

New Course for Fall 2008
GWSS 3590 Topics: Social Change, Activism, Law, and Policy Studies

**Feminist Perspectives on
Sexual Assault and
Domestic Violence**

3 credits, Tuesday/Thursday, 12:45 to 2:00 pm, TC East Bank
Professor Mary Lay Schuster (mmlay@umn.edu; 624 2262)

This course focuses on the history of and contemporary thinking about activism, social change, public policies, and legal remedies directed toward sexual assault and domestic violence in the US, particularly from the point of view of feminist perspectives. The course deals with how social construction of women's and men's bodies, including their reproductive responsibilities, and changing notions of privacy contribute to attitudes toward stranger sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Readings in the course offer insight into early links between slavery and rape, between the temperance movement and domestic violence, and between views of child abuse and sexual abuse, as well as the increasing roles of psychiatry and social work in addressing such violence. The course traces how these historical foundations and cultural attitudes help determine contemporary responses by legal officials, and the course covers such diverse topics as the impact of HIV/AIDS on rape survivors; sexual abuse of men in prison; incest; and sex offender treatment. Students will visit the domestic violence court in Hennepin County, and the course ends with a close look at a project by the president of William Mitchell Law School on sexual predator laws, such as civil commitment and community notification, in terms of their effectiveness, feminist perspectives, and impact on Constitutional rights. Meets with PA 5690 (sec 001).



Readings include:

Eric Janus, *Failure to Protect: America's Sexual Predator Laws and the Rise of the Preventive State*.

Elizabeth Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of American Social Policy against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present*.

Frances Reddington and Betsy Kreisel, *Sexual Assault: The Victims, the Perpetrators, and the Criminal Justice System*

All majors welcome!