Career Choices and College Strategies
For Women in Political Science

An Honors Thesis (Honrs 499)

By

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In 1998, Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox reported in *Women and Elective Office* that only 8% of Governors, 10% of Congress, and 21% of state legislators are female.

Does this statistic seem reasonable, considering the fact that nearly 50% of Americans are women? How can this be?

Statistics like the one above are numbers that have a very powerful meaning for women throughout the United States. The area of political science is a specific topic of study that can be used to analyze the status of women in various arenas. According to Webster’s, political science is the study of political institutions, or the principles, organization, and methods of government. This seems like a very limited area, but in reality, a college major in political science can lead to various other careers. This major offers an analytical study of the way that society and people interact and work. Many colleges require one or more classes on international relations and the study of foreign governments within the study of political science. In addition to political science students, anyone who travels abroad could use this information. Political science also analyzes governments, which make the laws controlling almost every activity and organization in the United States. Local governments set standards for activities such as education. State governments set laws concerning areas such as highways. Federal governments delegate activities such as Social Security and Medicaid. These three areas of government affect the everyday lives of each person in the nation. Additionally, political science focuses on the ideas of compromise and conflict resolution. Specifically, these concepts apply to bills proposed to state or federal Congresses and the interactions between state, federal, and international governments. These topics can apply to the lives and careers of women, during which they are continually interacting...
with other coworkers, clients, family, and friends. A major in political science also offers many other skills that can apply to every career in the world.

In addition to the importance of political science studies for society, concentration on specific areas within the major are very valuable. For example, the twentieth century civil rights and women's movements have helped to make the study of women's and non-majority issues acceptable. Furthermore, a sense of pride (through the securing of equal rights) has slowly been instilled in women and non-majority groups. Progress in society is making it easier for people to celebrate their diversity while remaining part of the melting pot of the United States. Because of these changes, women feel empowered to help propel other women into their careers and save them the troubles that earlier women have suffered. It is important and vital that women highlight the achievements of other females and not feel threatened by their advancement. A web site or magazine article explaining the path to be taken to pursue a certain career can be very helpful to women around the world. These types of activities such as information and experience sharing should be a priority to every woman. These actions are examples of behaviors that are necessary to continue the advancement of women as a whole.

As the twenty-first century closes in on everyone around the world, technology has allowed the Internet to grow into one of the largest forms of media. Almost every hotel, library, school, and home in the United States has Internet capability. This global network of communication and information sharing is currently needed in most careers that require higher education. Understanding the way in which the Internet has invaded our lives, is key to choosing a topic of research or communication of that information. In this new world of connectedness, a thesis topic designed to reach people around the globe
is an excellent idea for current and future collegiates. By choosing to design a web site, many advantages are automatically available.

First of all, this form of media is very easily accessed. Many women around the United States and the World are able to log on to the web site from whatever city, state, or country they reside in. They can read about political science in their homes and then go to classes and inform their friends. Their friends can then go to a computer lab on their campus and download or read the information for themselves. These opportunities are open to women of all ages who might be considering political science or are currently pursuing the field.

Secondly, the Internet allows the information to be updated immediately and at any time of the day or night. Books, magazine articles, and newspaper articles are forms of communication that, once they have been published, can never be changed. Revisions can be printed but they will never effect the original document. A web site, however, can constantly be modified for updated information, for broadening the categories, or for personal interviews of women in their fields. This advantage of the Internet is an excellent reason why web sites have become so popular.

Lastly, by using this type of media an author can demonstrate his or her ability to work with technology and revolutionary ideas. For example, learning how to use HTML documents to create web sites shows an author’s versatility and ability to work with new mediums. Adapting to change is an attribute that every woman needs to succeed in a world driven by constant change.

Understanding the importance of the study of political science, the current issues important to women, and the new age of technology are keys to designing a useful
research project. By knowing and utilizing the ideas that accompany these three areas, a
web site concerning career choices and college strategies for women should be highly
effective and useful to women around the world.
Career Choices and College Strategies for Women in Political Science

Today is the FIRST day of your future!

Are you prepared to take charge of your life and choose an exciting and challenging field of study? Have you considered political science?

For many years, this has been an area of study that few women have felt comfortable entering. As the twenty-first century opens up technology and information, it has become easier for women to get help and advice in choosing a future path. The goal of this site is to give women information, suggestions, and possible contacts in the area of political science.

This field offers many available avenues for women to excel in various careers. Political science can propel women into:

1. Journalism
2. Government Service
3. Law
4. Politics

Within this site, there are also ideas concerning achievement and leadership for women in college. Hopefully the information contained will help women walk an easier mile than the ones that have gone before.

Consider the following links:
Ball State University
Political Science and Politics
Women & Politics

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http://www.yourfreehost.com/violetbsu/
The Art of Choosing a Major

There IS a skill to planning a rich future.

By following several of the guidelines listed below you can find your path and excel in that area.

Plan Ahead:
- Admit to your strengths and weaknesses. (What did you like in high school?)
- Set your priorities. (How long are you willing to go to school?)
- Base your plans on realistic assessment of your life. (Accept mistakes and failures.)

Define Your Interests, Abilities, and Goals:
- Survey the things that you really like to do.
- Keep asking questions. (Seek college career centers.)
- Overcome obstacles. (It's ok to be afraid.)
- Define desired income, life goals, time needed, etc.

Match Your Interests with a Career:
- Relax. (There are a million jobs and careers.)
- Explore. (Read about jobs, talk to people that you know in these fields.)
- Commit. (If you haven't chosen a field, then commit to continue searching and exploring.)
- Chart. (What activities have you done? Have you volunteered before? Where do you want to go?)
- Take action. (Declare a major and look into extracurricular activities.)

ALSO
- Take at least one elective per semester.
- Don't enter college thinking that your life is set in stone. There are always surprises!
- Participate outside of the classroom.
- Volunteer.
- Be open to leading and following.
- Have FUN!

Want to find out for yourself? (See source #1)
The Power of Women

Leadership = Competent Self + Creative Aggression + Woman Power

**Competent Self**

Know who you are at all times. This idea is not defined by situations, people, or events. Do not change the way that you act for other people. You can take risks without feeling threatened. See your life full of possibilities rather than obstacles.

**Creative Aggression**

This encompasses taking initiative, leading others, and speaking out. You must feel comfortable with aggression and competitiveness. U.S. culture tends to say that women shouldn’t be competitive but rather nurturing. Do not feel guilty for excelling and competing for work.

**Woman Power**

This idea is used to make society a better place. Advancing a specific agenda is key to working on solutions for society and your life. "Woman Power" promotes social awareness, environmental issues, culture as a whole, etc.

**Power**

= is the ability to make people’s lives better

= the ability to get things done

**Empowering Messages**

- You can do anything you want.
- You can take risks.
- You are loved and special.
- You can use and enjoy your Creative Aggression.
- You are entitled to dream of greatness!

Who wrote about the power of women? (See Source 6)
Informing the World

Is your desire to educate the public via magazines, newspapers, radio, or television?

If you answered YES to this question then the journalism side of political science is the concentration for you.

Since the turn of the century, our nation has grown into a generation of media learning. During the first part of the century, newspapers, magazines and radio were the main form of national information to our homes. As time passed these forms of media became available to almost all homes. Furthermore, television has been the major entertainer of our youth since the 1930's and now the Internet has fallen into the media genre. It’s no wonder that with all the media encompassing our everyday lives, journalism (communication and media) is one of the fastest growing professions in the U.S.

The overall journalism job outlook is as follows:

Competition for Jobs:

Despite the fact that the television industry is constantly growing through cable and satellite, the competition is keen. College training and experience are highly encouraged among the technical and regular aspects of this area. In the area of magazines, the most competition will be in editorial departments where experience will most likely be required. Sales, circulation, and production are less competitive and have more opportunities for those without degrees. Concerning the area of newspapers, the most competition will be with weekly ones rather than dailies. Additionally, larger cities have a higher level of competition over small town papers. Circulation, distribution, and sales are also much easier to break into.

How to Acquire a Job:

The corporate offices of most major radio and television stations are in New York, NY and Los Angeles, CA. News bureaus and soap operas are usually in New York, while most network entertainment programming is on the West Coast. Most of the major stations also have affiliates in Chicago (KABC-ABC, KNBC-NBC, and KCBC-CBS); Philadelphia (KYW-NBC, WCAU-CBS, and WPVI-ABC); Boston (WBZ-NBC, WCBV-ABC, and WNEV-CBS), etc. Your best chance is to look into internships at local places to gain experience. Try to network through your internships to gain contact people. For the area of magazines, attending a summer publishing institute such as New York Univ. or Radcliffe College/Harvard Univ. can be the most help. Also an outstanding resume and letter sent to the editor or head of your desired department are the best ideas. For newspapers, your best opportunity is to look for a summer job or internship at your local paper. This is a great place to gain experience and find contacts into other areas. For most major urban papers years of journalism experience is required.

http://www.yourfreehost.com/violetbsu/journ.html

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Salaries:

For many radio personnel the salaries are between $20,000-25,000 depending highly on local versus national. Usually, editors and directors will have the highest salaries. For television the salaries are at around $30,000 for a producer or reporter while anchors usually make twice that. For magazines, the circulation staff make around $20,000, while the director can earn $40,000. Sales associates usually make between $20,000-40,000, while the director’s salary usually doubles that. The department editor usually makes around 40,000, while the executive editor earns twice the department’s salary. Newspaper salaries tend to have the greatest variation depending on whether it is a daily or weekly and what state and city it is located in. The highest salaries belong to those staffs that belong to the Newspaper Guild, which sets a minimum salary for different jobs.

What are my chances in this field?

I need to know where this information came from? (See source#2)
Does Journalism Hold Hope for Women?

Statistics

- In 1971 about 1/5 of the people in Journalism were women, in 1992 about 1/3 of the profession were women.
- In 1992 83% of the women in Journalism had a college education or higher.
- In 1991 male Journalists made almost $6,500 more a year than their female counterparts.
- 1997 statistics show the income gap between men and women as slowly decreasing.
- From the 1980's to the 1990's, women lost ground in television from 1/3 of the workers to 1/4 of the people in journalism.

Why are women different in journalism?

- Story decisions—Women usually interview more women.
- Editorial policies—Women often choose a different set of stories.
- Assignments—Women tend to cover society and culture issues rather than politic ones.
- Hiring—When women are hired, they are often thought of as too emotional to report or investigate the news. This is a stereotype used to hold women back from traditionally male-dominant categories in journalism.

I'm curious about these facts. (See Source 6)
Servicing A Nation

Do you have the desire to contribute to the nation, your state, or your community?

If you answered YES to this question than government service might be the avenue for you.

Millions of people work with state, local, and the federal government each year. Almost every profession that exists in the private sector is also found in the public sector. For these workers, the government can offer great on-the-job experience, great benefits, job security and quick elevation into management.

**The overall government services job outlook is as follows:**

**Competition for Jobs:**

Government hiring is greatly affected by political elections. Likewise, the desire for less "Big Government" means that state and local hire more often than federal. The greatest need is for individuals with advanced degrees and blue-collar jobs. Few opportunities are available for people with only an undergraduate degree.

**How to Acquire a Job:**

Unlike many employers, the government contains a great deal of red-tape and paperwork for jobs. Therefore, many governments offer aid for job searching. You will have to be patient and aggressive. Most state and local offices have a web site in which job availability is listed, applications can be printed off, or an address to write to for more information. If you feel more comfortable calling, most phone books have a state, etc information line that is toll free. For federal Jobs, the Office of Personal Management handle competitive services while some departments that hire under expected services have their own personnel departments.

**Salaries:**

Despite the fact that many government bodies don’t pay as high as private industries, they tend to offer nice benefit packages and job security. State and local agencies pay on a rating scale according to education, skills, and level of position. To find out the scales, you can usually refer to the agency’s web site.

For example: The State of Indiana offers:

1. 12 vacation days/year (increases after 5, 10, and 20 years)
2. 9 days of sick leave/year
3. 3 personal days/year
4. 12 holiday days/year
5. paid funeral, jury duty, and military leave
6. up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for family care, adoption, or childbirth
7. several health insurance options
8. state pays 100% of premium of dental insurance

and much more?

Where did the info come from? (See source#2)
Does the study of the laws governing our society sound fascinating to you?

If you answered YES to this question then the legal side of political science might be your area of study.

For many liberal arts students, the analytical skills, writing, and research studied in college are perfect tools to enter the world of law. For students that enjoy the dramatic elements of life, a legal career provides them a perfect opportunity during the presentation of a case. Corporate practice, government service, and private practice are three main areas of law for which students can pursue. For people that want high salary possibilities, challenging critical-thinking opportunities, and a wide variety of job types the legal profession is ideal.

The overall law job outlook is as follows:

Competition for Jobs:

The greatest amount of competition in law tends to be in the corporate market. Historically, businesses have depended on private firms to handle their legal matters. Within the last fifteen or so years, corporations have began to hire inside legal counsel. Economic reasons encourage businesses to hire inside because it is less expensive than private firms are. Government law is a confined area with little room for expansion. Politics tend to keep legal budgets low for state and local governments. However, federal international law, information, and communication law are rapidly growing areas (mostly due to the Internet). Private practice is an area that has always been very competitive. This type of practice is mostly a networking game and must be played very carefully.

How to Acquire a Job:

Large corporations generally have a very specific system for recruiting and hiring lawyers. Most companies will interview at colleges. Additionally, advertising openings in the newspaper is a strategy that businesses may use. Despite the possibility of finding a job in the paper, the best chance is to send a cover letter and resume to the head of the legal department. For federal government law work, many departments require an application be filled out and returned (i.e. the Department of Justice). If an interview is granted, they are usually conducted at regional offices around the country. For state prosecutors, they generally conduct interviews on campuses. Furthermore, city solicitors and agency offices follow this same recruitment practice. The greatest opportunity, though, is to send a resume and cover letter and follow up with a telephone call to that office. If civil service laws
control the city, be sure to take a civil service exam so that you can be ranked. For the area of private practices, the most important key for acquiring a job is graduating with excellent grades at a prestigious college. Large firms usually recruit from on-campus interviews. Writing letters to firms can also help you gain an interview. Law review experience and internships can greatly increase your chances along with networking through professors and personal references.

**Salaries:**

In general, private practices have the highest beginning salaries-around $45,000. Corporations have the second highest salaries usually ranging from $30,000-40,000. This range varies depending on the industry and the business. The lowest paid area of law is government. For entry-level positions, the salary is in the $20,000’s. They also tend to work very long hours and have a high caseload.

Curious about the data? (See Source #2)
Building A Nation

"I didn't select politics as a profession. It emerged out of my concerns for the city and the neighborhoods." (Source 4)

Do you feel the need to inspire laws for a state, federal, or local government?

If you answered YES to this question then politics may be the avenue for you to pursue.

In the world of politics, it is often forgotten that for every great leader, there is a great staff behind her or him. For each candidate that vote and propose laws, there exists a well-trained and educated staff which research, prepare briefs, debate issues, poll the public, and much more. Additionally, there are a large number of people that help to elevate each candidate to a government job through advertising, fund-raising, party organization, and networking. Whether you are looking for center stage or technical assistant, politics offers a fascinating world of compromise growth.

The overall political job outlook is as follows:

Competition for Jobs:

The most highly competitive jobs will fall under small lobbying firms that are highly visible. Likewise, federal and Washington D.C. jobs will have more competition than local and state positions. Sometimes, running for office in local elections only requires that you fill out a form at the courthouse because there are no other candidates. In Washington, however, the stakes are much higher and there is more money to be handled.

How to Acquire a Job:

Volunteering your services to a campaign or interest group is the quickest way to land a paid position. Start volunteering early in college and gaining connections during this time. Take an internship with your party affiliation or activist or interest group. Once you have proven yourself valuable, people will be willing to inform you of possible job openings. If you have not pursued an internship or volunteered write a clear and short letter to your perspective area. Legislators and political parties will advise you of contacts and entry-level positions. The key to politics is networking and contacts. Remember the people that you come in contact with during your time of volunteer work or internships.

Salaries:

Salaries in politics depend greatly on the level of office, the region of work, and the nature of the
work involved. For most entry-level positions, the salary is at or below $20,000. For mid-level positions such as state congressional staff, it is between $30,000-40,000. Higher positions are very rare but earn over $75,000. These salaries will vary greatly when working with a lobbying or special interest group.

**Curious about women in political office?**

I need to know where this material came from. (See Source #2)
Women in Elective Office

Statistics

- The 1992 American National Election Study found that most Americans believe that women are underrepresented in power. Additionally, women are more likely to favor other women.

- The NORC-GSS 1992 and 1994 found the greatest male-support for electing more women is in the Western and New England states. Also, from 1992-1994 the percentage of men that said it was very important to elect more women to office has significantly decreased.

- October 1996, statistics show that only 8% of governors, 10% of Congress, and 21% of state legislators are female.

Remember

- In politics, open seats are easier to win.
- Incumbency is the highest chance for a candidate to win. To become an incumbent, you must win an initial seat. This cycle contributes to the failing of women in office.
- The "pipeline" effect is the idea that experience and credentials are needed to get elected. If women cannot get elected because of this then they likewise cannot get experience.
- Social attitudes of femininity and power continue to work against a woman’s chance of equality in politics.

I need to know where this information came from. (See source 5)
Where does all that information come from?

1. **Majoring in the Rest of Your Life**  
   Written by Carol Carter  

2. **Career Choices for the 90's Student of Political Science**  
   Edited by Peggy Schmidt and Ramsey Walker  

3. **Have You Considered Politics?**  
   Written by Margaret Strachan  

4. **Women and Elective Office**  
   Edited by Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox  

5. **Women In Power**  
   Written by Dorothy Cantor and Toni Bemay  

6. **Women, Media, and Politics**  