

Social Studies 30-1

Unit Three: Classical Liberalism to Modern Liberalism in Politics

KEY QUESTION: What is liberalism (liberal ideology) and how has it evolved over time?

Assignment 2.7: Feminism

Feminism, at its core, is the belief that men and women should be treated equally in all areas of life, with its modern roots tracing back to Enlightenment thinkers who promoted “the rights of man.” At the time, however, “man” was almost always taken literally to mean men, and few classical liberal philosophers extended these rights to women. For example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that women were created for the delight of men, that a woman’s virtue lay in pleasing others, while a man’s virtue lay in his strength—reflecting the belief that inequality was natural. Although classical liberalism failed to recognize women as equals, its emphasis on individual rights and civil liberties provided the intellectual foundation for feminism to develop, allowing feminists to argue that women, too, deserved equal freedoms and protections. Yet, not everyone has accepted this view. Critics of feminism argue that it disrupts traditional family or social roles, threatens the privileges of those who benefit from existing hierarchies, and, in some cases, goes too far by granting advantages to women at the expense of men. In many societies, feminism is also resisted as a challenge to cultural norms, religious teachings, and long-standing values. Thus, while feminism has grown out of Enlightenment ideals of liberty and equality, it has also faced enduring opposition from those who see it as destabilizing, threatening, or excessive in its demands.

Timeline of the feminist movement

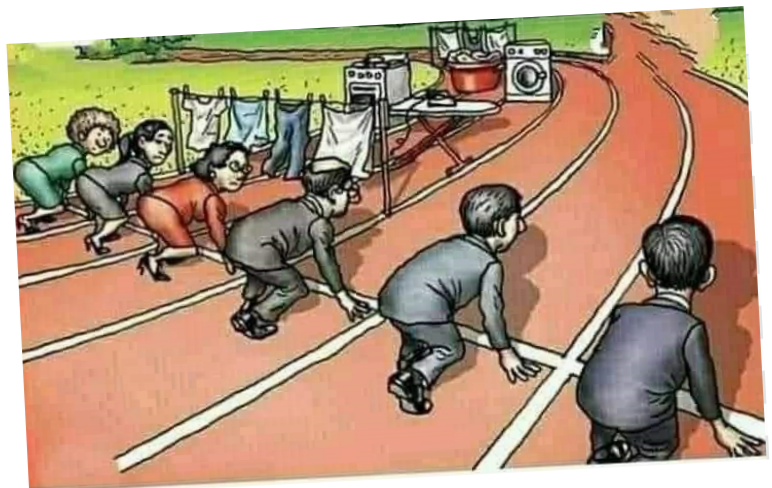
1st wave	2nd wave	3rd wave	4th wave
Late 19th - early 20th century	1960s-1970s	1990s-present	2010s-present

The focus was on right to education, work and equal pay. Here, the challenging of traditional roles and representation of women began.

Focuses on intersectional approaches to feminism, the empowerment of women, and the use and impact of the media, including the internet and social media.

This was the suffrage period. The focus was on securing voting and equal rights for women.

Challenged white-middle class orientation. Broadened the agendas of working-class women and women of colour. Non-feminine women's concerns noted.



Case Study #1: Sophie de Grouchy



In 1958, Isaiah Berlin, in an essay titled, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, made an influential distinction between freedom from external interference or constraint (negative liberty), and freedom to achieve something or become someone (positive liberty). In the late eighteenth century, a woman named Sophie De Grouchy (1764–1822) made her own distinction between positive property rights and negative rights in her essay titled, *Letters on Sympathy*, published in 1798 - one hundred sixty years before Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty*. Sophie de Grouchy deserves a rightful place in the history of the liberal tradition, a tradition that is typically depicted as the exclusive province of men.

According to some feminists (and scholars or both), patriarchy, sexism, and male privilege are fundamental parts of our socially constituted reality. Do you think patriarchy, sexism and male privilege prevented (or prevents) Sophie De Grouchy from entering “a rightful place in the history of the liberal tradition”? If it isn't patriarchy, sexism and male privilege, then what is it?

Case Study #2: [Emily Davison](#)



In the United Kingdom, force feeding was used against hunger-striking suffragettes. Rubber tubes were inserted through the mouth (only occasionally through the nose) and into the stomach, and food poured down.

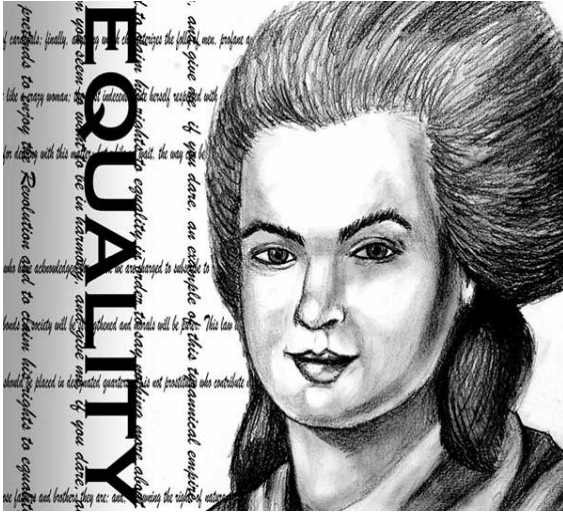
Emily Wilding Davison, a suffragette, was frequently arrested for acts ranging from causing a public disturbance to burning post boxes and spent several short periods in jail. She attempted to starve herself and resisted force-feeding. By 1911, Davison was becoming increasingly militant. On 4 June 1913, she ran out in front of the king's horse as it was taking part in the [Epsom Derby](#). Her purpose was unclear, but she was trampled on and died on 8 June from her injuries.



Emily Davison was a militant suffragette who died after throwing herself in front of the king's horse at the Epsom Derby. Mr. Kruk will show you a video on Emily Davison and the Epsom Derby.

Click on the links above to watch TWO videos on Emily Davison and then, in the space provided, summarize the case study in your own words, then detail your position and argument on the case study.

Case Study #3: Olympe de Gouges



In 1791, Olympe de Gouges, wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*.

In it she wrote, “Woman is born free and lives equal to Man in her rights.”

A few days after she had her head chopped off by the guillotine, revolutionary politician Pierre Gaspard Chaumette urged republican women to “remember that virago, that woman-man.” The “impudent” de Gouges, he continued, had “abandoned all the cares of her household because she wanted to engage in politics... This forgetfulness of the virtues of her sex led her to the scaffold.” It wasn’t until **1944** that French women were allowed to vote (and

didn't win the right to work without their husband's permission until 1965), which is odd because the issue of votes for women (not to mention their eligibility for office) was articulated earlier in France than in virtually any other nation in the world -- in 1789, at the outset of the French Revolution.

In 1993, only 5.7 percent of seats in France’s Parliament were occupied by women – barely more than that after the end of World War II. The lack of women in politics prompted France to pass a law in 2000 requiring political parties to present an equal number of men and women on voting lists, making it the first country to do so.

Although things have improved in recent years, men still heavily dominate French politics. Seventy-three percent of the National Assembly is comprised of men, while the Senate is 78 percent men.

Why do you think it took so long for France to give the franchise to women?

Case Study #4: The Glass Ceiling

The [glass ceiling](#) is an invisible barrier to advancement that women face at the top levels of the workplace; an unofficially acknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities. The glass ceiling is often the result of unconscious bias on gender roles that result in gender bias. Gender roles and gender bias create a glass ceiling. *Gender roles* are social constructs unique to different cultures that are assigned to individuals the moment their sex is identified. From this point on, children are more or less categorized in a binary of either male or female genders. These roles are later translated into academic interests and professional careers. [Gender bias](#) refers to the tendency people have to prefer one gender over another. In the workplace, this bias tends to negatively affect women significantly more than men.

Women are not perceived as being fully committed to the workplace. Working mothers are often “mommy tracked”, suffering a hit to their careers. Men are promoted at 21 percent greater rates than women and when there’s only one woman in a candidate pool, the woman has statistically no chance of getting the job. The glass ceiling is cracking, however gender parity is still out of reach.

Highlight which one you support... and provide an explanation in the space below.

Should companies:

1. encourage women to assimilate—to adopt more masculine attributes OR
2. accommodate the unique needs and situations of women, offering extended maternity leave, flexible work arrangements, even rooms for nursing infants OR
3. emphasize the differences that women bring to the workplace and institute sensitivity training to help male managers appreciate traditionally “feminine” activities or styles, such as listening and collaborating OR
4. should we wait it out and prioritize a persistent campaign of incremental changes that discover and destroy the deeply embedded roots of discrimination, by eradicating the practices that produce inequity and replace them with practices that work better for everyone OR
5. some of the above, or none of the above...

The representation of women in Canada's House of Commons remains low compared to many industrial and post-industrial countries. While female participation has gradually increased alongside labor-force involvement and educational attainment, "waiting it out" has proven insufficient, and the lack of women's voices negatively affects public policy. Research indicates that Canadian women face undemocratic barriers at the candidate selection level, including biased media coverage, unrealistic leadership expectations, and conservative party members unwilling to risk nominating women. Societal perceptions of leadership, which favor command over compromise, and the role of women as primary caregivers also deter many from entering politics or attaining leadership roles.

Countries such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, South Africa, Mexico, and Argentina have demonstrated that rapid improvements in female representation are possible through gender quotas, showing that deliberate action can create more legitimate parliaments and improve public policy. Globally, women constitute only 11.7 percent of parliamentarians, yet some nations have achieved quotas of 30–50 percent, highlighting the potential impact of structured measures to enhance gender equality in political representation.

Question:

4. To what extent should Canada adopt gender quotas to address the underrepresentation of women in its House of Commons, considering societal perceptions of leadership, caregiving roles, and barriers in candidate selection?

