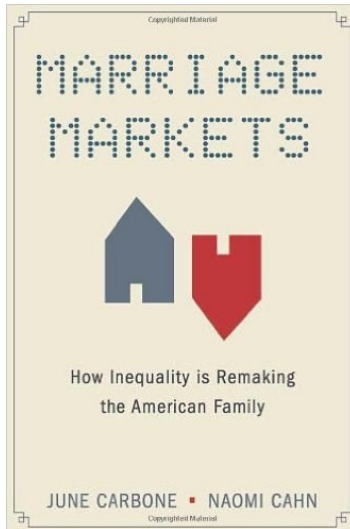


THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY



Naomi Cahn

Harold H. Greene Professor of Law
GWU Law School

Thursday

February 4 - 4:10pm

Scheler Humanities Forum
Linderman Library, Room 200

Marriage once rested on three overlapping systems of inequality. The first elevated men over women as heads of households, entrusting them with decision-making authority and duties of support. The second restricted access to marriage on the basis of race and sexual orientation. The third privileged marital intimate unions over nonmarital ones, reserving societal support for marriage while stigmatizing and criminalizing the latter. Marriage law has now changed to recognize the equal status of men and women in managing family finances and assuming responsibility for children. With the Supreme Court's 2015 opinion in *Obergefell*, same-sex couples, like interracial couples before them, have won equal access to marriage. And through a long line of decisions, couples now have the ability to form intimate unions either within or outside of marriage.

Does marital equality mean that nonmarital and marital unions should be treated in the same ways? Professor Cahn shows how the commitments between married and unmarried couples differ, explores the class nature of family structure, and then analyzes the varied meanings of the new state of "nonmarriage." She explains why the institution of nonmarriage deserves respect.

Co-sponsored with Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Health, Medicine and Society

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