Gender in the Social Sciences:  
Political Science and Sociology Curricula at the Australian National University

Elizabeth Gerard

It is often assumed within the social sciences that, after decades of feminist scholarship and critique, gender is now being sufficiently addressed. There is of course a large amount of gender research and writing being done, but social science curriculum must also be considered. Gender is an analytical tool used to examine how assumptions surrounding concepts such as ‘women’, ‘men’, ‘femininity’, ‘masculinity’ and ‘sexuality’ operate within and relate to different aspects of life. Gender has been identified with feminist research but is overlapping rather than identical in nature. Feminist research critically assesses any established knowledge, concepts and institutions to reveal hidden sexual inequalities. The aims of feminism tend to be more radical and transformative than other paradigms. This research aims to assess the integration of gender perspectives into political science and sociology at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra, through the analysis of introductory course materials. The integration of gender and feminist scholarship in political science will be compared with the situation in sociology, to see where any differences lie. The expectation from previous surveys of Australian political science curriculum (for example that reported by Dudley and Palmieri in 1999) is that feminist scholarship remains on the outer, and is compartmentalised rather than integrated into the discipline. Available evidence from Australian sociology, such as the 2003 survey of most influential sociology books, suggests that gender perspectives and feminist scholarship are better integrated into sociology curriculum. In order to test these differing expectations against current evidence

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one introductory course at the ANU from each discipline was chosen for investigation, and
the textbooks, lecture material and assessment for each course were analysed to see how
prominent gender and feminism were in students’ introduction to the discipline.

**Literature review**

In Australia feminist ideas within the social sciences have been through a number of stages. The aim of feminist critique is ‘a radical rethinking of the constitutive concepts, practices and understanding of that field.’ The issue of gender, likewise, is not one that can be locked away in a separate section. It should be used as a constant point of reference and critique for mainstream thought: ‘one of the characteristics of feminist scholarship has been its capacity for challenging the constitutive practices and understandings of whatever field in which it operates.’ One of the achievements of the feminist movement within political science has been the surge of feminist writing on diverse areas newly defined as political. This is encouraging, but further progress must be made to mainstream such knowledge and have it acknowledged as an important element of the discipline as a whole. The inherent biases in mainstream political science come from the history of the discipline as ‘male centric’. It is hard to escape the influence of men and male knowledge within the discipline as men were the first contributors to the subject, and those initial paradigms still inspire research and debate today. Existing Australian research into gender has found that feminist ideas are being compartmentalised rather than properly included. This results in the curriculum of political science taking a similar male centric approach and presenting male knowledge as mainstream knowledge. This is not necessarily representative of the discipline, nor the diverse range of students who study it. Women must be presented as political beings, and their contribution and unique position within political science must be acknowledged.

In Australia female students are often the majority in undergraduate studies. However, this trend does not continue into women working within the discipline. This underrepresentation of women in political science has implications for the well-being and future prospects of female students. In 2009 female students made up over half of the undergraduate and

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6 Ibid., p. 536.
Honours students enrolled in Society and Culture disciplines. This figure is very different from the number of women academics in political science, which is only 28 per cent. 

Having role models within the discipline can have positive results for minority students. Alternatively, a lack of role models can make students feel that there is limited space for them in academia. The fact that female students leave study after completing masters and doctoral level study at higher rates than their male peers seems to support this point. This is a more subtle form of discouragement, but the discipline also includes overt persuasion against pursuing feminist scholarship. Early career female academics who focus on the area of gender often face profession stonewalling, such as the case of Carole Pateman, who was the most widely cited political scientist in Australia from 1971-1982, yet was repeatedly denied promotions to a chair of political science, even though one of the male chairs at the same period, was not cited even once. Such discouragement of a professional focus on gender within political studies continues today. In America Brandes et al found that at a doctorate level students ‘were dissuaded from doing dissertations on feminist subjects, either with the claim that the department lacked the expertise to supervise such dissertations, or with the threat that such topics would impair the students; employment prospects.’ The lack of female academics in political science will restrict the potential of subsequent generations of feminist political science scholars.

From the mid-nineties, at the international level, feminist scholarship became an established sub-field of the political science discipline. It is still largely absent, however, from the core of the discipline which still counts knowledge concerning and created by men. A survey of four prominent politics textbooks in the United Kingdom found that only 2 per cent of the content was concerned with issues surrounding gender, feminism or women. Feminist knowledge is being produced, and the position of women within political science is an issue that will be increasingly salient, so these findings are somewhat disturbing. Within the UK Political Studies Association (PSA), the Women and Politics specialist group is the second most active

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8 Ibid.
within the association, and in 2006 had approximately 60 members.\textsuperscript{11} Despite the increased presence of women in higher level academic jobs within political science in Britain, they are still discouraged from focussing on gender. ‘Senior academics have not been averse to telling them that they would have a \textit{better} chance of getting \textit{better} jobs if they worked on something \textit{other} than women and politics.’\textsuperscript{12} Whether from lack of interest or lack of resources, upcoming scholars who are interested in the role of women in the political sphere are being discouraged from studying the subject. This will further limit the knowledge produced on this area.

Research on gender and political science, and activism within this area has gone through a number of stages. Childs and Krook argue that within the British arm of the discipline the first stage exposed the biases of the discipline and critique the virtual absence of women from the ‘category of political actor.’\textsuperscript{13} The second involved the systematic analysis of women’s underrepresentation. The third and current phase is that of provides a feminist critique of the methods, concepts, institutions and processes in politics and its gendered nature.\textsuperscript{14} Some scholars suggest that rewriting women into the field is not sufficient (nor has it yet succeeded), and a radical alteration of the field is needed.\textsuperscript{15} This is especially evident in the case of introductory political science textbooks, where chapters on women or gender are added to the volume, but the rest of the book essentially ignores the issue of gender. While the official stance on the treatment of feminist scholarship may be one of integration in practice it seems to have been watered down to mere inclusion. Men are not seen as a part of the issue of gender as ‘gender was a characteristic reserved for women and not considered as a part of the overall construction of political life.’\textsuperscript{16} Adding feminist theory in a separate chapter characterises it as removed from the main political theory. Mere presence does not translate into an appropriate treatment of the issue. Jose et al find that feminist scholarship in political science texts ‘remains a subsidiary feature, more than an afterthought, but not quite

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\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 19.
\textsuperscript{13} Childs and Krook, ‘Gender and Politics’, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Sawer, ‘The Impact of Feminist Scholarship on Australian Political Science’, p. 559.
\end{flushleft}
the key thought. Feminist debate can strengthen and invigorate the discipline, however its underutilisation means it is not fulfilling its potential.

Gender has become an influential topic within sociology and has been increasingly mainstreamed. Initially sociologists interested in gender tended to ‘import’ ideas from feminist theory, however the interest in this field has now grown so much so that sociology-based knowledge on gender is now being produced and debated within the discipline. Now other disciplines such as political science look to sociology to provide frameworks and knowledge for approaching gender issues. Political science revolves around issues of power, while sociology is more open to knowledge drawn from those without, or with less power which is perhaps why it has been more receptive to issues of gender. Feminist scholarship in sociology has made significant gains, and produces important critiques of the discipline. However, the issues of gender that have had the most impact are those which are easiest to relate to, such as the sex/gender division and gender roles, while the majority of knowledge produced in relation to gender remains on the outer edges of the discipline. While the popularity of gender as a concept within sociology is encouraging, it has not yet achieved widespread integration into the discipline as a whole. There is a sense of disappointment in the extent to which gender and feminist thought is being used to rethink sociological canons. There has not been a transformative approach to the foundations of the discipline. Outside of explicitly feminist issues within sociology, the use of feminist critique is significantly lessened.

Despite its shortcomings the integration of feminist scholarship in sociology is often looked to as an example of success within the social sciences. Jose et al present it as more normalised and mainstreamed that in political science. From within sociology itself there are often conflicting views on this. Much like political science, sociology is founded on the work of men and the discourse is sometimes referred to as focussing around the ‘two Adams’,
Adam of Adam and Eve, and Adam Smith.\textsuperscript{23} Women have been contributing to sociology for the last hundred years, though it is said that their contributions are often ignored in the history of the discipline and subsequently the knowledge they produced has been subjugated. In terms of the teaching of sociology there is evidence of the compartmentalisation of gender, and of ignoring the feminist legacy. Despite caveats, the general conclusion of feminist surveys of sociology is that the discipline as a whole does incorporate feminist theory, but it is still underutilised.\textsuperscript{24} Amongst the social sciences, sociology could be seen as the best at integrating feminist scholarship, but further integration must be encouraged in order for it to achieve its potential. Sociology is more reflexive in nature than political science, however for both disciplines the achievements of feminist scholarship fall short of those imagined in the early stages of the movement.\textsuperscript{25}

**Research design**

This research is timely as there has been a certain amount of complacency about gender in recent years and a too-easy assumption that the social sciences are the most gender-friendly of the science disciplines. With the fire and passion of the initial feminist critique over, the radical development of a feminist perspective in areas such as political science has become less bold. In political science it seems generally believed that mere inclusion in the curriculum is enough to give students an understanding of the role of gender and feminism in the discipline. However, feminist scholarship seeks to question the established ideas within scholarship and to reveal the gender bias that is often inherent within such long-established disciplines. The trend of presenting gender and feminist enquiry within a single (and often disproportionately small) section of a course undermines the aims of the feminism. As introductory courses give new students a foundation to further learning, and an insight in to what is deemed importance within that discipline, it instils in their minds that gender is a side-attraction, not a contender amongst the main paradigms. It sends the message to students who may be interested in this area that gender is not a significant area of scholarship, and that future research or work in that area will not be viewed as legitimate by political science. In

\textsuperscript{23} Sasha Roseneil, (1995) 'The Coming of Age of Feminist Sociology: some issues of practice and theory for the next twenty years' p. 192


my personal experience in working on this research, when asked what was the focus of my research many of my peers would be interested until I mentioned the word gender, at which point their eyes would glaze over in a knowing sort of way. Academia has come to a stage where people assume that the gender question has already been answered. And there have been many advancements made that would support this assumption.

The research for this report was carried out from December 2011 – January 2012, under an ANU Summer Research Scholarship. The methodology was largely modelled on a study carried out at Newcastle University, which analysed the prominence of gender, women and feminism in introductory textbooks from across Australia. The study focussed specifically on the area of political science and highlighted the lack of importance placed on female scholarship. The authors targeted introductory textbooks as the medium through which a discipline is first communicated to undergraduate students. It sets out to discern who and what is valued within the subject. Textbooks can be used as a test for how feminism and gender are portrayed within the discipline. The 2011 findings by Jose et al indicated that hierarchy of political science scholarship places feminist scholarship at the bottom of the heap. This not only limits the knowledge of the student, but also the claims of the discipline as a science. By actively or passively ignoring feminist scholarship, political scientists undermine the characteristics of objectivity and systematicity that from the basis of their claim to a ‘scientific’ discipline. The approach taken in the majority of textbooks is an inclusion of gender, but not an integration of gender. This means that gender is presented to students, but within a separate chapter to the mainstream (or ‘malestream’) political science. Jose et al conclude that: ‘Despite the considerable feminist scholarship of the past 50 years, its presence barely impacts on the content of the discipline-specific knowledge base, even when the authors might have intended otherwise.’27 The presentation of feminist scholarship in this manner limits both the potential of feminist scholarship and the discipline itself. The discipline needs to employ a level on reflexivity and question why feminist scholarship remains on the outskirts of political knowledge.

Two introductory-level courses at the ANU were chosen as the focus of this research. As discussed earlier, introductory courses provide a broad introduction to the discipline and therefore provide insight into where gender and feminism fit within the discipline. Often it is

27 Jose et al. ‘Reproducing Political Subjects’ p. 545.
seen that gender is contained within a specific area of a course and separate from the main areas of discussion, almost as an afterthought, a token gesture to equality. The courses chosen for analysis were ‘Introduction to Politics’ and ‘Self and Society’, both typically taught in the first semester of the academic year. These would be the very first points of contact between undergraduate students and the subject. These two were compared to see if the claims that sociology provides a better treatment of gender was true and if political science could learn from it. The politics course describes its aims in the course catalogue as:

The first aim of this course is to introduce students to some of the key concepts in the discipline of Political Science: power, influence, authority, legitimacy, coercion, conflict, interests, policy-making, bureaucracy, political communication, accountability and democracy.

The second aim is to use these and other concepts to examine the major institutions of Australian politics, often in a comparative perspective. Students will explore the Constitution, Federalism, Parliament, Cabinet, the Public Service, the Electoral System, the High Court, Political Parties, Interest Groups, Social Movements and the Media.\(^{28}\)

The sociology course has this to say:

This course addresses the paradox that, although we are shaped by powerful social forces, we have a sense of ourselves as autonomous individuals. It shows how this sense of individual selfhood is of recent origin, associated with the development of modern society. It also explores how individuals confront unfamiliar institutional environments to show that the ‘sociological imagination’ can help us come to terms with every day experiences. Throughout the unit, we will use historical and comparative research in order to question the taken-for-granted assumption that the way we organise our lives is the ‘natural’ way human beings shape their interactions.\(^{29}\)

Due to the nature of each discipline the course structure for each was quite different, yet there were also several parallels. Each course is taught with two lectures and one tutorial each week. There are weekly readings assigned and students are marked on their tutorial participation where they are expected to reflect upon the week’s readings. Both courses set two essays as part of the assessment criteria. The content of lectures, course reading material, and design of assessment was analysed in this research.


\(^{29}\) ‘Self and Society’ ANU School of Sociology. http://studyat.anu.edu.au/courses/SOCY1002;details.html
In analysing the lecture material I examined the content, resources used and whether the approach to gender was integrative or additive. I applied the following criteria in generating my data:

- whether gender was dealt with throughout the course, or within one section;
- how many of the lectures mentioned issues of gender, feminist scholarship or women’s contributions to the discipline;
- how often was a female academic was quoted; and,
- how often a book or article authored by a woman was used as a resource for the lecture.

My analysis of the course texts is based on similar research done by Jim Jose and colleagues. The data considered for each course included:

- the gender of the author;
- how many sections, chapters or articles there were concerning gender and feminist scholarship;
- how many female authors were used in the bibliography, as a resource for the text;
- if the text included an index, how many terms were related to women, feminism or gender; and,
- whether the text took an inclusive or additive approach to gender.

The final level of analysis involved examining how the courses were assessed. The inclusion of gender in the assessment aspect of the course instils its significance to the discipline. There were some differences in the structure of assessment for the two courses, while each required a main essay during term time, the final piece of assessment for the sociology course was a synoptic essay, while political science course had a final exam. Assessment is how students gauge how well they are performing in the subject area and can also shape their continued interest in the course. The decision to include or exclude gender from assessment requirements can reveal how seriously feminist scholarship is taken within the course and discipline.

**Case study 1: Sociology and gender**

Sociology is often believed to be more inclusive and open than cognate social sciences like political science in regards to issues of both gender and feminist theory. This could be
attributed to the more self-critical nature of the discipline, in contrast to the comparatively less reflexive nature of political science. It has a greater focus on the production of knowledge and sociologists are taught to question commonly held beliefs about society and social science itself. Mainstream sociology began addressing feminist scholarship in the 1980s, and for this reason it is more generally normalised within the discipline.\textsuperscript{30} This case study, which analyses the curriculum of a first year sociology course at the ANU, examines the extent of this assumed normalisation.

**Background**

In Australia, sociology began appearing in the early 1900s, but it was not until the 1960s and the creation of the first sociological association in 1963 that the discipline began to take hold within universities.\textsuperscript{31} Before this women held quite an influential place within the study of sociology, as the study of social science in Australia grew out of social work and social welfare concerns. It is estimated that before the First World War, women constituted two-thirds of those working in the area of social welfare. Indeed the eventual professionalization of the social science owes much to the work of women such as Aileen Fitzpatrick.\textsuperscript{32} However, once the discipline achieved its goal of institutionalisation, women were slowly displaced from social science disciplines and the discipline was taken over by men, who held greater influence within universities. The professionalization of the subject also meant a greater focus on the academic rather than practical nature of sociology which alienated many women who were in the social work field.

Following the professionalization of the discipline the first official Association was established and initially named the Sociological Association of Australia and New Zealand, and was formed during a conference at the Australian National University, already home to the Canberra Sociological Society.\textsuperscript{33} The Association is now known as The Australian Sociological Association (TASA). Of the 28 Presidents between 1963 and 2006, only eight

\textsuperscript{30} Jose et al., ‘Hidden in Plain Sight’, p. 3.
have been women.\textsuperscript{34} The Women’s Section of the Association was established in 1976.\textsuperscript{35} Today two-thirds of the Association, which has over 600 members, are female (in 2011 the figure was 66.8 per cent) and in 2004 the most popular area of research interest amongst TASA members was ‘Feminism, Gender and Sexuality.’\textsuperscript{36} However while two-thirds of TASA members are women, this figure is not replicated in higher level academic positions where there appear to be equal numbers of men and women.\textsuperscript{37}

At ANU the School of Sociology is within the Research School of Social Science, which is the same School that houses the School of Politics and International Relations. As mentioned previously, ANU has had an important part to play in the history of sociology. Although there was no chair of sociology until 1976, the subject was offered to graduate students from 1961.\textsuperscript{38} The history of the School of Sociology provided by its website, describes how the discipline was first institutionalised at ANU in the 1960s, and was based on the study of ‘issues of inequality, stratification and the experience of migrants living in Australia.’\textsuperscript{39} The explicit focus of the School on inequality seems to indicate a favourable environment for the integration of gender theory and feminist scholarship. Today the School has earned international recognition, and was ranked 13\textsuperscript{th} in the world for the 2011 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings for Sociology.\textsuperscript{40} The School of Sociology at ANU is somewhat unique in that the majority of students studying sociology are also sociology majors. Elsewhere in Australia it is more common for students in sociology classes to be majoring in social work or nursing, which is a testament to the disciplines origins. The School consists of 20 academic staff, with an even mix of ten female and ten male staff members. The highest ranking female is Associate Professor, while there are two male Professors and one male Emeritus Professor. On their profiles, only two academics listed an interest in gender, and both were female.

\textbf{Analysis of the introductory course ‘Self and Society’}

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\item \textsuperscript{34} Germov and McGee, ‘Australian Sociology in the Early 21\textsuperscript{st} Century’, p. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 21.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Katy Richmond, (2005) ‘Sociology’s Roller-coaster Ride in Australia’ p. 62.
\item \textsuperscript{39} http://sociology.cass.anu.edu.au/
\item \textsuperscript{40} http://sociology.cass.anu.edu.au/node/110
\end{itemize}
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To gauge the position of gender and feminism within sociology an introductory course was selected in order to see how these issues are first communicated to students. The first course a sociology student will take at ANU is SOCY1002, ‘Self and Society’. As the title indicates it introduces the tensions between the individual and large societal forces, introducing fundamental theories within sociology and teaching the students how to critically assess the social world. It is taught by a male Associate Professor, who has taught the course since 2004.

This case study is based on the 2011 version of the course, which consisted of two lectures per week, plus a one-hour tutorial. The broad subjects covered in the course are; time, space, social division and inequality, education, research methods, sociological theory, deviance, social control, sociology of taste, sports and suburbia. The range of topics was chosen so that the students see how sociological knowledge and methods can be applied to areas that they can relate to. The assessment for the course is split between a tutorial exercise (10 per cent), a research essay (45 per cent), a synoptic essay (35 per cent) and tutorial participation (10 per cent). To establish the presence of gender or feminist scholarship I collated and analysed data on the lecture materials, the set readings, and the methods of assessment.

Considering the emphasis of the School on inequality, and the reiteration of this aim in the outline of the course, one would expect the course to accommodate feminist scholarship within the presentation of the discipline. However, the limitation of an introductory course such as this is that it must introduce historical figures and ideas that are often male dominated. Introductory courses aim to build a foundation of knowledge of the historical figures and ideas so that as a student moves on to more critical courses they have a grounding in the fundamentals of the discipline and understand the production of knowledge. SOCY1002 introduces significant figures such as Weber, Durkheim, Foucault and Marx, but focuses more on the application of sociological thought to more contemporary and Australian issues.

The assessment of the SOCY1002 course, along with the lecture material and readings gives insight into how feminist theory and general gender issues are presented to those new to sociology. The textbook used for this course is *Sociology: Place, Time & Division* edited by Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan. It is a broad introductory text specifically tailored for Australian university students. There are a number of areas within the textbook where gender
issues and feminist scholarship could be included. The structure of the book, and the range of topics covered convey to the student the areas of importance within the discipline. The glossary also proves an invaluable tool for students to find succinct and definitive meanings for key concepts. The index is another tool for readers to locate what are the important concepts, thinkers and issues. All of these aspects also betray the internal hierarchy of the discipline and which contributions to the production of knowledge are regarded as the most valuable. The visibility of feminist knowledge and gender issues within this environment both informs readers of their importance and for new students can shape their future academic interests.

There were a total of 84 contributors to this edited volume, 51 of them men and 33 women (60.7 per cent and 39.3 per cent respectively). While there may have been a number of reasons that there were significantly fewer female contributors to the textbook, the ratio between the male and female contributors is not representative of the membership neither of the TASA -which is mostly female- nor of the ANU School of Sociology, where there is an equal number of male and female academic staff. The book is divided into 4 sections, which cover ‘Place’, ‘Time’, ‘Division’ and ‘Conclusions’, within these 4 parts are 84 subsections. Of these subsections, only two are explicitly aimed at issues of gender or feminism, ‘Women’ and ‘Gender’, both of which are authored by women. There is another section titled ‘Men’, which unpacks different facets of Australian masculinity. The ‘Gender’ section does not provide an equal presentation, but focuses on the sexual revolution and the changing role of women in society. The ‘Women’ and ‘Gender’ sections cover very similar material and history. Following the main content there is a section on Key Theorists, which includes 12 male founders of the discipline, which is relatively unsurprising. The next part of the appendix is the Glossary which includes definitions for the key concepts. In total there are 164 entries, of which 7 refer to women, gender or feminist ideas, which is less than 5 per cent.41 Lastly there is the index, which contains 526 entries and of which 23 relate to issues of gender of feminism, again representing less the 5 per cent of the knowledge presented in this volume. While political science texts have been found to reflect the gender biases of the discipline, this text does not reflect the sociology discipline in so far as it is not representative of the women active in sociology, nor the strong interest in gender exhibited in the 2004

41 These were: ‘feminism/feminist’; ‘gender’; ‘gender politics of technology’; ‘gendered division of labour’; ‘masculinity/masculine’; ‘personal is political’; and ‘sexual revolution’.
TASA survey.\textsuperscript{42} Even though sociology is considered to have a better rate of female participation one still finds biases against the inclusion of feminist and gender perspectives.

In my treatment of the lecture material I considered how often the contribution of female academics was acknowledged, and the inclusion of feminist scholarship along with issues of gender. The lecture materials used were the power point slides created by the lecturer. In analysing the presentation of feminist scholarship I examined each slide as to what scholarly sources were being used and how they were being used. I used the same technique as used in ‘Hidden in Plain Sight’ to determine which sources to count. As I was reviewing lecture materials rather than texts, the ‘Cited/Discussed’ category was the most relevant. This was explained by Jose et al as:

someone named in the text for a particular writing/view, or was a source of a quotation used to support some point without further discussion of the cited author’s views, or where the cited author’s views were elaborated/expanded and used within the overall point(s) being made by the texts author.\textsuperscript{43}

Over the duration of the course 190 sources were cited or discussed. This excludes literary or musical sources, sometimes used to illustrate a point by making a reference to popular culture. Of these 190 references, 21 were female (11 per cent). While this is a low number, a positive aspect of the integration of female scholars is that they were not all localised to women’s issues, but were well dispersed throughout the course. While there is inequality in regards to the ratio of male to female sources, the female scholars are not being used solely to illustrate women’s issues. Women are seen as contributing to mainstream knowledge, even if at a lower level. The underrepresentation of women can also be attributed to the nature of the course, whereby the historical background must be explained to students, and unfortunately the history of sociology is a masculine one. Out of 21 lectures, none were aimed specifically at issues of gender or feminist sociology, however four lectures included either gender issues or feminist scholarship. References to feminism were located amongst other issues of inequality, such as; civil rights, race in Australia, and the LGBT movement. Again, there is an underrepresentation of this type of knowledge, but what is being presented is being integrated rather than compartmentalised away from the mainstream sociology. This being said, the underrepresentation of women cannot entirely be blamed on the gendered nature of

\textsuperscript{42} Jose, Jim, et al. 2011. ‘Hidden in Plain Sight: Women and the Political Science Curriculum’ p. 5.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 7.
the discipline or the gendered make up of mainstream sociological knowledge. Lecturers are not constrained as to the content of their lectures nor is there a shortage of knowledge produced by female sociologists, therefore the level of female scholarship could easily be increased. Also, two out of the four lectures that included gender of feminist scholarship were taught by a female guest lecturer, which is often seen as implying that ‘women’s issues’ can only be taught by women. While the sociology course shows integration, the level of integration leaves a lot to be desired. To use a quote from the lecture itself:

After decades of political action, feminist rhetoric and state and federal legislation promising equality, women were entitled to think things would be a little easier in the early 21st century than they had been a generation ago. Yet, although the language of equality is still used, and despite the success of so many individual women, the actual experience of far too many women in Australia today suggests that the promise of equality has not been met. Sadly, we are actually going in the opposite direction.44

Despite the poor gender profile, female students still respond well to the course, with the class made up of approximately 75 per cent female students.45 In the area of assessment feminist critique is encouraged and room for inquiry into issues of gender is accommodated. The major pieces of assessment are the research essay and the synoptic essay. The research essay presents the students with five essay topics to choose from, including ‘Despite decades of equal opportunity legislation, women still earn less than men. What social forces reproduce this gender inequality?’ which refers to gender explicitly and ‘Australia is often portrayed as an egalitarian society. Choose a specific social group in contemporary Australia and examine whether it gets a ‘fair go’?’ which provides the scope for feminist critique.46 Students respond well to these topics, and approximately a quarter choose the explicitly gender based question.47 Likewise the synoptic essay allows room for scope by asking students to draw on all areas of the course, to ‘Critically assess the following claim by Brenton Prosser: ‘Our sense of ‘self’ is a social product’.‘48 The inclusion of gender and the encouragement of feminist critique in assessment is essential. Students often consider the knowledge that is being tested as the most valuable kind, therefore by assessing the students’ knowledge of gender and feminism its place within the discipline is validated.

45 http://arts.anu.edu.au/sss/greig/selfandsociety/
46 http://arts.anu.edu.au/sss/greig/selfandsociety/
47 This is an estimation made by the lecturer; he did not have access to the actual data.
48 http://arts.anu.edu.au/sss/greig/selfandsociety/
While gender and feminist scholarship may not be integrated to a high level, it seems that the nature of the discipline and the structure of assessment allows students to develop an independent interest in gender issues. This could be further encouraged by a more consistent integration of female scholars within course material.

Case Study 2: Political Science and Gender

Feminist scholars in political science have made significant contributions to the discipline in the last 30 years, not only in regards to issues of gender but also through critiques of mainstream political science. The contributions to mainstream debates continue to be ‘one sided’, and the potential for transformation in the discipline is still not being addressed. The knowledge and tools produced by feminist thought has been embraced by some areas of political science but remain ignored by other mainstream fields such as public policy and administration. The analysis of the introductory political science course aims to reveal how feminist scholarship and issues of gender are communicated to students during their first experience of the discipline.

Background

Political science in Australia can be traced back to 1855, but the discipline truly began to come into its own following the Second World War. After the war there was a greater interest in the social sciences and an emphasis on nation-building. The Australian Political Science Association (APSA) was established in 1951, after a seminar at ANU to mark the jubilee of federation. The current membership of the Association is around 300 and still growing. Since 1979 there has been a Women’s Caucus of the Australian Political Studies Association (APSA). One of the early achievements of the Women’s Caucus was in regards to the teaching of political science, with an APSA commitment to promoting a

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49 Brennan and Chappell, ‘Women, Gender and the ’ p. 346.
A Women and Politics Prize was set up by Marian Sawer in 1981 to celebrate the contribution of exceptional feminist scholarship, and is open to both sexes. In 2008 a study carried out by the APSA showed that out of the 29 universities in Australia that teach political science there were 253 male academics and 108 females (70.1 per cent and 29.9 per cent respectively). This underrepresentation of women is slightly more apparent when looking at the gender division amongst higher academic positions (in this case Professors and Associate Professors) where there were 104 males and only 36 females at the time of the 2008 survey.

Political Science began its life at ANU with the creation of the Department of International Relations in 1949. Currently the School of Political Science and International Relations has 28 academic staff, 21 of which are men and 7 of which are women. The female staff members include one Emeritus Professor, two Senior Lecturers, three lecturers, and one Post-Doctoral Fellow. The male staff members include one Emeritus Professor, one Research Fellow, four Readers, six Professors, one Associate Professor, one Senior lecturer, and seven Lecturers. The inequality of women at the professoriate level is also reflected in other Australian universities, and is included in Alison Plumb’s research discussed earlier. Out of the eight departments analysed in her survey, ANU ranked 7th in regards to gender equality in Australian political science departments. The structure and content of courses are left to individual lecturers, though they must of course comply with various university guidelines. APSA policy on the integration of gender into curriculum does not seem to have been translated into any official policy in regards to the design of curriculum in political science departments, including the ANU.

**Analysis of the introductory course ‘Introduction to Politics’**

The first year course chosen for this research was POLS1002, ‘Introduction to Politics’. It is taught in the first trimester and is typically the first lecture a political science student will encounter. The aims of the course are set out as:

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55 Ibid., p. 558.
56 Ibid., p. 556.
58 Ibid., p. 21.
The first aim of this course is to introduce students to some of the most important concepts in the discipline of Political Science, including power, influence, authority, legitimacy, coercion, conflict, policy-making, bureaucracy, nationalism and democracy. The second aim is to use these and other concepts to examine the major institutions of Australian politics, often in a comparative perspective. Students will explore the Constitution, the Executive, the Parliament, the High Court, political parties, electoral systems, interest groups, social issues and the media.60

While there is a significant emphasis on the technical and practical aspects of Australian politics, there is also an emphasis on the theory and history of the discipline. The course is unique in that it is ‘team-taught’, meaning that various lecturers within the school deliver the different section of the course depending on their specialty. In 2011 the course was convened by a female senior lecturer and was taught by eight male lecturer and two female lecturers (including the convenor).

The structure of the 2011 course was two lectures a week with an additional hour-long tutorial. The tutorials were run by two female tutors and six male tutors. The course begins with a broader introduction to the topic of political science before unpacking the institutions and processes of Australian politics. Being an introductory course much of the material aims at providing a foundation of knowledge about the Australian political system and introducing key concepts. The assessment of the course is structured around tutorial attendance and participation (10 per cent), an essay (50 per cent) and a final exam (40 per cent). The readings that support the lecture material come from various articles chosen by each lecturer (and accessed online), and the textbook Politics One, by Ian Ward and Randal Stewart. To examine the presence of female scholarship within the course I analysed both the online readings and textbook, the lecture materials and the assessment requirements of the course.

The written material for the course, in the form of the online articles and the textbook was used to further develop ideas introduced in the lectures. Through these texts the students are taught the important aspects of Australian politics and pick up more subtle cues about the discipline as a whole. Introductory texts provide a snapshot of the discipline and are often shaped by the inherent biases of the subject, and these biases are often accepted (and reproduced) without question by new students. There was a total of 41 online readings, and a

60 ‘Course Outline’ Introduction to Politics 2011, obtained from the lecturer.
total of 46 authors who contributed to those readings. Of the 46 authors, 38 were male (82.6 per cent) and 6 were female (6 per cent). None of the readings were specifically focussed on women in politics or issues of gender. The textbook revealed a similarly low inclusion rate for feminist scholarship. The textbook had two male authors and no other contributors. The structure of the book was set out in the contents section and gave insight into the presentation (or lack of presentation) of gender and feminist scholarship. The book was divided into 14 sections, with 124 subsections. Only one of the 124 sections made any specific reference to women, ‘The Changing Place of Women within the ALP’. The sociology textbook made twice as many mentions of gender related topics in the contents, although two mentions is still not a significant number.

There could be a number of reasons contributing to the lack of inclusion of women within this volume. The study of political science requires a certain amount of technical knowledge as to how political systems work, and in communicating this information there is little room for more complex or critical issues such as feminist scholarship. Likewise, an introduction to the discipline requires an understanding of the history of political science which has been strongly shaped by men and masculine knowledge. Often other areas of knowledge which are seen as ‘niche’ or specialist get left out of the initial presentation of the discipline as it is seen as more important to provide students with a strong foundation of the mainstream knowledge. This results in an overly male-centric presentation of the discipline. Unlike the sociology text, Politics One did not have a glossary or section on key theorists, so the index was the next area to be analysed. The index contained 180 total entries, and only the entry titled ‘Women’ referred to women, gender or feminism to any degree (0.56 per cent). The entry ‘Women’ contained 7 sub-entries which were spread over 27 pages of the textbook (out of 315 pages total). This accounts for 8.6 per cent of the textbook, where issues relating to women were mentioned, though it is important to note that this does not mean these issues were the main focus on those 27 pages. It is interesting to note that the textbook only included ‘Women’ as an index entry and excluded mentions of gender or feminist issues. It is a rather narrow presentation of the contributions that females have made to the discipline.

Over the course of the semester there were 21 lectures. From these 21 lectures, none were explicitly aimed at gender, feminism or women in politics. However, there were five lectures

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61 The sub-entries were: ‘in the ALP’; ‘in the APS’; ‘in the Liberal Party’; ‘in Parliament’; and ‘right to vote’. 
that made reference to such issues, always within a larger (and more mainstream) topic. All five of the lectures that mention gender issues were taught by men, which goes against the general trend, though is not surprising at there were significantly more male contributors to this course. Aside from the inclusion of ideas about gender and feminism I also considered who produced the knowledge presented in the course. As with the sociology case study I used the Jose et al ‘Cite/Discussed’ category to determine how many female scholars were referred to throughout the course. In my analysis I excluded political figures, firstly because they did not produce knowledge that shaped the discipline but were in this case used as examples of concepts. Secondly, because the course focussed on the history of Australian politics which is strongly biased in favour of men and would provide misleading results in regards to the academic contributions to the subject. Another difference in this course was that I did not have the lecture slides to work from for each lecture, but used the lecture summaries for some lectures that were provided online for students to refer back to. Over the 21 lectures, 71 scholars were referred to, which included 63 men (88.7 per cent) and 8 women (11.3 per cent). This is shows that for both the introductory courses, female contributions to content were very similar (with 11 per cent in sociology). Likewise the references to gender or feminist issues within the lecture material were of a similar level. Political science only just topped sociology with five to four respectively, however the reference made within the political science course were more superficial than those made in sociology. Both disciplines show a relatively low presence of gender and feminist scholarship within the lecture material, however there is evidence of integration, rather than compartmentalisation of gender.

The last aspect of the course to analyse was the mode of assessment. The largest components of the assessment were the essay and the final exam. The essay required the students to produce a paper of between 1800 and 2000 words on one of twelve topics provided. Of these twelve topics one asked the students to consider issues of gender; ‘Why are social movements important? Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of one of the following- 1) The Aboriginal movement, 2) The Women’s movement or 3) The Green movement.’ The presence of these types of issues within the assessment of the course validates their place within the discipline. The exam required the students to answer three short answer essay questions within a two-hour period. Again there were a total of twelve questions to choose from, with the lectures submitting one question for each lecture they taught. Unlike the essay assessment, the exam does not include any reference to gender or women in politics.
The low rate of the inclusion of gender could be attributed to the low number of female lecturers both within this course and the School itself. It has been noted that ‘male political scientists do not seem to have followed their colleagues in sociology or cultural studies in developing an interest in gender.’ 62 This means that when there are few female academics within a School, or when the female academics do not choose to take an interest in gender, there is very little chance of the topic being addressed. As mentioned previously there are three times as many male staff in the school, and the majority of the female lecturers focus on international relations as opposed to political science. Secondly, the nature of the course and the amount of technical knowledge that needed to be communicated restricted the ability for lectures to make more nuanced critiques of the politics presented. One could perhaps argue that the data from this analysis shows that women and gender are not additive to the mainstream material, but these issues are subordinate to ‘malestream’ knowledge. Equality has yet to be reached and transformation of the discipline seems as far away as ever. The presence of gender scholarship in political science is slowly increasing, though there is continued marginalisation. The convenor aims to create a more gender inclusive course for 2012, which is a positive step. The discipline as a whole could benefit from the continued enquiry into the gendered nature of the field.

Conclusion

This research reiterates the inequality within political science and the lack of inclusion of feminist scholarship into the mainstream of the discipline. It also shows that sociology provides a more favourable presentation of feminist and gender issues, but not to the degree expected. Both courses had similar inclusion of female scholarship in the lecture material, however political science used this as illustrative, while sociology used it to address issues of inequality. In both the course the written material set out for students showed an underrepresentation of women. While for the political science course, the underrepresentation of females could be attributed to the lack of female academics within the discipline, this is not the case in sociology. The School of Sociology at ANU has an equal gender distribution of staff, and the TASA has a majority of female members which makes the presentation of gender within this introductory course all the more unrepresentative. The lecture material shows an inclination in both courses towards integration, in contrast to the textbooks, which compartmentalise gender. While significant contributions to feminist knowledge have been,

and continue to be made in both disciplines, the structure of the curriculum must be addressed because it is providing students with an inaccurate view of the ways in which the disciplines are developing. The potential of feminist critique within the social science is substantial and if it was increasingly mainstreamed could create a more robust and reflexive discipline.

**Bibliography**


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