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Closing the Gender Citation Gap in Peace and Conflict Research

Project Report

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Project Summary

Despite a steady increase in the number of women in peace and conflict research, works by women and minority researchers remain underrepresented in course literature and reading lists. This imbalance creates a ripple effect, as academic curricula play a crucial role in shaping the knowledge and perspectives of the next generation of scholars and practitioners.

Recent studies find that course reading lists feature significantly fewer female authors than male authors in graduate programs in both international relations and political science (two disciplines of which peace research is a sub-field) (Colgan 2017; Hardt et al. 2019; Jordan et al. 2009; Phull, Ciflikli, and Meibauer 2019). Studies in both the US and the UK find that female authors make up approximately 20% or less of graduate reading lists (Colgan 2017; Hardt et al. 2019; Phull, Ciflikli, and Meibauer 2019). One UK study found that gender bias was particularly pronounced at the undergraduate level, and some individual course syllabi were less diverse than others (Phull, Ciflikli, and Meibauer 2019). These findings show gender bias in course materials is both an enduring challenge and often unequally distributed across the curriculum. This demonstrates the importance of mapping existing patterns to understand both the scope and nature of the problem.

To address this challenge, the Equal Opportunities Committee at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research (DPCR) developed a project on intersectional gender mainstreaming in course literature which was generously funded by an initiative of Uppsala University to support gender mainstreaming.¹ Work on this project began in Spring 2021 and was finalized in Spring 2024. This project emerged from ongoing efforts at DPCR to foster equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming. Student surveys and course evaluations in recent years reflect a consistent desire for diversity and inclusivity in course materials, and many teachers have worked to address this issue within their individual courses. This project sought to document and draw connections across ongoing work, and to develop resources to support teachers in making further progress.

Project Activities

Activity 1: Analysis of course materials

The first project activity was a quantitative analysis of the demographic balance of assigned course literature for all courses at DPCR.² Course reading lists were gathered

¹ Kvarstående medel för särskilda satsningar inom jämställdhetsintegreringen 2020, UFV 2019/2180, "Closing the Gender Citation Gap in Peace and Conflict Research"

² We excluded courses which do not have assigned literature or reading lists, such as internship courses and independent research or thesis courses where students select their own literature.

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from the latest course guides or reading lists posted on Studium for each course. Reading lists were then analyzed using the Gender Balance Assessment Tool (GBAT)³, a web-based app that analyzes author names to predict the likelihood of belonging to a particular gender or ethnic background (Sumner 2018). This tool is widely used within the peace research field to analyze gender citation patterns. For undergraduate courses we find that the assigned course literature on average is made up of 37% female authors, with some courses only represented by 18% female authors. Using the same analysis tool we find 88% of the literature is written by Western scholars (the tool designates this as “white”). A more disaggregated analysis is presented internally in collaboration with course conveners and directors, with an opportunity for teachers to provide further comments and reflect on ongoing efforts to address gender balance in course materials.

To expand on and nuance the quantitative findings, we also conducted a qualitative review of course guides and Studium pages to identify other teaching and learning activities for gender mainstreaming and inclusion which were not reflected in course reading lists. Examples include specific lectures on gender in relation to the course topics and seminars that ask students to engage with diverse perspectives within the field.

We recognize that beyond mapping existing citation patterns and reviewing course materials, addressing the gender citation gap requires sustained institutional commitment and concrete policy measures. To ensure long-term progress, the project recommends embedding gender balance considerations into syllabus design and faculty training. This includes developing guidelines for inclusive citation practices, organizing workshops for faculty on gender-sensitive teaching, and establishing a regular review mechanism for course materials. Additionally, fostering collaboration between faculty, students, and librarians can help expand access to underrepresented scholarship. By institutionalizing these efforts, DPCR can serve as a model for other academic institutions working towards more inclusive and representative curricula.

Activity 2: Resource toolkit to support gender mainstreaming

The second project activity compiled a document of resources and best practices for gender mainstreaming to support continuous development for teachers at DPCR.

First, a crowd-source request was shared with all teachers at DPCR asking for recommendations of resources and ideas they have found helpful for gender mainstreaming and diversifying their own lectures and courses. Next, we conducted a literature review of teaching journals and pedagogical reports within peace research and the adjacent fields of political science and international relations to identify best practices for gender mainstreaming and diversifying course materials. We compiled and

³ <https://jsumner.shinyapps.io/syllabustool/>

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summarized these best practices and recommended resources into a reference document for teachers.

Second, we conducted in-depth interviews with selected teachers to reflect on opportunities, challenges, and best practices for developing more inclusive courses. Interviews followed a semi-structured format, and interview subjects were purposively selected for their active engagement with inclusivity and diversity. We included a summary of the lessons learned and best practices in the reference document for teachers.

To maximize the long-term impact of the resource toolkit, the project also recommends integrating its use into faculty development programs and institutional structures. Regular workshops and discussion sessions can help familiarize faculty with the toolkit and encourage the exchange of strategies for gender mainstreaming. Additionally, an online platform or internal repository could be created to ensure continuous updates, allowing teachers to contribute new materials and best practices over time. By embedding these resources into ongoing professional development and institutional policies, DPCR can support a sustained commitment to inclusivity in course design.

Finally, we developed topic-specific lists of suggested scholars for common lecture and course topics covered in both the Bachelor's and Master's-level courses at DPCR. Topic-specific lists were drawn from various databases highlighting diverse expertise in relevant disciplines, including the Women Also Know Stuff (<https://womenalsoknowstuff.com>) and People of Color Also Know Stuff (<https://sites.google.com/view/pocexperts/home>) databases. This resource is intended to streamline the process of identifying topic-specific expertise within the broader database.

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