Description

As understanding of identity and bias increased, Kimberlé Crenshaw developed the theory of intersectionality which challenges us to consider various components of identities as having the potential to create overlapping and intersecting experiences. When an individual holds multiple identities that have traditionally been marginalized, any discrimination experienced will be different than someone without that unique blend of identities. To use Crenshaw’s initial example in 1989, Black women experience the intersection of both racism and sexism that meant their discrimination differed from the racism experienced by Black men and the sexism experienced by White women. Thirty years later, researchers still are coming to terms with what this means in the public sphere, but also in research which underlines the importance of thinking about identity more comprehensively and completely. In this class, we will begin by addressing the question of what intersectionality is. We will also consider how considering identity as intersectional alters our understanding of policy, and what policy should address. Importantly, we will consider how to incorporate intersectionality into a basic framework of research and analysis through a term-long project.

This class is a seminar, meaning that there is no point where I will lecture you using slides, white or jam boards, or any other meeting. A seminar means that you are expected to devote approximately 2 hours each week to learning information to discuss in our time together, and be able to ask questions about the content, thoughtfully discuss the material, and engage with me and classmates throughout the time. Some of the material will be articles and book chapters to read, but other material will include videos of talks or lectures, podcasts, and interviews.

Given that this is an unusual year, with an unusual classroom and learning structure, please pay particular attention to the syllabus and to the Canvas course cite. Please read it thoroughly and refer to it throughout the term. Students will be required to participate in asynchronous learning modules and expected to participate in weekly online discussions. Class communications will occur through Slack.

Objectives

There are several objectives in this course, but each goal is intended to enhance your understanding of identity, social structures and engagement with policy.

- Understand the definition of intersectionality and the theoretical origins and underpinnings.
• Identify why and how an intersectional approach changes our perspectives of politics and policy.

• Increase your process of reading, critiquing, and investigating social science concepts.

• Practice engaging why and how different approaches to social scientific investigation are meaningful to how we analyze and investigate politics and policy.

Policies

Commitment to learning:
The Role of the Teaching Team: By enrolling in this class, there is a mutual commitment between the instructor and the student. As the instructor, I am committed to being prepared, invested in the learning of all class participants, fair, and respectful. I will respond to questions electronically within a 48 hour time frame, and written assignments within 7 days. I am committed to giving you what you need to fulfill the course objectives.

The Role of the Student: As a student enrolled in this class, you are agreeing to (1) show up, (2) adequately prepare for and participate in class discussion, (3) ask questions when you are confused or need help, (4) be respectful of me, guest speakers, and fellow students, (5) comply with class policies or understand the consequences of not doing so, and (6) abide by the Northwestern guidelines for academic integrity (see below).

Academic Integrity and Honor Code:
Plagiarism and cheating are not tolerated in any form. If you are uncertain what constitutes plagiarism, please ask. All quotations, data, and ideas taken from other work (even if they are not quoted) must be cited. This means, if the information is not common knowledge, you must attribute the source from which you learned that information. There are serious consequences for intellectual theft as students (and in real life, Google: John Walsh, Montana). It always works in your favor to be overly cautious here. Please see the Northwestern Academic integrity guidelines (http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/) for more information about what plagiarism is, how to prevent cheating in your own work, and other types of honor code violations.

Academic Accommodations:
If you have physical, temporal, or social needs that prevent you from fully participating in this class, please make arrangements as soon as possible. These can include learning disabilities, inability to afford the text or the poster, or events that conflict with scheduled class time. Please contact AccessibleNU (https://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/), the office charged with ensuring appropriate accommodations for all students. Their information, pulled directly from their website, is below:

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from
AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

If for any reason, you feel that your needs cannot be addressed by AccessibleNU, please talk to me about what you need. I am committed to making this class a productive learning environment that is accessible to every class participant.

Late policy:

Recognizing that there is a lot of uncertainty in the world right now and that we all have full plates, my policy on late assignments is going to assume that we are all doing our best to get our work done. There will be no grade reduction for submitting assignments late, but assignments will not be grade 5 calendar days after the original due date because the I will need to grade all the assignments as close as possible to each other (both for fairness to their other commitments and to create consistent grading).

Recording

Portions of this class may be recorded by the instructor for educational purpose and available to the class during the quarter. If you think you will need recordings, please let me know, and I will communicate how you can access the recordings. Portions of the course that contain images, questions or commentary/discussion by students will be edited out of any recordings that are saved beyond the current term.

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact AccessibleNU. Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University’s Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

Good Citizenship:

Guest Speakers: There will be several guest speakers in this class. All speakers are experts on identity and intersectionality, have contributed work that is immensely valuable to their respective fields, and deserve our full attention as honored guests in our virtual classroom. Treating them with respect means that you need to be present and attentive during their presentations, ready to engage by asking questions, and show up to class during their presentations.

Commitment to Inclusivity: Although we will not occupy a physical space, we will strive to maintain an inclusive and respectful environment. One of the most important learning objectives of this class is to integrate the research we discuss with the world around us. The diversity within this classroom, and in communities that we will discuss, may be reflected by differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, economic background, political party, etc. In this
class, we are committed to the respectful discussion of ideas and differences. Criticizing ideas and conclusions about observations is permitted; criticism of individuals and groups for having those ideas is not. Classroom discussions must be tolerant and a safe space to learn about difficult histories and concepts and to respectfully increase our own knowledge and empathy. At the same time, anti-Blackness, Indigenous erasure, stereotypes, racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, ethnocentrism, ableism etc. will not be permitted in any form.

**Zoom Class and Slack Discussions:** Since we are introducing technology into our classroom, please be mindful that our commitment to inclusivity extends to our use of that technology. Discussions on Slack channels, Zoom break out rooms, and through chats must conform with the same expectations of inclusivity and respectability as in full class sessions. Although if you need to have your screen off for any reason I will be understanding, but since this is a very small class, I do ask that you leave your screen on if possible. Regardless of your screen being off or on, you need to indicate that you are present and participate through reactions, chat, and comments.

**Class in a Pandemic:** As you are well aware, our learning continues in very different circumstances and environments. All of us are dealing with additional stress and anxiety. First, I would like to encourage us all to be as kind and compassionate as we can to one another and enter conversations with grace. Second, I would like to encourage flexibility in all of us. I prefer safety of structure and routine, but I also recognize that we need to be adaptive to a world constantly changing around us. I commit to being flexible should life events arise that make it hard for you to keep up with the class. Such events might include things happening to you personally or things happening to family members. Please know that I want to do everything I can to support you. To do this, though, I need to know about a problem when it starts, or as soon as possible, not after it has already derailed your ability to keep up with class. Please reach out via email or Slack DM as soon as you start to find yourself falling behind.

**Assignments**

The assignments for this class are designed to give you an opportunity to interact with traditional academic work within course content, but in a way that allows you to convey information how you feel most comfortable. Assignments are broken into three categories: (1) class participation, (2) one content check-ins that functions as a mid-term, and (3) a final assignment around expanding our knowledge of intersectionality and politics. These are described briefly below. A full description and grading rubric for the main assignments will be distributed on Canvas in advance of the due date.

**Class Participation (25%)**

**Attendance (10%):** Since this class is a seminar, you are required to attend and participate in all class sessions. This is particularly important since we will have guests most weeks in the term, and one absence will critically shrink the size of our class. Importantly, it will be difficult to make up missed class sessions. If for some reason this feels particularly burdensome, please talk to me about it so we can strategize the best way for you to participate in the course. Importantly, while I will note if you are showing up and making an effort to engage in class discussion, I will not be evaluating the
frequency of your comments or assess them for quality: this grade will simply be given to you if you show up and engage respectfully.

*Questions (15%):* By Sunday at 2 PM, will be required to submit 2-3 well thought out questions for the class. In the weeks that we have a speaker presenting, you 2 of these questions must be with respect to the speaker content. You can ask questions to clarify what you have read, you can integrate larger questions on intersectionality and how it matters for their work, or about how current events matter in context of their work. Please keep in mind that all of our guest speakers are experts on their topics, and we want to value their time by signaling our interest and appreciation of their work.

*Content Check-in (25%)*

There will be a single content check-in that will serve as a midterm as well as an opportunity for me to ensure that you understand the basic components of this class. The check-in will ask you to respond to one question about intersectionality in approximately 2-3 single spaced pages, using what you have learned until this point in the quarter.

*Final Project (50%)*

The final project will be to contribute original knowledge to the study of policy using an intersectional lens. Students can choose to approach this assignment as an individual or in a group and can decide if they wish to produce original research, teach a mini-class, or a produce a policy brief (we will discuss on the first day). This project will be iterative and term long, with two milestones during the term that will serve as points for which we can make sure everyone is progressing comfortably and on track to submit and complete a successful final project. We will discuss the project throughout the term and have in-class working session where I can answer questions, there will be space to collaborate, and we can foster a community of learning and knowledge sharing.

*Milestone 1 (5%):* You will be asked to submit a 1-2-page description of a policy topic where an intersectional lens will change our understanding of the topic and how to approach it. You will need to not only have consider what topic you wish to investigate for the term, but also provide a plan for how you intend to complete the project that includes original sources through which you can further learn about the topic, and what you hope your final project could look like.

*Milestone 2 (10%):* You will be asked to submit a 2-3-page update of where you are on your topic. This means providing insight into your progress thus far by documenting what you have done. You will also be asked to provide a list of additional work for the project and what adjustments need to be made to your plan as you have learned more about the topic.

*Final Presentation (15%):* On the final day of class, you will be given approximately 10-15 minutes to share your work with the class.

*Final (20%):* The final project in its completed form will be turned in during the week of finals. Format, rubrics, and specific requirements will be contingent on your proposal, but you will be given a clear set of expectations following Milestones 1 and 2.
Schedule

The course schedule is subject to change. Please refer to the Canvas website for updates throughout the term.

January 11  
**What is intersectionality?**

Watch: Kimberlé Crenshaw's TED Talk  
Read: Combahee River Collective Statement

January 18  
**How do we understand identity and intersectionality?**


Guest  Danielle Lemi

January 25  
**Intersectional solidarity?**


Read: Hancock, A. *Solidarity politics for millennials: A guide to ending the oppression Olympics.* Springer, 2011., Chapter 2


Guest  Fernando Tormos-Aponte

January 27  
**Conversation with Bettina Love**
January 29

Milestone 1 Due (2 PM)

February 1

How does intersectionality matter for policy?
The border

Watch: RAICES. "Black Immigrant Lives are Under Attack."

Read: Hancock, A. *Solidarity politics for millennials: A guide to ending the oppression Olympics*. Springer, 2011., Chapter 5

Guest: Martha Balaguera

February 8

How do we measure identity?


Watch: TBD

Guest: Amber Spry
Guest: Desi Rodriguez-Lonebear

February 12

Content Check-in Due (2 PM)

February 15

No Class -- Group or Individual Meetings

February 22

How does intersectionality matter for policy?
Policing

Read: Fact Sheet: Native Women, Native Trans People, & Two Spirit People

Watch: [Murdered and Missing Native American Women Challenging Police and Courts](https://example.com)


**Guest** Jenn Jackson

February 27

**Milestone 2 Due (2 PM)**

March 1

*How does intersectionality matter for policy?*
*TBD: Environmental Policy, Reproductive Politics, COVID-19, or Education Policy*

March 8

*How does intersectionality matter for policy?*
*TBD: Environmental Policy, Reproductive Politics, COVID-19, or Education Policy*

*Presentations*