

CONSENT: SEXUAL AGENCY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

GNDR_ST 321 / HISTORY 292



“Consent” is the ubiquitous standard used both by ordinary people and by legal institutions to distinguish between sexual activity that is harmful and non-harmful. But the way in which consent has been defined and constructed is also problematic in multiple ways. On one hand, women have historically found their ability to consent or not consent severely constrained by rape law and the marriage contract. On the other, sex crime laws classify and stereotype a range of non-normative “queer” behaviors, such as sex work, sex in public, the sexual conduct of HIV-positive people, and underage sex, as always and necessarily harmful and inherently non-consensual. Analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of how consent has been constructed in different times and places will allow us to sharpen our critical thinking skills and envision a more just future for gender and sexual governance.

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MW 3:30-4:50pm
Kresge 2-335