

Suffrage and Beyond: Women and American Politics

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Summary:

This CDP project will explore the engagement of American women with the US political system. Beginning as the United States celebrates 100 years of national women's suffrage in 2019-20, the PhD student will explore the ways in which American women have interacted with the political sphere, as (non-)voters, candidates and office-holders. How have American women in majority and minority communities shaped US politics, at national and local levels, and had their political actions and ambitions shaped by it in turn?

This project will offer new opportunities to interrogate the British Library's US collections and to raise the profile of these holdings – which include newspapers, stamps, campaign materials, sheet music, zines, political pamphlets, as well as extensive collections of US government documents.

The PhD student will benefit from staff-level access to these collections. In addition, the project will feed into existing and developing strands of the work of the [Eccles Centre for American Studies](#). The Eccles Centre has long been a hub for US politics research: the former Centre Director, Professor Philip Davies, a scholar of US elections, founded the twice-yearly [Congress to Campus](#) UK programme, and made US politics events a popular mainstay of the Centre's evening cultural programme. The CDP project will therefore enjoy a high profile and contribute to these and other ongoing outputs for different audiences, such as the Centre's US politics online learning resource and the British Library's [Americas blog](#).

Areas of Study:

Following the historic defeat of Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Presidential election by Donald Trump, a man whose attitudes towards women have horrified many Americans, numerous women are seeking first-time political office across the country. This project offers scope to think about the interconnected elements of sex and gender in American social, cultural, and political life, both in the present moment and historically. How have the gendered nature of family and professional life, stereotypes, political parties, electoral systems and the media affected women's political lives?

The wide-ranging nature of the British Library's US collections lends itself to broad projects exploring change over time, whilst also being able to facilitate targeted case studies. Amongst many other excellent primary resources (local and national newspapers, stamps, campaign materials, sheet music, zines, political pamphlets etc.), the Library's holdings of US government documents make it a vital source for UK-based scholars of American politics.

Significantly, much existing scholarship, particularly of women candidates, has focused on straight, white women. Therefore, one suggestion for the development of this research theme is to focus on the experiences of minority and queer women and the political system. (An example of a potential line of fruitful research enquiry in this area is the Library's sheet music collection, where a recent bibliographic project has highlighted the racial inflections which characterised some responses to women's suffrage campaigning in US popular culture.)

However, the research theme is broad and we are open to any proposals that would generate original research that complements British Library collections, resources and expertise. We are looking for the HEI partner to work with us to develop the research theme to enable the project to benefit from their own specific academic expertise and interests.

Benefits and training opportunities for the student:

The Eccles Centre works across many different areas of British Library activity, which will offer the student a rich experience of both research and an insight into archive and library processes as well as outreach and public engagement. Staff-level collections access will give the student the opportunity to work with larger volumes of material than is possible for general readers. By being embedded in the Eccles Centre and the Americas curatorial team, the student will benefit from expert research and collections support and will be encouraged to make links with other collections specialists around the Library whose knowledge can help provide critical depth to the project.

A number of bibliographic research projects on the Library's collections, undertaken by the Eccles Centre's Bibliographical Editor, Jean Petrovic, have the potential to provide excellent entry points into this project for the PhD student. These include projects on US elections and campaigning, the relationship between the media and politics, and the lives of American women.

With the guidance and support of the Centre and other Library staff, over the course of the CDP, the student will have opportunities to contribute updated bibliographies on US politics collections, to organise events and workshops (both at the Library and potentially off-site), and to contribute to the *Congress to Campus* programme, both in its live and on-line iterations.

These will enable the student to gain new skills in writing for diverse audiences, project management, event organisation and public engagement, applicable in academia as well as other, related fields, such as the galleries, archives, museums and heritage sectors.

Since the projected timeline would see the student in post for the 2020 US Presidential election, there would be also scope for them to assist the Library's Americas Collections curators to collect material to document it, or to suggest websites for a special collection on this topic for the [UK Web Archive](#).

The Eccles Centre has additional funds available to the student to support the dissemination of their research (e.g. travel costs, Open Access costs).

Application deadline: 23 November 2018. For more information about the call and how to apply visit www.bl.uk/research-collaboration or email Research.Development@bl.uk.