

WGST 4812E/5901E Special Topic: Sexuality Debates in Law and Feminism

DESCRIPTION:

Feminist theorists, activists and legal reformers often identify sexuality as a key site of oppression, if not the quintessential linchpin to patriarchy. At the same time, feminists are in dispute with one another about the meaning of sexuality, which sexual practices are oppressive, and which strategies will best bring about equality and liberation. At stake in these debates is determining the feminist agenda for social change, along with identifying which “side” is entitled to claim the feminist position on the issues.

With an emphasis on the contemporary socio-legal context, this class surveys a number of “hot topics,” including BDSM, pornography, sex work, sexual violence, and safe spaces. The goal is for us to engage with the substantive issues, consider the contrasting methodologies and theories employed to illuminate the issues, evaluate the various feminist approaches to social transformation, and explore the epistemic and ontological premises of different feminist positions. In the course of our work, we will grapple with various concepts including: agency, autonomy, consent, coercion, context, call-out culture, rape culture, carceral politics, sex equality, socialization, material and structural constraints, desire, pleasure and empowerment.