women focus more on women's health, but few women get to invent. *Science, 372*(6548), 1345–1348.
  5. Bell, A., Chetty, R., Jaravel, X., Petkova, N., & Van Reenen, J. (2019). Who becomes an inventor in America? The importance of exposure to innovation. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 134*(2), 647–713.
  6. 28th october - We have a brief presentation by mathematician, and and Director of the Women In Mathematics program at Institute of Advanced Study, professor Wei Ho on 28th October.

- **Week 9 (2nd Nov)– Culture and household**

  - What explains gender norms? Can policy change culture?
    1. Alesina, A., Giuliano, P., & Nunn, N. (2013). On the origins of gender roles: Women and the plough. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 128*(2), 469–530. Optional: Boserup, E. (2007). *Woman's role in economic development*. Routledge. Chapter 1.
    2. Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender & Society, 2*(3), 274–290.
    3. Bau, N. (2021). Can policy change culture? Government pension plans and traditional kinship practices. *American Economic Review, 111*(6), 1880–1917. Introduction and key results.

  - Households and bargaining power
    1. Browse: Our World in Data. Time women and men spend on unpaid care and domestic work.
    2. Lundberg, S., & Pollak, R. A. (1996). Bargaining and distribution in marriage. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 10*(4), 139–158.

3. Agarwal, B. (1997). "Bargaining" and gender relations: Within and beyond the household. *Feminist Economics, 3*(1), 1–51.
4. Iversen, T., & Rosenbluth, F. M. (2011). *Women, work, and politics: The political economy of gender inequality*. Yale University Press. Chapter 2, "The structure of patriarchy: How bargaining power shapes social norms and political attitudes."

- **Week 10 (9th Nov week)– Violence against women**
  - What is gender-based violence? What are the causes?
  - We have a guest lecture by Mona Lena Krook on 9th Nov.
    1. Krook, M. L. (2017). Violence against women in politics. *Journal of Democracy, 28*(1), 74–88.
    2. Htun, M., & Weldon, S. L. (2012). The civic origins of progressive policy change: Combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975–2005. *American Political Science Review, 106*(3), 548–569.
    3. Adams, A., Huttunen, K., Nix, E., & Zhang, N. (2024). The dynamics of abusive relationships. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 139*(4), 2135–2180.
       Optional companion paper: Adams-Prassl, A., Huttunen, K., Nix, E., & Zhang, N. (2024). Violence against women at work. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 139*(2), 937–991.
    4. Bloch, F., & Rao, V. (2002). Terror as a bargaining instrument: A case study of dowry violence in rural India. *American Economic Review, 92*(4), 1029–1043.
    5. Bhalotra, S., Chakravarty, A., & Gulesci, S. (2020). The price of gold: Dowry and death in India. *Journal of Development Economics, 143*, 102413.

- **Week 11 (16th Nov week)– Maternal risk, fertility decisions, and "Missing women"**
  1. Browse data on Maternal mortality.
  2. Sen, A. (1990, December 20). More than 100 million women are missing. *The New York Review of Books*.
  3. Qian, N. (2008). Missing women and the price of tea in China: The effect of sex-specific earnings on sex imbalance. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 123*(3), 1251–1285. (Read introduction only)
  4. Anukriti, S., Herrera-Almanza, C., Pathak, P. K., & Karra, M. (2020). Curse of the mummy-ji: The influence of mothers-in-law on women in India. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics, 102*(5), 1328–1351.
  5. Londoño-Vélez, J., & Saravia, E. (2025). The impact of being denied a wanted abortion on women and their children. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 140*(2), 1061–1110.
  6. Optional: Indian Matchmaking on Netflix, Season 1, Episode 5, 32:00 to 34:30

- **Week 12 (23rd Nov, single lecture class) - Is technology a girl's best friend?**

  1. How the Washing Machine Changed the World: The Far-Reaching Impact of Household Appliances, read blog here. The economist and author says the washing machine changed the world more than the internet, read here. Research on AI and women's careers is sparse and early-stage, and we will discuss it briefly; read about the global gender gap in generative-AI use here.
  2. Goldin, C., & Katz, L. F. (2002). The power of the pill: Oral contraceptives and women's career and marriage decisions. *Journal of Political Economy, 110*(4), 730–770.
  3. Greenwood, J., Seshadri, A., & Yorukoglu, M. (2005). Engines of liberation. *The Review of Economic Studies, 72*(1), 109–133.

- **Week 13 (30th Nov week)— Women's careers**

  – The evolution of women's careers in America and the impact of childbirth (I)

    1. Goldin, C. (2024). Nobel lecture: An evolving economic force. *American Economic Review, 114*(6), 1515–1539. and read/ watch: Goldin, C. (2020). 12th Annual Feldstein Lecture, "Journey across a century of women".
    2. Lundborg, P., Plug, E., & Rasmussen, A. W. (2017). Can women have children and a career? IV evidence from IVF treatments. *American Economic Review, 107*(6), 1611–1637.
    3. Kim, S., & Moser, P. (2025). Women in science: Lessons from the baby boom. *Econometrica, 93*(5), 1521–1560.

  – Explaining some of the lowest rates of women's labor force participation in the world (MENA and South Asia) (II)

    1. Browse, data story: World Bank. (2022). *Female labor force participation*. Gender Data Portal.
    2. Jayachandran, S. (2021). Social norms as a barrier to women's employment in developing countries. *IMF Economic Review, 69*, 576–595.
    3. Deshpande, A., & Singh, J. (2021). *Dropping out, being pushed out or can't get in? Decoding declining labour force participation of Indian women* (Economics Discussion Paper No. 65). Ashoka University.
    4. Bursztyn, L., González, A. L., & Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2020). Misperceived social norms: Women working outside the home in Saudi Arabia. *American Economic Review, 110*(10), 2997–3029. Optional: Bursztyn, L. et al. (2023). "How Are Gender Norms Perceived?" NBER Working Paper 31049 (2023).

- **Week 14 (Dec 7th)**

  – Dec 7 is the final quiz (pen and paper) will be conducted in this lecture. The material covered is from mid-term till date, includes slides and mandatory readings.

  – There is no precept this week.

- **Final paper due as per registrar's office on Sun, Dec 20 10:30 pm ET.**– Choose a clear research question related to one of the substantive topics covered in the course and examine that question in a country context of your choice. You may continue with the country you studied for the mid-term or choose a new country. At the beginning of the paper, clearly state your research question and indicate which week or topic in the course your paper speaks to. For example: Why are gender quotas adopted? What explains gender gaps in political knowledge? Why does women's labor force participation remain low? What explains the gender gap in generative AI or digital use, more broadly?

  Think of this assignment as a proposal for a junior paper or senior thesis, and as an opportunity to develop a promising and original research idea. You are not expected to complete a full research project. Instead, the goal is to formulate an important and well-grounded research question, situate it in the existing literature, develop an explanation for the outcome you want to understand, and use prior research and available evidence to establish whether that explanation is plausible and worth investigating further.

  Your paper should have the following components:

  1. Abstract (maximum 150 words). Clearly summarize your research question, argument or main hypothesis, country context, and supporting claims.

  2. Introduction. Introduce the substantive puzzle and state your research question clearly. Explain why the question is important and what makes your particular country or case useful for studying it. Briefly preview your proposed explanation and its placement in the literature, and indicate which course week or topic your paper engages with.

  3. Literature review. Develop a careful review of the relevant scholarly literature. Identify what existing research argues about your question, the main explanations or hypotheses in that literature, and what we know—and do not yet know—about the question in your particular country context. You should engage substantially with course readings as well as relevant peer-reviewed research beyond the syllabus. A good literature review should help motivate your research question and identify the gap, disagreement, or unresolved puzzle that your paper addresses. It should not read as a litany of broad-sweeping statements, but instead is analytically organized around your key argument.

  4. Hypothesis and argument/ supporting evidence. Develop one or more hypotheses that could explain the outcome you are interested in. Your hypotheses should follow clearly from your argument and from your engagement with the literature. Explain the mechanism behind your proposed explanation and identify its observable implications: if your explanation is correct, what patterns should we expect to see?

  Use prior research, publicly available secondary data, and other credible empirical evidence to assess how much preliminary support exists for your hypothesis. This might include prior research, survey data, administrative or electoral data, cross-national datasets, historical trends, variation in policy adoption across regions or over time, or other quantitative evidence available online. Produce some original descriptive analysis—for example, plots, maps, tables, or comparisons across time, regions, or countries—that helps motivate or evaluate your argument.

You are not required to conduct a causal analysis or collect original data. The purpose of this section is to ask whether the available evidence makes your proposed explanation plausible and whether the empirical patterns are consistent with the argument you have developed. Be clear about the distinction between evidence that motivates or supports a hypothesis and evidence that would be necessary to test it conclusively.

5. Conclusion and proposed research. Summarize what you have learned from the literature and empirical evidence. Explain what remains unresolved and what additional evidence, data, or research design you would need if you were to develop this paper into a full junior paper or senior thesis.

The strongest papers will therefore do more than describe a gender gap, policy, or country case. They will pose a specific explanatory question, identify a puzzle or gap in the existing literature, develop a theoretically motivated and potentially original hypothesis, and use prior research and empirical evidence to establish whether that hypothesis is promising. The objective is to leave the reader with a clear sense of what you want to explain, what your proposed explanation is, why it improves on or adds to what we already know, what preliminary evidence supports it, and how you would investigate it more rigorously in a larger research project.

The final paper must not exceed 3000 words, excluding the 150-word abstract, references, tables, and figures.