This course examines the legal status of women in the United States, focusing specifically on the 20th and 21st centuries. How has the law used gender, sex, sexuality, and race to legally enforce inequality between women and men (and among women)? We will examine the legal arguments feminists have used to advocate for legal change and how these arguments have changed over time, paying specific attention to debates about whether to make legal arguments based on formal equality, substantive equality, liberty, or privacy. We will also consider the pros and cons of using the law to advocate for social justice. Specific issues that may be covered include the civil and political participation of women (voting, jury service), employment discrimination, intimate relationships, reproduction, contraception and abortion, violence against women, women as criminal defendants, and women as law students, lawyers, and judges.

The course takes place on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 2:15 pm, and counts for 4 Honors credits.

Non-Honors students may enroll in this course with permission of the instructor. If you’re not an Honors students and would like to take this course, please email Prof. Nye @ jlnye@history.umass.edu.