



Ready, Set, Run

Professor Nichola Gutgold has spent most of her career studying women in politics—and the obstacles they face in running for America’s highest office.

By STEPHANIE ANDERSON WITMER '05 MFA A&A

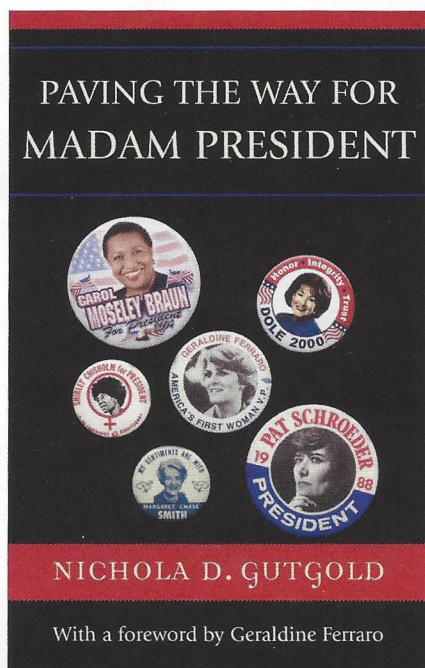
IS AMERICA

ready for a female president? Nichola Gutgold, communications professor and associate dean of the Schreyer Honors College, thinks so—and she should know.

Gutgold '99 PhD Lib has authored and co-authored several books on the topic, including 2006’s *Paving the Way for Madam President* and 2012’s *Gender and the American Presidency: Nine Presidential Women and the Barriers They Faced*. On Sept. 20, as part of the Alumni Association’s Huddle with the Faculty series, Gutgold presented her research and shared some surprising thoughts on the 2016 election. We talked with her to learn more:

What are the main obstacles women candidates for president face?

There’s the psychological obstacle. Many people say they’ll vote for a woman president, but when they step into the voting booth, they can’t quite make that commitment, because leadership in the United States has been defined in masculine terms, historically. And the media are especially



harsh on women candidates. Running for a political office is a highly visual enterprise, and often we scrutinize the appearance of candidates. By the time a woman has gained the experience to be a successful candidate, she is likely more than 50 years old. Ageism often figures in to the harsh media treatment of women.

The title of your talk poses the question “When will America be ready?” What’s the answer?

I think we *are* ready. Hillary Clinton’s bid in 2008

was really important because previous to that, the women who ran were symbolic candidates. She was extremely viable.

Do you have any predictions for 2016?

The 2008 election reminded me that it’s risky to make predictions. I didn’t know who Sarah Palin was when she first came onto the political scene. I think it’s possible, maybe even probable, that a woman will emerge who is unknown to us now, just like most people didn’t know who Barack Obama was until the Democratic National Convention in 2004.

What’s your latest project?

I’m working on a children’s version of my book *Paving the Way for Madam President*, with illustrations. From the polling I’ve done, I know if we get more young women active in politics, we’ll elect a woman. Putting a book in the hands of girls who are 6 to 12 years old will go a long way to say, “There *will* be a woman president of the United States, and it could be you.”

Huddle Up!

Upcoming events in the Alumni Association’s Huddle with the Faculty series:

Nov. 1

“Touring America’s Religious Landscape”

Roger Finke, professor of sociology and religious studies

Nov. 15

“Personalized Medicine: A Look Into the Future”

Marylyn Ritchie, director of the Center for Systems Genomics and associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology

Nov. 29

“Preserving Wealth and Relationships”

Cathy Falcon Bowen, professor and consumer issues specialist in the College of Agricultural Sciences

Huddle with the Faculty talks take place in the downstairs ballroom of the Nittany Lion Inn on home football Saturdays. Free breakfast refreshments begin at 8:30 a.m.; lectures begin at 9:00 a.m. No registration required. For more information, visit alumni.psu.edu/events