

POLS 2103 Australian Democracy: Comparative and Theoretical Approaches

Guest Lecture, 30 March 2009
Australian Democracy: A Feminist Perspective
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Lecture outline

Introduction

A thought experiment – encountering a politician on the street
How we all think about women and politics is important
Why is a feminist perspective relevant to studying democracy?

1. Women's different concerns and experiences

– issues, interests & welfare
Income, poverty, child-rearing, sexual assault and harassment,
cultural stereotypes
Issues for young women – expectations of equality
A fundamental failure of democracy?

2. Institutions and cultures of democracy marginalising women

– participation & political power
Representation of women in politics
Growth in proportion of women politicians
Why underrepresentation is important
– reflecting population, representing interests
Reasons for underrepresentation
– electoral, cultural, practical
Media portrayal of women politicians

3. Struggle for a place in public life and government response to issues

– social change
Major expansion of democracy in practice
After suffrage – 'using the vote'?
Women's organising, 1900s to 1960s
Women's liberation movement
Development of government responses & systems
Last 20 years – dismantling of government units
Continuing feminist communities

Wrapping up. Cartooning – Sexist or Not?

How we all view women, individually & collectively, makes a big difference
to politics