

Books on Relevant Issues with a Gender Lens

All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s by Robert O. Self

In the 1960s, Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and War on Poverty promised an array of federal programs to assist working-class families. In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan declared the GOP the party of "family values" and promised to keep government out of Americans' lives. Again and again, historians have sought to explain the nation's profound political realignment from the 1960s to the 2000s, five decades that witnessed the fracturing of liberalism and the rise of the conservative right. The award-winning historian Robert O. Self is the first to argue that the separate threads of that realignment—from civil rights to women's rights, from the antiwar movement to Nixon's "silent majority," from the abortion wars to gay marriage, from the welfare state to neoliberal economic policies—all ran through the politicized American family.

Based on an astonishing range of sources, *All in the Family* rethinks an entire era. Self opens his narrative with the Great Society and its assumption of a white, patriotic, heterosexual man at the head of each family. Soon enough, civil rights activists, feminists, and gay rights activists, animated by broader visions of citizenship, began to fight for equal rights, protections, and opportunities. Led by Pauli Murray, Gloria Steinem, Harvey Milk, and Shirley Chisholm, among many others, they achieved lasting successes, including *Roe v. Wade*, antidiscrimination protections in the workplace, and a more inclusive idea of the American family.

Yet the establishment of new rights and the visibility of alternative families provoked, beginning in the 1970s, a furious conservative backlash. Politicians and activists on the right, most notably George Wallace, Phyllis Schlafly, Anita Bryant, and Jerry Falwell, built a political movement based on the perceived moral threat to the traditional family. Self writes that "family values" conservatives in fact "paved the way" for fiscal conservatives, who shared a belief in liberalism's invasiveness but lacked a populist message. Reagan's presidency united the two constituencies, which remain, even in these tumultuous times, the base of the Republican Party. *All in the Family*, an erudite, passionate, and persuasive explanation of our current political situation and how we arrived in it, will allow us to think anew about the last fifty years of American politics.

The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America by Margot Canaday

The Straight State is the most expansive study of the federal regulation of homosexuality yet written. Unearthing startling new evidence from the National Archives, Margot Canaday shows how the state systematically came to penalize homosexuality, giving rise to a regime of second-class citizenship that sexual minorities still live under today.

Canaday looks at three key arenas of government control--immigration, the military, and welfare--and demonstrates how federal enforcement of sexual norms emerged with the rise of the modern bureaucratic state. She begins at the turn of the twentieth century when the state first stumbled upon evidence of sex and gender nonconformity, revealing how homosexuality was policed indirectly through the exclusion of sexually "degenerate" immigrants and other regulatory measures aimed at combating poverty, violence, and vice. Canaday argues that the state's gradual awareness of homosexuality intensified during the later New Deal and through the postwar period as policies were enacted that explicitly used homosexuality to define who could enter the country, serve in the military, and collect state benefits. Midcentury repression was not a sudden response to newly visible gay subcultures,

Canaday demonstrates, but the culmination of a much longer and slower process of state-building during which the state came to know and to care about homosexuality across many decades.

Social, political, and legal history at their most compelling, *The Straight State* explores how regulation transformed the regulated: in drawing boundaries around national citizenship, the state helped to define the very meaning of homosexuality in America.