

# Instructor Guide for College Educators



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## Overview

Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics digs deep into the personal experiences and challenges of a bipartisan group of women who took the risk to run for elective office beginning in the 1960s, when women's candidacies were exceedingly rare in Ohio and across the United States. The bipartisan group of trailblazers featured in the project opened the halls of political power to women through a variety of breakthrough electoral wins at the local, state, and federal levels. To put their accomplishments in perspective, women held less than 4 percent of the seats in the United States Congress in 1961.

While their stories are specific to Ohio, the personal experiences of this project's trailblazers span state lines. They are stories of being discounted, taken for granted, and discouraged from pursuing elective office. They are also stories of resilience, with each trailblazer describing different strategies employed to counter veiled (and not-so-veiled) sexism, racism, and classism on the campaign trail and in elective office.

Trailblazers describe in vivid detail what scholars have known for some time about the experiences of women, including women of color, running for political office in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Based largely on survey research, prior studies have shown that women have historically been discouraged by political party gatekeepers from running for office, encouraged to run in unwinnable races, and often ignored by the press. Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics brings such findings to life for students and scholars, with first-hand accounts of what has typically been available to students and scholars in a highly aggregated format.

Instructors of courses in political science, gender studies, women's studies, and history will find that Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics provides numerous opportunities for students to deeply engage with compelling, qualitative primary research that brings the experiences of accomplished political women to life. Many of the challenges they faced while running for local, state, and federal office still exist for women in politics today. Critical thinking is sure to be sparked about the status of women in politics today relative to decades past. Students will likely recognize progress on a number of fronts, but continuing to detect obstacles on others.

This Instructor Guide for College Educators provides assignments to engage students with various components of Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics. Project components are:

- ◆ Public television documentary produced by WBGU-PBS on the campus of Bowling Green State University and featuring a bipartisan group of eight trailblazing women; stream for free at the WBGU-PBS website at <https://video.wbgu.org/video/trailblazing-women-in-ohio-politics-iouz8a/>

- ◆ Website featuring soundbites, timelines, and biographical materials on 11 trailblazers; also includes theme pages devoted to shared experiences of bias and discouragement, the initial decision to run for office, sources of encouragement, and advice for women and others interested in seeking elective office; available at [www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers](http://www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers)
- ◆ Oral history collection featuring 60- to 90-minute interviews with ten trailblazing women who describe their upbringing, early adult life, decision to seek elective office, experiences on the campaign trail, sources of discouragement and encouragement; access online at <https://digitalgallery.bgsu.edu/collections/show/161>

Trailblazers featured in the project come from a variety of backgrounds and got their start in politics through a variety of different paths. They are:

- ◆ **Nickie J. Antonio** (Democrat) – First member of the LGBTQ+ community elected to the Ohio House and the Ohio Senate; elected to leadership positions in both chambers
- ◆ **Jo Ann Davidson** (Republican) – First woman on the Reynoldsburg City Council; first woman Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives
- ◆ **Nancy P. Hollister** (Republican) – First woman Mayor of Marietta; first woman Lieutenant Governor of Ohio; only woman to serve as Governor of Ohio
- ◆ **Marcy Kaptur** (Democrat) – Longest-serving woman in the United States Congress
- ◆ **Joan W. Lawrence** (Republican) – First woman on the Big Walnut Board of Education; first woman to represent Morrow and Delaware Counties in the Ohio House of Representatives
- ◆ **Rhine L. McLin** (Democrat) – First African American woman in the Ohio Senate; first woman Mayor of Dayton
- ◆ **Betty D. Montgomery** (Republican) – First woman elected County Prosecutor in all 88 Ohio counties; first woman Attorney General of Ohio; first woman Auditor of State
- ◆ **Donna Owens** (Republican) – First woman Mayor of Toledo
- ◆ **Helen Rankin** (Democrat) – First African American woman in the Ohio legislature
- ◆ **Melody J. Stewart** (Democrat) – First African American woman elected to the Ohio Supreme Court
- ◆ **Mary Ellen Withrow** (Democrat) – First woman on the Elgin Local School Board; rose to become Treasurer of the United States

In the following pages you will find assignment and project ideas to engage students with the real-life stories of these remarkable women. Assignment suggestions for individuals, pairs, and groups are suggested. General instructions for each assignment can be adapted to a variety of subject and classroom settings, as well as pedagogical styles.

Generous support for Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics has been provided by:

- ◆ Dr. Maribeth S. and Martin E. Rahe
- ◆ Office of the President, Bowling Green State University
- ◆ Ohio History Fund, a grant program of the Ohio History Connection  
Ohio Humanities, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities
- ◆ Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship, Bowling Green State University
- ◆ Department of Political Science, Bowling Green State University

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Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics is made possible in part by Ohio Humanities, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this website do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Trailblazing Women also benefits from advice obtained at the project's outset from a group of distinguished scholars. They provided detailed comments on the project's overall design and offered insights and suggestions to guide the interviewing process prior to the collection of trailblazer oral histories. They are:

**Jacquelyn Dowd Hall** – Dr. Hall is the Julia Cherry Spruill Professor Emerita at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, founder of the Southern Oral History project, recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, and winner of the National Humanities Medal. Her award-winning work uses oral history to raise public awareness and promote cultural understanding.

**Jennifer L. Lawless** – Dr. Lawless is the Leone Reaves and George W. Spicer Professor of Politics and Professor of Public Policy at the University of Virginia. Her numerous books on the gender gap in political ambition include *Becoming a Candidate: Political Ambition and the Decision to Run for Office*, and *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*.

**Ronnee Schreiber** – Dr. Schreiber is Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Letters at San Diego State University as well as Professor of Political Science. An expert on women leading national conservative organizations in the United States, Dr. Schreiber's book, *Righting Feminism: Conservative Women and American Politics* has received national acclaim.

**Wendy Smooth** – Dr. Smooth is Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the College of Arts and Sciences at The Ohio State University. She is also an Associate Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and serves on the faculty of the Political Science Department. Dr. Smooth is an expert on the intersection of gender and race in American politics whose work appears in numerous scholarly journals and edited volumes.

## Public television documentary

Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics is an engaging 56-minute documentary produced by WBGU-PBS on the campus of Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio.

This historically important film, featuring seven trailblazers, serves as a time capsule of an important era when women began running for office in greater numbers. From Mary Ellen Withrow, who first ran for elective office in 1965, to Jennette Bradley, who became the first African American woman Lieutenant Governor in all 50 states in 2003, the film captures the challenges, obstacles, strategies, and achievements of this compelling, bipartisan group of women.

### In-class screening / written prompts / discussion:

- ◆ Screen the 56-minute film in class. Access the film for free at <https://video.wbgu.org/video/trailblazing-women-in-ohio-politics-iouz8a/>
- ◆ Provide students with a set of general prompts to respond to (digitally or in writing) while watching the film. Choose, adapt, or supplement the following prompts:

In what way were the upbringings of the featured trailblazers noteworthy?

Which trailblazers seemed destined to launch a career in politics? Explain why.

What kinds of reasons did the trailblazers cite for their decision to run for office?

How were the trailblazers treated by political gatekeepers, such as political party officials and the media?

How does the film handle the political party affiliation of each trailblazer?

How would you have handled the political party affiliation of each trailblazer and why?

What forms of bias did the trailblazers encounter? How prevalent is such bias today?

What strategies did individual trailblazers employ when they encountered bias? Would such strategies be effective today?

What questions or concerns are raised by the film?

Which trailblazer would you like to meet and talk to in person? Why?

- ◆ At the conclusion of the film provide a few minutes for students to jot down any further thoughts about the film and its trailblazers.
- ◆ Use the prompts to lead a class discussion.

**Online or take-home alternative:**

- ◆ Adapt the in-class screening assignment outlined above to be an online or take-home assignment.
- ◆ Have students answer the prompts (either digitally or on paper) outside of class. Collect and grade the assignment or use it as the basis for class discussion.

**Pre- and post-screening reflections on politics / politicians:**

- ◆ Prior to screening the film have students jot down ten words that come to mind when you mention the word “politician.”
- ◆ Screen the 56-minute film in class. Access the film for free at <https://video.wbgu.org/video/trailblazing-women-in-ohio-politics-iouz8a/>
- ◆ Immediately after screening the film, have students jot down ten words that come to mind when you say “trailblazing women in Ohio politics.”
- ◆ Lead a discussion afterward in which students compare their pre-conceived notions about politicians with their impressions of the trailblazers featured in the film. Probe for specific examples / evidence / anecdotes from the film that either altered or reinforced preconceived notions students have about politicians.
- ◆ **Pair-and-share alternative:** divide students into pairs or small groups. Have them work together to compare their pre- and post-screening impressions. Have each pair (or group) report their “findings” to the class. Encourage students to consider whether the film reinforced or altered their pre-existing views of politicians.

**Group exercise:**

- ◆ Randomly divide the class into eight groups.
- ◆ Randomly assign each group one of the eight individual trailblazers featured in the film.
- ◆ Provide each group the name, party affiliation, and general description of their trailblazer prior to screening the film as follows:



**Jennette Bradly** (Republican) – First African American woman to serve as Lieutenant Governor in all 50 states

**Jo Ann Davidson** (Republican) – First woman on the Reynoldsburg City Council; first woman Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives

**Nancy P. Hollister** (Republican) – First woman Mayor of Marietta; first woman Lieutenant Governor of Ohio; only woman to serve as Governor of Ohio

**Marcy Kaptur** (Democrat) – Longest-serving woman in the United States Congress

**Rhine L. McLin** (Democrat) – First African American woman in the Ohio Senate; first woman Mayor of Dayton

**Betty D. Montgomery** (Republican) – First woman elected County Prosecutor in all 88 Ohio counties; first woman Attorney General of Ohio; first woman Auditor of State

**Helen Rankin** (Democrat) – First African American woman in the Ohio legislature

**Mary Ellen Withrow** (Democrat) – First woman on the Elgin Local School Board; rose to become Treasurer of the United States

- ◆ Have students screen the film together in class or on their own after class using the link: <https://video.wbgu.org/video/trailblazing-women-in-ohio-politics-iouz8a/>
- ◆ Provide time in class for students to meet as a group to prepare a brief oral presentation about their trailblazer. Encourage them to refer to the trailblazer’s biographical page, as needed, by clicking on the appropriate headshot at [www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers](http://www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers) (NOTE: trailblazer Jennette Bradley declined to be interviewed for the project and is featured in the documentary via a third-party interview with former Governor Bob Taft only)
- ◆ Provide the following prompts, adapt or supplement them to guide group discussions and oral presentations:

Provide a basic biographical overview of the trailblazer, including general information about upbringing, path to public office, and electoral achievements.

What experiences related by this trailblazer seemed consistent with your prior understanding of women’s experiences running for office?

What experiences related by this trailblazer seemed inconsistent with your prior understanding of women’s experiences running for office?

Describe the kinds of bias this trailblazer encountered running for and serving in elective office.

What strategies did this trailblazer employ when faced with instances of discrimination or bias?

What aspects of this trailblazer's experiences are relevant for women and men considering a run for elective office today?

If your group had the opportunity to do a follow-up interview with this trailblazer, what additional questions would your group pose to her?

What was most and least surprising about this trailblazer's story?

## Oral history collection

Complete oral histories are available on the website of the Center for Archival Collections at Bowling Green State University for ten of the trailblazers featured in Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics.

They offer rich primary source material for students to access in order to hear (or read) complete first-hand accounts of the upbringing, early adult life, decision to run for office and experiences on the campaign trail and in public life of women who broke electoral barriers in Ohio.

For students of political science, gender studies, women's studies, and history, the Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics Oral History Collection offers students a deep dive into the life and experiences of specific trailblazers. In light of the wide range of trailblazer backgrounds represented in the collection, students are likely to identify a trailblazer of specific interest to them, whether based on their upbringing, demographic characteristics, office(s) held, or specific accomplishments.

### **SINGLE TRAILBAZER DEEP DIVE**

- ◆ Have students choose one of ten trailblazers featured in the Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics Oral History Collection. Brief descriptions of each trailblazer are available on the collection's landing page (<https://digitalgallery.bgsu.edu/collections/show/161>).
- ◆ Once a trailblazer is chosen, have each student either listen to or read the transcript of her complete oral history. Oral histories are 60-90 minutes in length.
- ◆ NOTE: Encourage students who opt to read the transcript of their trailblazer's oral history to listen to at least five minutes of it using the audio file. This will enable them to address the essay prompt (below) that pertains to the emotional impact of the oral history.

Choose from the following assignments associated with the "single trailblazer deep dive" (general) assignment:

### **Observing / reflecting / questioning assignment:**

- ◆ Have students listen to (or read) the oral history of their chosen trailblazer (see "SINGLE TRAILBLAZER DEEP DIVE" instructions above).
- ◆ After listening to (or reading) the oral history, have students write a reflective essay that addresses the following prompts (or portions of them). Prompts adapted from "Analyzing Oral Histories" Teacher Guide available at the Library of Congress website

([https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing\\_Oral\\_Histories.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Oral_Histories.pdf))

**Observe:** Briefly describe the format of the oral history you accessed. How would you describe the speaking style and overall manner of this trailblazer? How would you describe the speaking style and overall manner of the interviewer? Describe what you noticed first about the trailblazer and/or her story. Explain whether the oral history seemed more like an “interview” or a “conversation.”

**Reflect:** What do you think was the purpose of this oral history? What do you think the interviewer set out to accomplish? What do you think the trailblazer set out to accomplish? What conclusions might you draw about the trailblazer’s point of view? What conclusions might you draw about the interviewer’s point of view? In what ways is this trailblazer’s oral history significant? Would you describe this oral history as more personal or historical? Why? How does listening to the oral history (as opposed to reading the transcript) affect its emotional impact? What do you feel are the most important lessons to be taken from this trailblazer’s oral history and why? How did this trailblazer’s oral history reinforce, contradict, or supplement your understanding of women’s experiences running for and serving in elective office during this time period?

**Question:** Why do you suppose the interviewer chose the questions she did? Are these the questions you would have chosen? How effective were the probes employed by the interviewer? What alternative or additional questions would you have asked this trailblazer? What additional information would you like to learn about this trailblazer or her story?

### **Biographical add-on assignment**

- ◆ Have students listen to (or read) the oral history of their chosen trailblazer (see “Single trailblazer deep dive” assignment above).
- ◆ In addition to having students write an observing / reflecting / questioning essay outlined above, have them also summarize the biography of the trailblazer using the biographical narrative provided about the trailblazer on the project’s website ([www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers](http://www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers)).

### **TWO TRAILBAZERS DEEP DIVE ASSIGNMENT**

- ◆ Have students choose two trailblazers featured in the Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics Oral History Collection using the information on the trailblazer biographical pages of the project’s website ([www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers](http://www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers))
- ◆ The two trailblazers chosen by each student should differ on at least one key dimension. For instance, students can pick:

One Democrat & one Republican

One white trailblazer & one trailblazer of color

One trailblazer whose career started in the 60s/70s & one who started in the 90s or after

- ◆ Once two trailblazers are chosen, have each student either listen to or read the transcripts of both trailblazers' complete oral histories. Oral histories are 60-90 minutes in length.
- ◆ After listening to (or reading) both oral histories, have students write a reflective essay that addresses prompts of your own design or choose from / adapt / supplement the suggested prompts below:

On what dimensions do these two trailblazers differ?

On what dimensions are these two trailblazers similar?

What kinds of challenges / biases did each of these trailblazers face in their pursuit and holding of elective office? How did each respond and why?

Did the differences and similarities between these two trailblazers comport with your expectations?

What are the most important lessons conveyed by the experiences and stories of these two particular trailblazers?

In what ways are the experiences of these two trailblazers relevant today?

Are the experiences of these two trailblazers more alike or different? Explain.

## Project website

### Engaging with project themes

Topics touched on in trailblazer interviews were wide-ranging and varied. Nevertheless, there are five themes woven throughout the trailblazer interviews. Each is featured on the Trailblazing Women in Ohio Politics website and can be accessed under the “Themes” drop-down at the top of each page ([www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers](http://www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers)). The five themes are:

Deciding to run  
Experiencing bias  
Getting encouragement  
Receiving discouragement  
Advice for women

Each theme page features soundbites from six individual trailblazers – three Democrats and three Republicans. Soundbites were chosen for each theme page in order to provide students, scholars, and the general public with a variety of perspectives and experiences related to each theme from both sides of the aisle.

The theme pages at the project website thus provide the opportunity for students to explore different broad topics as they pertain to the experiences of women pursuing elective office at the local, state and federal levels beginning in the 1960s. Suggested assignments employing the theme page content appear below, organized by project theme.

#### Deciding to run

- ◆ Scholars have documented a gender gap in political ambition, with women less likely than men to express interest in running for elective office. Assign students a chapter or expert from one of the following scholarly studies of political ambition to read as a precursor to accessing the “deciding to run” theme page:

Lawless, Jennifer L. and Richard L. Fox. 2005. *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lawless, Jennifer L. and Richard L. Fox. 2010. *It Still Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lawless, Jennifer L. and Richard L. Fox. 2013. *Girls Just Wanna Not Run: The Gender Gap in Young Americans' Political Ambition*. Washington, D.C.: Women and Politics Institute.

Lawless, Jennifer L. and Richard L. Fox. 2018. “Girl Power Isn't Political Power: The Gender Gap in Political Ambition.” In Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, eds. *Women, Men & U.S. Politics: Ten Big Questions*. New York: W.W. Norton.

- ◆ Have students listen to the six soundbites on the deciding to run page, making note of each trailblazer’s career highlights.
- ◆ Have students write a brief essay summarizing the key reasons each of these six trailblazers decided to run for elective office, explaining how the trailblazers’ decisions to run comport with – or fail to comport with – the findings of large-scale surveys on the topic conducted by Lawless and Fox.

### **Experiencing bias**

- ◆ Have students listen to the six soundbites on the experiencing bias page, making note of each trailblazer’s career highlights.
- ◆ Have students write a brief essay in which they compare and contrast the types of bias experienced by the six trailblazers featured on the experiencing bias theme page. In what ways do the experiences of bias recalled by these trailblazers demonstrate the intersectional nature of bias? Provide some examples of bias experienced by individual trailblazers that differed based on their race or class.

OR

Have students write a brief essay in which they reflect on the experiences of bias reported by the six trailblazers featured on the experiencing bias theme page. Which experiences of bias are most likely to occur today, and in what spheres of life (politics, education, corporate sector etc.)? Which are least likely to occur today?

### **Getting encouragement**

- ◆ Have students listen to the six soundbites on the getting encouragement page, making note of each trailblazer’s career highlights.
- ◆ Have students write a brief essay reflecting on the sources of encouragement reported by each trailblazer. How important does each source of encouragement seem to each trailblazer’s decision to run? To what extent would women in politics today benefit from similar or different sources of encouragement?

OR

Have students write a brief essay in which they discuss examples of women who were initially reluctant to run for elective office. How relatable is their reluctance? Was their

reluctance understandable and, if so, why? Discuss your own willingness to run for elective office. What kind of encouragement might convince you to run?

### Receiving discouragement

- ◆ Have students listen to the six soundbites on the receiving discouragement page, making note of each trailblazer's career highlights.
- ◆ Have students write a brief essay reflecting on the varieties of types of discouragement endured by these six trailblazers. Keeping in mind that each trailblazer ran for office and broke important electoral barriers, why do you suppose the discouragement failed? To what extent do you think women today are discouraged from seeking leadership positions in politics and other sectors of life?

### Advice for women

- ◆ Have students jot down (digitally or on paper) advice they would give women considering a run for elective office before they navigate to the advice for women page
- ◆ Direct students to the advice for women page using the following link: <https://www.bgsu.edu/arts-and-sciences/political-science/trailblazing-women-in-ohio-politics/advice-for-women.html> (also available as a "Themes" drop-down option at [www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers](http://www.bgsu.edu/trailblazers))
- ◆ Instruct students to listen to each of the six soundbites at the advice for women theme page; each soundbite is approximately 30-90 seconds in length
- ◆ Have students write a reflective essay employing / adapting / supplementing the following prompts:

How does the advice offered by the trailblazers differ from (or resemble) the advice you would give women considering a run for office today?

How universal is the advice offered by each of the trailblazers? Would it apply to all kinds of women? To men as well?

What advice would you find easy to take and why?

What advice would you find difficult to take and why?