

Advocacy Paper: 70 points

Paper Content: The paper should have two parts. The first part of the paper should focus on the background of the *issue* that the policy deals with. Examine recent governmental activity on this issue, including a brief history of federal or state efforts to handle the issue and various proposals for action. A good analysis of the background of the issue will also include a discussion of what values current or past policies promote, which interests support or oppose current policies and if, and why, these policies are inadequate in dealing with the women's issue at hand.

In the second section you should describe and advocate for a specific policy in the issue area. Discuss why this policy is necessary and how it would address current problems or inadequacies. It may be that small changes to or reinforcement of the status quo policy is the best outcome for a particular issue area. If you believe this to be the case, make an argument as to why the status quo policy is better than a drastic policy change. Discuss the benefits of your proposed policy, whether it is the status quo or a policy change. Discuss how this policy should be implemented (at the federal, state, and/or local level) as well as who it primarily affects (all women or particular subsets of women – such as working mothers). Though you should focus on convincing the reader that your policy should be adopted, be sure to include some information about potential downfalls/shortcomings (and possible solutions) to your policy proposal.

Papers are to be your own work (do not work in groups) and will be evaluated along three dimensions: research and documentation, analysis, and writing. Because the ability to explain one's thoughts on paper to others is an expectation of all serious scholars, WRITING COUNTS and will be a consideration in paper grading. Your writing should use proper sentence structure and correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, typing etc. Nothing makes professors happier than not having to piece together sentences to form a coherent argument- it takes time and makes us annoyed! The more clearly you write, the happier the professor, and (often) the higher your grade.

Your analysis should be critical in your appraisal of other authors or current policies; I encourage you to include your own ideas or criticisms that others have not yet noticed or described. However, your analysis should also be well-developed and supported by evidence, accurate data, and/or a plausible example (See section on what constitutes good evidence). When presenting ideas which are not your own, you must use quotation marks and/or references to indicate that the idea is not your own. But be careful of excessive use of quotations; too many quotes often lowers the quality of a paper.

Topics: There are 7 possible topics for the paper. In order to assure that sufficient library sources are available to everyone, only a maximum of 5 people will be allowed to work on the same topic. You will be assigned to a group based on your preferences for a topic. At some point during the first few weeks of class, I will ask you to rank order the topics from favorite to least favorite. Your topic will be assigned based on your preferences and the demand for each topic. The possible topics are:

- 1) domestic violence
- 2) health care policy for women
- 3) women and poverty
- 4) employment policies (can include child care)
- 5) gay/lesbian rights
- 6) women in college sports
- 7) women in the military

Research and Documentation: A good place to start looking for materials is in the bibliographies of some of the required readings for this course. When you find a useful book, you should also check the bibliography to see what other materials are cited. Appropriate materials can also be found by checking the CAT or some of the Journal or Newspaper databases on LIAS. Numerous sources specific to the topic of the paper will also be discussed in the class on finding appropriate library sources. While I encourage you to use sources on the Web, be careful in using such sources. You will need to be selective in which sources you utilize (after all, any fool can put material – false or true -- on the web).

You could also consider gathering information by interviewing or writing to relevant activists such as interest group leaders, elected representatives, or information centers on public policies concerning women. There are many non-profit organizations and representatives working on policies related to each of the 7 issue areas. I can help point you in the right direction to find relevant interest organizations and show you how to search state websites for policy advocates serving in office. Interviews serve as a wonderful supplement to traditional research approaches and provide “real world” examples related to your policy. If you think you may be interested in contacting outside sources for information about a policy issue, please let me know as soon as possible.