

**The Changing of the Guard  
Eagleton Institute of Politics Undergraduate Associates: A Critical Analysis**

**School of Arts and Sciences Honors Program Capstone Paper**

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## Abstract

This paper is designed to first describe the program and create recommendations for long-term changes to it based on the evolution of New Jersey State Politics. I am using my experiences in the Eagleton Institute of Politics Undergraduate Associates Program to write my capstone. Although the program is prestigious, resourceful, well run and well managed, I argue that changes must be made to the program in order to modernize it into a tool that can be used to critically treat socio-political problems in state and federal government. These problems include a lack of minorities and women in state government, the lack of accessibility for youth in political participation and the difficulty in obtaining stable employment within state government. However, as New Jersey's politics change or seem

poised to change, so to must the programs that interact with it critically, Eagleton notwithstanding.

### Introduction

I am writing this paper to fulfil my School of Arts and Sciences Honors Program (SASHP) graduation capstone requirement. I have elected to write this under option E, which is the completion of a two-semester professional or certificate learning experience. For my program, I will be writing on my experiences and recommendations about the Eagleton Institute of Politics Undergraduate Associates program, which I was a part of in the class of 2016. I will also include thoughts from complimentary experiences, such as my Arresty Research project under Professor Ethel Brooks (which I undertook as a sophomore) and my specialization in the politics of criminal justice under Professor Heumann (which culminated in a graduate class as a senior).

I intend to write this both as an academic paper and partly as a personal memoir to my time spent as an international student in Rutgers University New Brunswick. In many ways, this paper will touch on issues of race, class and gender. It is intersectional, like many of my own experiences, and because my entry into school politics, and by extension, the Eagleton Institute was based around these activities, a paper based on the certification process alone cannot exclude these intersections. To me, these are every bit as academic; and the add to the overall argument and tone of this capstone paper. As an aside, this is also a personal celebration to a worthwhile education that I have enjoyed in four years. I came in as a wide-eyed and freshly arrived freshman, unaware of student and American Politics. Eventually, I became so enmeshed in student politics that these experiences shaped my entry into

Eagleton—and through Eagleton till my graduation. There is simply no way for me to comment on the program alone and my corresponding thoughts without first giving context.

### Acknowledgments

As with any finished product, I wish to thank many of those who have helped me along the way. I would like to thank Professor Heumann, Professor Francis Ryan, Professor Votipka, Professor Brooks, Dr Matto and Dr Gillespie for their kind and patient mentorship. I would also like to thank my personal friends of 2 years, Michael Martinez and Patrick Gibson, for friendship and personal support, without which none of this could have happened. I would also like to thank my cat<sup>1</sup>, for being such a wonderful therapist and motivator to get out of bed. In addition, many thanks go out to my fellow class mates of the 2016 Undergraduate Associates' program as well as the volunteer proof-readers of this paper. You all have my gratitude.

### Reason for choosing Option E

My reason for choosing this option was more or less personal. I feel that I am not at the stage of my life yet where I am prepared to *create* new knowledge. Since my field of interest is in New Jersey State politics, I feel that I need to know much more before embarking on my own independent research. Professionally, I would like to become an academic and specialize in socio-legal studies, so I assume that I will have more opportunities to pursue writing an original thesis. As of the time of final edits, I am happy to say that I will be going to Columbia University to pursue a Master's degree in sociology. I

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<sup>1</sup> Female Mackerel Grey Tabby, responds to "Cous Cous", formerly named Kim, approx.. 1.5 years of age. Photos gladly available on request.

hope to take my research with me to law school eventually as well. While there may be further opportunity for me to carry out thesis work, a certificate granting program as extensive and resourced as the Eagleton Undergraduate Associates Program is like no other. Besides, I have many personal feelings on the program that I wish to ruminate on—many of these thoughts have no real place in fully academic piece of work. They are reflections that are based on race and gender theory. Option E allows me the best way to balance these thoughts out while giving me the opportunity to fully reflect on my completion of the program. There is nothing wrong with writing an departmental thesis, but at the same time I wish to fully give weight to the uniqueness of this program and my experiences.

#### Eagleton-A brief Introduction

The Undergraduate Associates program is a certificate awarding program within the Eagleton Institute of Politics that aims to “fuse the study of politics with the practice of politics”. It is 3 semesters long. Applications open to rising senior towards the end of their fall semester, with admission offered by the end of the semester. The class then takes place on the following spring semester, and the two semesters of senior year. It is also a relatively small class-25 people. The class bonds over the next 3 semester with about 150+ hours of class time together. Each class is 3 hours long, and classes are held in the Woodlawn Mansion (which is where the Eagleton Institute is). Classes are typically held in either the drawing room or the dining room, and food is occasionally served for associates; typically on special occasions such as anniversaries and events with book launches or guest speakers. The location of the classes is relatively luxurious compared to most undergraduate

facilities—woodpanelling and portraits line the halls of the Woodlawn mansion, and most classes were spent on couches that were well padded. The settings give the class an air of prestige and privilege. Together with the fact that the program is selective about who it admits, the class feels like an exclusive club, one that is above the reach of the average undergraduate.

The Eagleton Institute of Politics was first founded 1956 with an endowment from Florence Peshine Eagleton (1870-1953). It is located on the Cook-Douglass Campus in the Woodlawn Mansion, which is on the National and State register<sup>2</sup> of historic places<sup>3</sup>—a well-known landmark. Florence Eagleton was a well-known suffragist and a trustee of Rutgers University. She willed more than \$1,000,000 to first create the Wells Phillip Eagleton and Florence Peshine Eagleton Foundation, which later became the Eagleton Institute of politics. Eagleton wrote that her support be :

“... for the advancement of learning in the field of practical political affairs and government [so] that a knowledge of the meaning of democracy may be increased through the education of young women and men in democratic government. ... It is my settled conviction that the cultivation of civic responsibility and leadership among the American people in the field of practical political affairs is of vital and increasing importance to our state and nation ... I make this gift especially for the development of and education for responsible leadership in civic and governmental affairs and the solution of their political problems.”

18 years after the first founding, the institute created the undergraduate associates program to better fulfil the charge. Initially, the class size was for 18 undergraduates, but this was slowly

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<sup>2</sup> Staff (2009-03-13). "National Register Information System". *National Register of Historic Places*. National Park Service.

<sup>3</sup> "New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places - Middlesex County". *New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection - Historic Preservation Office*. Retrieved 1 November 2015.

expanded to the current 25. Throughout the years, the Undergraduate Associates program has seen decades of classes come and go, and more than a thousand alumni finding success in careers in every field (although mostly in state politics and law, naturally) as well as in many parts of the nation and the world.

Institutionally, Eagleton's reputation is well-established locally, in New Jersey, and nationally in the United States. Directed by Dr. Ruth Mandel with Professor John Weingart as the associate director, the institute has over a hundred or so individuals associated with it at any given time. The institute has several programs that include polling, research, fellowships and publishing. Academically, the institute has both the undergraduate associates program as well as the graduate fellowship. The institute runs the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling<sup>4</sup>, which is well renowned for being non-partisan and reliable. Other well-known areas include the Center for American Women and Politics<sup>5</sup>, the newly established Center on the American Governor<sup>6</sup> (first of its kind in the nation) and the Eagleton Science and Politics Workshop<sup>7</sup>. Other programs include a research focus on state politics and government, the Program on Immigration and Democracy<sup>8</sup>, and the Youth Political Participation Program.

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<sup>4</sup> The Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling/Rutgers-Eagleton Poll manages the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll, established in 1971 as one of the nation's first university-based statewide public opinion polls. The Center also undertakes other survey research in the public interest and designs opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to learn how to read, analyze, design and administer polls.

<sup>5</sup> The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) is a university-based research, education and public service center. Its mission is to promote greater understanding and knowledge about women's changing relationship to politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life.

<sup>6</sup> The Center on the American Governor promotes research and discussion on the role of the governor in the United States. The Center's range of academic activities and public forums includes current research as well as creation of an extensive archive of video-recorded interviews and discussions on relevant topics, with particular initial emphasis on the administrations of recent governors in New Jersey.

<sup>7</sup> The Eagleton Science and Politics Workshop is a collaborative initiative between Eagleton and several partners in the sciences at Rutgers University. The program enables graduate students and postdocs to explore intersections between science and politics in order to increase their understanding of how politics affects their disciplines and how they can effectively engage with political and policymaking institutions – including through careers in public service.

<sup>8</sup> The Program on Immigration and Democracy is a cross-disciplinary group of immigration scholars that includes Rutgers faculty, Ph.D. students, and affiliated experts.

This side of Eagleton includes the **RU Ready™** and **RU Voting™**<sup>9</sup> as well as the Young Elected Leaders Project<sup>10</sup>, the State House Express<sup>11</sup> and the Darien Learning Community<sup>12</sup>. Special programs are occasionally run on an ad-hoc basis, and include the Clifford P Case Professorship of Public Affairs, the Arthur J Holland Project on Ethics in Government and Albert W Lewitt Endowed Lecture, the Louis Gambaccini Civic Engagement Series and hosting the Senator Winona Lipman Chair in Women's political Leadership.

Undergraduate selection is rumored to be difficult. Undergraduate Associates, or UAs, come from a broad variety of backgrounds and academic interests. Associates come mostly from New Jersey, although one other came from Massachusetts and I came from Singapore. 2 students came from Rutgers Newark, and 1 student was in his mid-life as a non-traditional student. The racial backgrounds of minority students ranged from Middle-Eastern, Latinx, Black and East Asian. Academically, we ranged from political science majors to finance and business related fields. Naturally, a majority of us had political science backgrounds although the selection varied within that field from statistical social science concentration to electoral politics (I came in with a background in field organizing and comparative politics). There were slightly more men than women. Political leanings were

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<sup>9</sup> RU Ready™'s mission is to provide young people with encouragement and practical advice to enable them to participate actively in the civic life of New Brunswick.

• **RU Voting™**

RU Voting™ is a nonpartisan effort to register, educate, and mobilize Rutgers students for elections.

<sup>10</sup> The Young Elected Leaders Project studies and works with young people who run for public office. Since the project began in 2002, Eagleton has compiled a database of young elected officials, surveyed these young leaders, convened a conference in May 2003, and issued a report entitled "Political Generation Next: America's Young Elected Leaders."

<sup>11</sup> As part of its efforts to promote civic education about representative democracy, the Eagleton Institute is offering small grants to teachers of social studies in middle schools and high schools throughout New Jersey.

<sup>12</sup> The Darien Civic Engagement Project allows students to take what they learn in the classroom about American political thought and put it into action on the Rutgers campus and in the New Brunswick community by working on Eagleton's RU Ready and RU Voting programs. The DCEP is made possible by the generous support of Steven and Susan Darien and is coordinated in partnership with the Walt Whitman Center for Culture and Politics of Democracy and under the direction of the Rutgers Learning Community program in Undergraduate Academic Affairs.



generally to the left, but also featured conservative students. Most students had worked in some politically capacity—either interning at political campaigns, to representing high schools in State Commissions on education or within student government. Most, if not all of the students selected had also professed an interest in pursuing public policy/politics as a career selection.

Eagleton is well known for bringing in guest speakers who range from state commissioners to, more recently, an Associate Justice of the supreme court-Sonia Sotomayor. During my time at Eagleton, the more well-known speakers included Senator George Mitchell and Senator Dodd of Dodd-Frank Act fame. However, we were told as associates that even the less well known speakers had much value because of ‘networking’ needs. Every speaker that came to class was a connected figure in construction, state government, banking and business etc. Undergraduate Associates typically have a requirement (2 or more) to attend guest speaker events. Because the motto of Eagleton involves practicality, the buzz word ‘networking’ meant that we were encouraged to ask questions and to subtly seek career and employment opportunities. As the second semester professor, Tom Wilson used to say frequently, ‘Eagleton is a mafia’. What he meant was that the wealth of connections would have helped us get very far ahead.

### The start of my involvement

I had a very unusual start to my involvement in politics. Most students had wanted to be involved, more or less, from the beginning of the college careers. Some had ambitions even in high school. As an international student<sup>13</sup>, I came without any clear ambitions or

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<sup>13</sup> I arrived as a freshman on an F-1 visa in 2012, lost, dazed and confused—all alone.

plans, and was not even very involved in any activities during my first year—my entire time was devoted to research and academic work. I got my start with an offer of admission into the Honors Program at the end of my freshman year, and advice to seek out a mentor. Although I have since decided against going to law school, I chose the pre-law advisor, Professor Milton Heumann as was my career ambition then. I bumped into a then-senior, Sam Berman during my first meeting and after hearing my thoughts, Sam recommended that I join student government—so I did. As I became more involved in student government<sup>14</sup>, I started focusing on education policy. I looked at administrative bloat, the reduction of EOF<sup>15</sup>, the cut in Pell Grants—all things that had to do with basic tuition affordability. My interest in student politics and electoral politics then lead me to join the Darien Learning Community—a small band of students interested in the same things that I was like voter mobilization and the electoral politics of millennials. Eventually I continued being more active in student politics, continuing with my involvement in the United States Student Organization, the oldest and the largest federal student union, and New Jersey United Students, the statewide student organization. Towards the end of my Junior Year, I was elected as the legislative director of student government and help mobilize on-campus voter registration programs and lobbying visits to Trenton and Capitol Hill, showcasing my intense interest in politics. As far as I know, this was a well-beaten path to being selected as an associate, since several past RUSA members had shown their interest in politics the same way. However, for an international student, it was novel, and I grew a lot as a person during the journey.

I have to add the reasons why I chose to apply to the program as they are, in my opinion, markedly different from that of my peers. Aside from the rumors of excellent food, I had wanted to be part of a program that would teach me how government ‘worked’ so that I

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<sup>14</sup> Rutgers University Student Assembly

<sup>15</sup> Educational Opportunity Fund, used to aid students from traditionally underrepresented communities such as non-traditional students and immigrant families etc.

could use that to better strategize lobbying meetings and to know how to argue the case for, say, higher EOF funding. I was, and still am, very interested in student led movements and advocacy. Instead, what I received was not what I was searching for. As elaborated below, the classes focused on ‘how’ to get into lobbying, what made up a decision and decision making models, and how commissions in New Jersey worked. Not that any of these were poor choices, but the class content did not seem to empower me. I asked several other classmates and interestingly, it seemed to be the opinion of minority students that the coursework was very much institutionalized—while it revolved around critical thinking, it did not seem to encourage critical thinking about the class itself, or a meta-criticality: how to solve, for example, the problem of state legislators having mistaken notions of sexual assault climates on campus.

Ironically, while Eagleton has taught me to understand and appreciate politics as a person, it has also shown me that politics is not what I would like to do as a career. I don’t see this as a failure, but rather a very poignant lesson that bears immense significance in my life. I used to see politics as a ‘quick and dirty’ process, and as a naïve freshman and sophomore writing papers it was always so easy to quickly recommend solutions to failures in gerrymandering and campaign finance laws. I hope to avoid the same mistakes in this paper. What I learned instead was that the study of politics is not esoteric, and it need not be grounded in doctrinal theory (although a framework is always important). The beauty of politics can be most easily seen in observing real actors, and in realizing that most ‘political’ decisions can be best understood as simple, short-term decisive actions that bear more consequence than expected. I am going to graduate school to study sociology instead, but my lessons in politics and constitutional law and campaigning will always be a part of my academic self.

### The Classes- A Breakdown of Each Semester

The first semester was taught by Professor David Redlawsk, whose area of expertise lay in social science polling research and statistics. It was previously taught by Professor Pomper. The first semester class, titled the 'Practice of Politics', revolved around Camelot—a role playing game designed to teach us about small town 'practical politics'. We were assigned different roles—roles that might be realistic around town. I was a town councilor. Other roles included the planning commission, police chief and random townspeople all representing different interests. We clashed on several issues, such as increased police spending—as per the game plan. We also had mayoral elections, and many characters clashed over small issues. Academically, we covered Graham Allison's breakdown of the Cuban missile crisis in *Essence of Decision*, a book on different decision making models such as spiral and escalatory models and Standard Operating Decision making models. A significant number of the class members have expressed dislike for the Camelot role-playing game, and have questioned its significance and applicability in today's modern world.

In between the first and second semester was when most people, including myself, chose to have complete their internship requirements. I worked over the summer at a small lobbying firm working at state-level politics called Morford Drulis. The hours were flexible and it was in Trenton, which was accessibly. My clients included NJ Society for Economic and Environmental Development, the Dosimetrists Association of America and NJ Government Management Information Technology association. Along the way, I learned important skills like basic website coding and publishing, account balancing, and project

management. I treasure my time there, especially because it is uncommon for an international student to go into lobbying just 3 blocks away from the state house.

The second semester was taught by Tom Wilson, then a partner at lobbying firm Kaufman Zita and was less academically intensive. Tom Wilson was also once the chair of the state Republican Party. The second class was meant to substantiate our experiences of the internships held over the summer. Held mostly in the evenings, every session had a dinner where the associates would unwind and bond over food and drinks. The second part of the class would be a late evening talk by an invited guest—mostly people who worked in state government as commissioners, contractors. Some speakers worked in the private sector such as in finance, construction or consulting/lobbying. One of the more notable speakers that semester was Governor Jim Florio. We ended the semester with brief presentations about our internships.

The second semester was hard because one of the class passed away unexpectedly—Ed Romano. I used to have class with Ed for 6 hours on Wednesdays, with 3 hours under Professor Heumann and another 3 for the Institute. For some of the other members, it was particularly hard because of how close they were. Ed was involved with the Middlesex County Democrats and was also a Gardner fellow doing research on old train lines. On-campus, Ed was the president of the college democrats, and helped me in my bid for the vice presidency of the student government. His passing came as a huge tragedy to all of us, but also united the class in ways that I will always remember. Ed was a dear friend, and I appreciated that he was always full of laughter and wit.

The third and last semester was taught by Professor John Weingart, the associate director of the Eagleton Institute and focused on understanding the nitty-gritty details of state government, emphasizing the role that commissions have in state politics. New Jersey is unique because of the number of commissions that it has (they are 'in' but not 'of') the various state departments. There are around 500 commissions, although some are inactive. I focused on the College Affordability Study Commission, a commission created by legislature from the senate and designed to create a study and a report and disband after presenting that report to the legislature.

### My Research

I worked on small research papers at the end of every semester. In the first semester, I examined spiral models of decision making and came to the conclusion that standard operating procedures (SOPS, which are common in the military) are helpful in the short-term, but military institutions should take special effort to nurture leaders that have a 'streak' of rebelliousness so that these people can lead others with novel and creative departures from an SOP should they prove more effective.

In my second semester I wrote a brief paper on leadership development in small companies and came to the conclusion that for a majority of small lobbying firms, unless special effort was made to distinguish and nurture young professionals into taking partnership positions, the firms would eventually fail or be merged with other larger firms. This is because in lobbying, people are very much more attached to a lobbyist rather than the firm, and often brand name recognition does not carry much further than the individual. Therefore, in the long term, many legislators will refuse to meet with younger lobbyists unless trained to

do so. Despite New Jersey's liberalization, lobbying in the long term can actually become more conservative because the young individuals that tend to be mentored and find success 'fit' the mold that older industry players value—being white and male. Naturally, this has huge consequences for minorities and women who hope to have a career in state politics, as it does for the state in general—the industry feels very guilty of 'groupthink' and is highly conformative.

In my final semester I looked at the College Affordability study commission and wrote a paper addressing the structural deficiencies of the commission (as opposed to a policy based critique). I wrote about the fact that the commission was made out of much older people who likely never had to take on student debt, who were entirely white, and who, except for the sake of 2 female members, were male. I also wrote that the commission met too infrequently, and in the statehouse in Trenton on Wednesday afternoons, which would make it inaccessible to students. Lastly, I wrote that allowing students to give feedback to the commission required a pre-check in and registration before the testimony portion. I made separate suggestions including diversifying the board, and, as is the case in Maine, including a separate but subordinate student panel that is more flexible and faster in response.

All of these papers show a common theme and examine political structures with a critical take on race, identity, gender and class. Although I did not plan it this way, these are also my research interests.

Ramifications of work at Eagleton

It should go without saying by now that Eagleton has a huge social and political impact on New Jersey Politics. Therefore, it is entirely possible that Eagleton, as well as the people that it produces, can become a huge agent of change. With multiple members of each class graduating on into careers in the law or state government it is a near certainty that Eagleton, with its vast and well connected network and precipitate a change of culture in state government. Naturally, this will involve understanding *what* should be changed in state government, and how the program itself should change. However, all of these start with acknowledging that a program that is several decades old requires major changes to tackle sociocultural problems with a critical focus. Tom Wilson also put it quite succinctly in class: ‘Where Eagleton goes, New Jersey follows’.

Aside from macro-level critiques, however, I wish to point out that educational programs have a huge *introspective* effect on the individual. Education—what is taught and who it is taught by has a huge effect on the development of the person that is being taught’s identity. In a sense, this is more serious than the effect that the program would have had on *where* the person might be working next. As a minority, and an immigrant student<sup>16</sup>, there were many times where I felt that the class was not doing a good job of helping me to understand the problems that New Jersey was facing when it involved *me*. For example, I was struggling to understand why there was the lack of immigrant-background individuals and Asian Americans in state government when the state itself was so vibrantly full of both. In many cases, I wanted to see the ways in which political patronage was fueled by racism or sexism or classism, and think about how to fix those things. I came in fascinated by the terrible state of higher education in the United States and more specifically the lack of state appropriation towards state colleges. I came in with an inkling that community college

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<sup>16</sup> I am not an ‘immigrant’ in by US Government definitions, but culturally it makes sense to use the word



presidents had to make the special effort to become a legislator's 'favorite' or else lose crucial funding, and I wanted to know more about these things—instead, all I learned was that recall petitions in small town governments can be forged. I don't even know if that is a realistic portrayal. For me, having missed out on growing up in a family setting held together by American politics as well as the American high school experience, it was a constant struggle to obtain the correct and necessary context to understand things ranging from simple humor to pointing critiques on the state of politics today. After speaking with several other minority students, I realized that we all felt the same way. It seems to me, on a personal level, that the program is not as empowering as it could be for minority students. For white students, who often have an easier and more homogenous entry into civil service, the program could be immensely helpful. However, for students of color from disadvantaged backgrounds, more could be done to *empower* them. It is these thoughts that are driving the analysis of the program, and creating the foundation for this paper.

#### The state of New Jersey Politics today

Compared to most other state, New Jersey could be said to be 'okay'. The economy is expanding, and key economic indicators, like inequality, inflation and a lack of growth are all healthy right now. However, New Jersey has several areas that require special attention. For example, one third of New Jersey's population is a minority. There are just over half a million 'illegal' immigrants. It is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse states in the country, and is well known for generally progressive views. New Jersey has about a quarter of a million people under the poverty line, and Newark, New Jersey is the 4<sup>th</sup> poorest city in the nation. Coupled together with a broke public pension fund and an almost ravaged transportation trust fund, New Jersey faces immense challenges for the future., I first realized

that there was a gender inequality issue happening in the lobbying industry while I was doing my summer internship. There were very few women in politics or lobbying. What little they were came from homogenized backgrounds-White, upper middle income, and college-educated. Throughout my 2 months going back and forth to the state house, I saw how state politics isolated the general public of Trenton around it. While properties right next to the state house were worth millions, properties 2 blocks away were redline or defaulted upon. I saw only one other Asian American undergraduate working as an intern, and very few minorities.

Other current major issues in New Jersey politics include disagreements between the state government and the private sector, unequal redistricting, rampant heroin use and alleged corruption. While many of these are thought to be ‘political’ in scope, they are also decidedly social issues at heart, and must be view intersectionally. Within in the class, we also discussed crony politics, the lack of sustained, long-term planning and the lack of layman accessibility to state politics and policy.

It is noteworthy to recognize that the lack of minorities either in formal lected representation or in the affiliated branches of government is of dire consequence because New Jersey today is a map of unmatched diversity. New Jersey today is 16.7% Hispanic, 8.3% Asian American, and 14.5% Black. In 2011, while the 15 African-American legislators are just two shy of the number that would reflect the state's 14.5% black population, the eight Hispanic legislators are 12 short of the 20 that would reflect the state's 16.7% Hispanic population. Asian-Americans, who have grown to 7.8 percent of the population and only have two Asian-American legislators, are equally underrepresented, but their population is too

dispersed for redistricting to make a difference. Further research must be done—it is difficult to find numbers relating to New Jersey’s exact breakdown in the legislature. However, it is obvious that the lack of proper, if not affirmative, representation is at best worrying and at worse a mockery of the concept of democracy. Something must be done, and fast.

Where does Eagleton fit into this? I elaborated on Eagleton’s history at the beginning of the paper to showcase the fact that Eagleton was started as a suffrage ‘house’, and grew itself through decidedly ‘progressive’ means. In a sense, if the institute were to re-focus on its original means and intent, then it should realize that mere ‘education’ and civic engagement is insufficient for emancipation of women, people of color, and young students. Eagleton makes full use of its resources and its access—but, puzzlingly, not its history. The institution has reinvented itself as a neutral platform, but I argue that it is perhaps time for it, and possibly the school, to restore some of the old priorities. While the class is made up of students from diverse backgrounds, many of us (minority students) felt tokenized—as though our unique experiences from navigating an inherently hostile political system were somehow used to showcase the breadth of the class and not to form an actual guided approach to politics. During the second semester, I spent more time debating the instructor and the more conservative side of the class on the importance of women in politics. I cannot help but feel that so much more could have been done in that time should we have started out, as a class, with a clear and affirmative goal in mind.

A Critical Focus- Intersectionality, Feminist theory and Tokenism

The use of intersectionality and critical theory becomes immensely important when thinking about how to fix these issues. For example, how are we supposed to treat a problem like the one I raised in my second paper with older lobbyists? It's difficult to create a cohesive context to look at the ways in which, for example, women may be discouraged from taking careers in politics, and subsequently, the way patriarchal condescension may push out the few women who venture in. But how do we explain the lack of political education resources given out to people and notably women in low-income communities at the same time, while noticing that focusing on empowering individuals only along gender-specific circumstances can lead racial imbalances?

This is why 'Intersectionality' becomes essential. First used by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, and subsequently used by most leading third-wave feminists, intersectionality looks at different factors in either multiplicative or additive relationships. For example, Black Queer Women are more likely to face discrimination than Black straight women who are also more likely to face discrimination than White women. In so doing, I argue that it is utterly essential in trying to see what and how systemic discrimination begins and is continued. Without intersectionality or a basic understanding of power dynamics, a class on social policy or public politics becomes quickly irrelevant. What use is there in understanding why *one* particular leader is favored electorally when such a person becomes quickly irrelevant in America today? It is far better to understand the people and mechanisms that lead to such a person being in power-and what that power brings.

Without intersectionality and properly lead student discourse, what often arises in elite, exclusive classes of highly intelligent people is *Tokenism*. This is the idea that minority students are admitted simply because they help the organization fulfil the 'diversity quota',

rather than being able to meaningfully contribute to an atmosphere or shared experiences. I am, again, not arguing that this is why I, or anybody else was brought into the program. While being very grateful for being admitted and the opportunities that the program has afforded me, without a critical focus on intersectionality the wealth of shared experiences that minority students can bring into a space becomes under-utilized. In essences, they are ‘tokenized’ by default.

### Repressive Tolerance, Picking a Side and Living with It

It seemed like half of every political science lesson that I’ve been to has consisted of griping. This is not a bad thing—griping and identifying political dissatisfaction and failure is the first step to critical and comparative thinking. However, griping is something that one does at the start. It becomes obstructive past a certain point, at which it becomes imperative to *do* something, anything.

The public intellectual Herbert Marcuse, and to some extent, Hannah Arendt, wrote of the concepts of “Repressive Tolerance” and the “Banality of Evil”. Summarily, these concepts state that there are ideas that are (1) too dangerous to be allowed to propagate and that (2) ‘evil’ starts out with small ideas that normalize oppressive regimes. It’s a bit of a stretch to say that terms used to describe 1935 onward fascism in Germany are immediately applicable to the environs of central New Jersey. However, the popularity behind Donald’s Trump rise to political fame and power (edit: and his nomination for the 2016 presidency election) coupled with issues such as creeping invasions of civil liberties and the rise of mass incarceration should make us realize that these are issues that are intersectional connected

with campaign finance reform, voter enfranchisement and expansion of higher education. We cannot isolate the political from the social, or the social from the cultural any longer. Not being able to see these issues in an intersectional and critical light is disingenuous with being able to critique, say, the failures of campaign finance laws. If we are to merely critique without taking action, or empowering people, then we might as well not critique anything. As the saying goes, “If you are neutral in times of oppression, then you have chosen the side of the oppressor”. I am, however, not concluding that we are ‘living’ in oppression, but I argue that Eagleton can no longer afford to be the armchair intellectual, moderate and bi-partisan in a world that is rejecting moderation—there is no longer mere conversation, only advocacy.

#### Comparative Examples-IWL

The IWL (Institute for Women’s Leadership) forms an excellent example. The institute hosts the Leadership Scholars Program which is affirmative (women only) in formation and purpose. The program ends with a social action project, and encourages students to take on projects that address major social problems such as the lack of abortion rights, access to infrastructure and higher education, and addiction problems. In a way, students develop real world campaigning and organizing skills—skills that are quickly becoming more relevant than ‘simply’ knowing about political systems.

In many ways I think that Eagleton Undergraduate Associates should take on a project of their own—be it campaign finance, encouraging youth participation or addressing college affordability. They could use the format that IWL does, or have a joint class project with lobbying included. Personally, I feel that this is far more significant than a mock, in-class exercise like ‘Camelot’ which had few teaching moments and served to divide the class

according to arbitrary rules. Without such action, the programs doesn't serve to develop leaders and 'world changers' so much so as it is simply equipping us to be very, very good staffers.

### Further Discussion and Conclusion

While IWL does have its merits, it is also worth noting that IWL scholars programs and the Eagleton Institute serve very different purposes. Eagleton's greatest shield is also its greatest fault. Its respectability comes from being as neutral and as moderate as possible. This is a vitally needed function in the world *today*. In contrast, other programs, IWL included, serve a different function—they are affirmative. However, social factors are quickly changing, and we should remember that Eagleton was founded in an era of suffrage, for suffrage, by a suffragist. It has become far more useful to the student today to know how to navigate changing conditions and how to organize around these issues effectively. Such a student today would make a great leader (hopefully) tomorrow. Some more research is therefore necessary to decide when and how to strike that balance within the larger Rutgers Community.

I would like to once again express my gratitude to my friends, and the opportunities afforded to me through the program. This is by no means a 'snub'—I remain, faithfully, emotionally and professionally connected to Eagleton. I am proud to be an alumni. But I hope that my experiences will help shape future programs to be sharpened, and this paper serves as a teaching and pedagogical critique, nothing more, nothing less.

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