CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ARTICLE

Submitting to *Politics & Gender*: Advice from the Editors

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For nearly 20 years, *Politics & Gender* has been a leading outlet for research on women, gender, and politics. As past and current editors,[1] we are happy to share our advice for early career researchers interested in submitting manuscripts to the journal. We believe that as the official journal of the Women, Gender, and Politics Section of the American Political Science Association, the content of *Politics & Gender* should reflect the diversity of authors, methods, and topics found across the broader gender and politics research community. However, not all authors have the full information on how to best prepare their manuscripts—or, indeed, what to expect during different parts of the review process (see Anlar and Phillips 2023).

In the first part of this essay, we outline the submission, review, and decision process at *Politics & Gender.* For context, we offer some recent statistics about submissions, including the number of manuscripts received and our rejection and acceptance rates. In the second half, we provide advice for authors considering submitting their work to *Politics & Gender.* As editors, we participate in every step of the publishing pipeline: reading submissions, inviting and processing reviews, and accepting and rejecting manuscripts. We can also see statistics on published articles, showing us which kinds of articles are most likely to be read and cited. While our advice is inspired by our experiences editing *Politics & Gender*, our suggestions are relevant for submissions to other journals as well—hopefully reducing the impact of the "hidden curriculum" more broadly.

The Process

Politics & Gender was launched in 2005. In the early years of the journal, the average number of submissions was around 150 annually.[2] By 2022, this number

had nearly doubled to 276. As Cambridge University Press has gradually increased the number of pages allotted to the journal, we have been able to accept more articles to keep pace with the greater supply of manuscripts. Nonetheless, our overall acceptance rate, 17%, has remained virtually the same over the journal's 18-year history. At the same time that submissions have grown, the journal's impact factor—a statistic dividing the number of citations to articles published in the previous two calendar years by the number of articles published in those two years—has also increased. While the 68 articles published in 2018 and 2019 were cited 142 times (a 2020 impact factor of 2.088), the 103 articles published in 2019 and 2020 were cited 326 times (a 2021 impact factor of 3.165). Work published in *Politics & Gender* is thus being read and cited more widely, reflecting broader expansion of the gender and politics research community.

Prospective authors have several options when considering submitting their work to *Politics & Gender.* Our main article type is a regular research article, with a limit of 12,000 words. Most of the advice we give here relates to this type of article. However, *Politics & Gender* also publishes three other kind of articles: Critical Perspectives essays, Notes from the Field pieces, and single and thematic book reviews (see Scott 2023 for more information on these other possible submission types).[3]

When submitting work to *Politics & Gender*, authors should use our online submission form at Editorial Manager.[4] After an article is submitted, the editorial assistant performs a technical check for word limit and other formatting requirements, then assigns the manuscript to an editor. From 2019 to 2022, one editor was responsible for manuscripts on American politics and political theory and the other editor handled manuscripts on comparative politics and international relations. Since 2022, the lead editor has assumed responsibility for all manuscripts at this initial stage, consulting with the team of associate editors as necessary. Every manuscript is read for its suitability for the journal. At this stage, approximately 30% to 40% of manuscripts are "desk rejected," a rate comparable to other political science journals. In these cases, the review process ends and the manuscript is returned to the author.

If the manuscript passes this initial appraisal, the editor invites outside reviewers, with the aim of recruiting at least three scholars to read and comment on the manuscript. Reviewers are asked to provide summary assessments of the manuscript's theoretical and empirical contributions to gender and politics research, quality of research design and methodology, quality of analysis and interpretation, organization and clarity of the argument and writing, and interest to readers of *Politics & Gender.* They are then asked to provide more detailed comments, as well as an overall recommendation to accept, revise, or reject the manuscript (see Montoya 2023 for a more detailed overview of the review process).

Once the reviews are complete, the editor considers the feedback, and often reads the paper again, to reach a holistic evaluation of the manuscript and its potential for publication in the journal. Few, if any, papers are fully accepted at this stage. If the manuscript is rejected, the review process ends. If the author is given the opportunity to revise, they are asked to detail all revisions made—as

well as reasons for not following certain suggestions—prior to resubmitting their revised manuscript (see Sundström 2023 for advice on responding to reviewers). As editors, we have sought to provide guidance to authors by highlighting reviewer comments that we believe are particularly important to address. In some cases, we have also provided some additional comments based on our own reading of the paper. After resubmission, the manuscript is sent back to the original reviewers and, once a second round of feedback has been received, the paper may be accepted, rejected, or invited to be revised once more. Upon final acceptance, it then moves into production.

Our Advice

As scholars, we have learned a lot about publishing simply by authoring and reviewing papers for a variety of journals. In our role as editors, however, we have gained new knowledge of the review process that may be helpful for early career researchers, in particular, as they navigate publishing for the first time. Preparing a manuscript well, in our experience, can make all the difference for whether or not the paper is desk rejected, offered an opportunity to revise, or ultimately accepted for publication at *Politics & Gender* (or another journal). To help authors improve their chances of getting through the review process, we offer four pieces of advice focused on framing and organizing a manuscript effectively.

First, *write a clear, compelling, and informative title and abstract.* These are the first two items that reviewers—and, later, readers—will see. Does the title accurately reflect the content of the paper? Does it include keywords that authors might use to search for articles on this topic? Does the title specify the country under study (often a problem with papers written by Americanists!) and, if appropriate, the specific period analyzed? The best titles strike a balance between being comprehensive and concise. The abstract, in turn, should articulate the paper's central question, concepts, and findings. What is the topic being studied? What is the manuscript's theoretical contribution? What empirical data is used to answer the research question? And, perhaps most importantly, why is this study important to the larger gender and politics research community? These kinds of questions cannot be answered by simply stating *what is studied* (i.e., the impact of X and Y on Z); instead, authors should specify *what they find* (i.e., that X determines Z, but Y does not).

Second, *draft a strong introduction to the paper.* This should cover the same ground as the abstract, but with greater elaboration, beginning with a clear motivation for the research and ending with a moderately detailed overview of the remainder of the paper. The fact that other scholars have studied the same question, even in a different context, is not prima facie evidence that a further study is needed! Failure to explicitly state the original element of the paper—whether theoretical or empirical—often leads to desk rejection. In particular, studies should not merely describe a single case with the help of a few general concepts from gender and politics research. What is the larger theoretical contribution of the research? Is the empirical material particularly novel?

How does the analysis connect to existing debates in the field and, specifically, the literature on gender and politics?

Third, *be mindful of citation practices.* Both editors and reviewers will check the bibliography to see whether the references are up to date and engage with key authors, including work previously published in *Politics & Gender.* The list of citations tells us a lot about how well informed and motivated the research is—and, indeed, if the contribution is as novel as claimed by the authors. Adequate citation practices are so important, in fact, that reviewers will often suggest additional citations even on very polished pieces. Editors, moreover, often use the bibliography as a starting point for selecting reviewers. While we seek diverse reviewer pools for each article, the references tell us who the authors are in conversation with—and thus who might be best positioned to evaluate the contributions of the manuscript. We also invite reviewers who are *not* on the reference list, of course. These might include scholars who can speak to the theory or research design, even if they are not country specialists, or researchers who are experts in the topic but do not necessarily adopt a gender lens.

Fourth, *volunteer to serve as a reviewer* (see also Montoya 2023). In addition to providing an important service to the discipline, reviewing manuscripts can shed light on the sorts of submissions the journal receives. When we make a decision on a manuscript, we also share the other reviews received, permitting scholars to see what other experts thought of the paper. If the author is given an opportunity to revise, serving as a reviewer will include access to the author's response memo, showing how others incorporate feedback and revise their manuscripts for reconsideration. Participating in the process can thus help early career researchers understand in greater depth what makes for a successful article, increasing the likelihood of having their own work accepted at *Politics & Gender.*

Final Words

We hope this guidance will encourage scholars, especially early career researchers, to take the plunge and submit their research to *Politics & Gender.* Space limitations mean that, unfortunately, we must decline more articles than we can accept. However, in our experience, authors often gain very generous and helpful feedback from our reviewers—enabling scholars to advance and improve their research, even if their work is not ultimately selected for publication in our pages. We are committed to publishing the work of early career scholars, who are often engaged in the most cutting-edge research in the field, and look forward to learning more about this work as editors and readers of *Politics & Gender.*

Notes

1. Susan Franceschet and Christina Wolbrecht served as coeditors from 2019 to 2022, and Mona Lena Krook is lead editor from 2022 to 2025.

2. Personal communication with previous editors. All subsequent statistics are drawn from a publishing report prepared by Cambridge University Press for the *Politics & Gender* editorial board in August 2022.

3. Further details on each article type are available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/information/author-instructions/preparing-your-materials.

4. The direct link is https://www.editorialmanager.com/pag/default2.aspx.

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