Week Four: First Wave Feminism and Women’s Suffrage

Monday, September 17
1. United States Declaration of Independence. 1776 (4 pages)
2. Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions. 1848. (10 pages)

Wednesday, September 19
2. De Gouges, Olympe. 1791. Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen (4 pages)

Friday, September 21: Discussion groups

**United States Declaration of Independence. 1776**

In Congress, July 4, 1776.
The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America, When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.
He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.
He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:
For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:
For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:
For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:
For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:
For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences
For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:
For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:
For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.
He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions
Seneca Falls, New York, 1848

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience has shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their
duty to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.
He has compelled her to submit to law in the formation of which she had no voice.
He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men, both natives and foreigners.
Having deprived her of this first right as a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.
He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.
He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.
He has made her morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master— the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty and to administer chastisement.
He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes and, in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of the women—the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man and giving all power into his hands.
After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.
He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.
He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her.
He allows her in church, as well as state, but a subordinate position, claiming apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the church.
He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.
He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.
He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.
Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation, in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.
In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the state and national legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of conventions embracing every part of the country.

**Resolutions**

*Whereas,* the great precept of nature is conceded to be that “man shall pursue his own true and substantial happiness.” Blackstone in his *Commentaries* remarks that this law of nature, being coeval with mankind and dictated by God himself, is, of course, superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries and at all times; no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this, and such of them as are valid derive all their force, and all their validity, and all their authority, mediately and immediately, from this original; therefore,

**Resolved,** That such laws as conflict, in any way, with the true and substantial happiness of woman, are contrary to the great precept of nature and of no validity, for this is superior in obligation to any other.

**Resolved,** that all laws which prevent woman from occupying such a station in society as her conscience shall dictate, or which place her in a position inferior to that of man, are contrary to the great precept of nature and therefore of no force or authority.

**Resolved,** that woman is man’s equal, was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such.

**Resolved,** that the women of this country ought to be enlightened in regard to the laws under which they live, that they may no longer publish their degradation by declaring themselves satisfied with their present position, nor their ignorance, by asserting that they have all the rights they want.

**Resolved,** that inasmuch as man, while claiming for himself intellectual superiority, does accord to woman moral superiority, it is preeminently his duty to encourage her to speak and teach, as she has an opportunity, in all religious assemblies.

**Resolved,** that the same amount of virtue, delicacy, and refinement of behavior that is required of woman in the social state also be required of man, and the same transgressions should be visited with equal severity on both man and woman.

**Resolved,** that the objection of indelicacy and impropriety, which is so often brought against woman when she addresses a public audience, comes with a very ill grace from those who encourage, by their attendance, her appearance on the stage, in the concert, or in feats of the circus.

**Resolved,** that woman has too long rested satisfied in the circumscribed limits which corrupt customs and a perverted application of the Scriptures have marked out for her, and that it is time she should move in the enlarged sphere which her great Creator has assigned her.

**Resolved,** that it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise.

**Resolved,** that the equality of human rights results necessarily from the fact of the identity of the race in capabilities and responsibilities.

**Resolved,** that the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for the securing to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions, and commerce.
Resolved, therefore, that, being invested by the Creator with the same capabilities and same consciousness of responsibility for their exercise, it is demonstrably the right and duty of woman, equally with man, to promote every righteous cause by every righteous means; and especially in regard to the great subjects of morals and religion, it is self-evidently her right to participate with her brother in teaching them, both in private and in public, by writing and by speaking, by any instrumentalities proper to be used, and in any assemblies proper to be held; and this being a self-evident truth growing out of the divinely implanted principles of human nature, any custom or authority adverse to it, whether modern or wearing the hoary sanction of antiquity, is to be regarded as a self-evident falsehood, and at war with mankind.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

Not until the Massachusetts State Legislature was called together on Tuesday, at the senate chambers in Boston, was any action taken for the present defense of the women of the state. An amendment was introduced to the state constitution providing for the protection of women from violence and wrongs, but it was defeated. The amendment was supported by a number of thinkers, and it is hoped that it will be reintroduced in the next session of the legislature.

During the session of the Knights of Labor Convention, held in a hotel in Boston, the question of the protection of women was again brought to the attention of the delegates. The Knights of Labor have always been in the forefront of the movement for the protection of women, and they have done much to advance the cause.

The General Assembly of the Knights of Labor at Cleveland, Ohio, met recently, and the question of the protection of women was again discussed. The Knights of Labor have always been in the forefront of the movement for the protection of women, and they have done much to advance the cause.

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FREEDOM IS THE HIGHEST OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

It is not the possession of wealth or education, the freedom to travel or work, but rather the freedom to be free. The freedom to think, to speak, to act without fear of reprisal or discrimination. The freedom to pursue one’s dreams and aspirations without hindrance or obstruction. The freedom to make choices and decisions without interference or manipulation.

The right to freedom is a fundamental human right, recognized by the United Nations and protected by international law. It is a right that should be enjoyed by all people, regardless of their gender, age, race, or any other characteristic.

In many parts of the world, the right to freedom is under threat. Governments may use the guise of law and order to suppress dissent and压制言论自由. The arbitrary detention of individuals, violence, and censorship are all forms of suppression and restriction of the right to freedom.

Despite these challenges, there are many who continue to fight for their freedom. Activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens alike are courageously standing up against tyranny and oppression. Their struggle is not only for themselves, but for all those who seek to realize the full potential of their human rights.

The right to freedom is not just a matter of individual rights, but a cornerstone of the rule of law and democracy. It is a fundamental principle of human rights that must be upheld and protected.

In conclusion, the right to freedom is a fundamental human right that should be protected and upheld. It is a right that must be fought for, not only in theory, but in practice. It is a right that must be cherished and defended, for it is the foundation upon which all other rights are built.

ENDNOTE

We can debate our approach to human rights, but we should never question the human right to freedom, which is at the very core of our humanity.
De Gouges, Olympe. 1791. Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen

Man, are you capable of being just? It is a woman who poses the question; you will not deprive her of that right at least. Tell me, what gives you sovereign empire to oppress my sex? Your strength? Your talents? Observe the Creator in his wisdom; survey in all her grandeur that nature with whom you seem to want to be in harmony, and give me, if you dare, an example of this tyrannical empire. Go back to animals, consult the elements, study plants, finally glance at all the modifications of organic matter, and surrender to the evidence when I offer you the means; search, probe, and distinguish, if you can, the sexes in the administration of nature. Everywhere you will find them mingled; everywhere they cooperate in harmonious togetherness in this immortal masterpiece.

Man alone has raised his exceptional circumstances to a principle. Bizarre, blind, bloated with science and degenerated—in a century of enlightenment and wisdom—into the crassest ignorance, he wants to command as a despot a sex which is in full possession of its intellectual faculties; he pretends to enjoy the Revolution and to claim his rights to equality in order to say nothing more about it.

Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen

For the National Assembly to decree in its last sessions, or in those of the next legislature:

Preamble

Mothers, daughters, sisters [and] representatives of the nation demand to be constituted into a national assembly. Believing that ignorance, omission, or scorn for the rights of woman are the only causes of public misfortunes and of the corruption of governments, [the women] have resolved to set forth a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of woman in order that this declaration, constantly exposed before all members of the society, will ceaselessly remind them of their rights and duties; in order that the authoritative acts of women and the authoritative acts of men may be at any moment compared with and respectful of the purpose of all political institutions; and in order that citizens’ demands, henceforth based on simple and incontestable principles, will always support the constitution, good morals, and the happiness of all.

Consequently, the sex that is as superior in beauty as it is in courage during the sufferings of maternity recognizes and declares in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following Rights of Woman and of Female Citizens.

Article I

Woman is born free and lives equal to man in her rights. Social distinctions can be based only on the common utility.

Article II

The purpose of any political association is the conservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of woman and man; these rights are liberty property, security, and especially resistance to oppression.

Article III

The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially with the nation, which is nothing but the union of woman and man; no body and no individual can exercise any authority which does not come expressly from it (the nation).
Article IV
Liberty and justice consist of restoring all that belongs to others; thus, the only limits on the exercise of the natural rights of woman are perpetual male tyranny; these limits are to be reformed by the laws of nature and reason.

Article V
Laws of nature and reason proscribe all acts harmful to society; everything which is not prohibited by these wise and divine laws cannot be prevented, and no one can be constrained to do what they do not command.

Article VI
The law must be the expression of the general will; all female and male citizens must contribute either personally or through their representatives to its formation; it must be the same for all: male and female citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, must be equally admitted to all honors, positions, and public employment according to their capacity and without other distinctions besides those of their virtues and talents.

Article VII
No woman is an exception; she is accused, arrested, and detained in cases determined by law. Women, like men, obey this rigorous law.

Article VIII
The law must establish only those penalties that are strictly and obviously necessary...

Article IX
Once any woman is declared guilty, complete rigor is exercised by law.

Article X
No one is to be disquieted for his very basic opinions; woman has the right to mount the scaffold; she must equally have the right to mount the rostrum, provided that her demonstrations do not disturb the legally established public order.

Article XI
The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of woman, since that liberty assures recognition of children by their fathers. Any female citizen thus may say freely, I am the mother of a child which belongs to you, without being forced by a barbarous prejudice to hide the truth; (an exception may be made) to respond to the abuse of this liberty in cases determined by law.

Article XII
The guarantee of the rights of woman and the female citizen implies a major benefit; this guarantee must be instituted for the advantage of all, and not for the particular benefit of those to whom it is entrusted.

Article XIII
For the support of the public force and the expenses of administration, the contributions of woman and man are equal; she shares all the duties and all the painful tasks; therefore, we must have the same share in the distribution of positions, employment, offices, honors, and jobs.

Article XIV
Female and male citizens have the right to verify, either by themselves or through their representatives, the necessity of the public contribution. This can only apply to women if they are granted an equal share, not only of wealth, but also of public administration, and in the determination of the proportion, the base, the collection, and the duration of the tax.
Article XV
The collectivity of women, joined for tax purposes to the aggregate of men, has the right to demand an accounting of his administration from any public agent.

Article XVI
No society has a constitution without the guarantee of rights and the separation of powers; the constitution is null if the majority of individuals comprising the nation have not cooperated in drafting it.

Article XVII
Property belongs to both sexes whether united or separate; for each it is an inviolable and sacred right, no one can be deprived of it, since it is the true patrimony of nature, unless the legally determined public need obviously dictates it, and then only with a just and prior indemnity.

Postscript
Woman, wake up; the tocsin of reason is being heard throughout the whole universe; discover your rights. The powerful empire of nature is no longer surrounded by prejudice, fanaticism, superstition, and lies. The flame of truth has dispersed all the clouds of folly and usurpation. Enslaved man has multiplied his strength and needs recourse to yours to break his chains. Having become free, he has become unjust to his companion. Oh, women, women! When will you cease to be blind? What advantage have you received from the Revolution? A more pronounced scorn, a more marked disdain. In the centuries of corruption you ruled only over the weakness of men. The reclamation of your patrimony, based on the wise decrees of nature—what have you to dread from such a fine undertaking? The bon mot of the legislator of the marriage of Cana? Do you fear that our French legislators, correctors of that morality, long ensnared by political practices now out of date, will only say again to you: women, what is there in common between you and us? Everything, you will have to answer. If they persist in their weakness in putting this non sequitur in contradiction to their principles, courageously oppose the force of reason to the empty pretensions of superiority; unite yourselves beneath the standards of philosophy; deploy all the energy of your character, and you will soon see these haughty men, not groveling at your feet as servile adorers, but proud to share with you the treasures of the Supreme Being. Regardless of what barriers confront you, it is in your power to free yourselves; you have only to want to....

Marriage is the tomb of trust and love. The married woman can with impunity give bastards to her husband, and also give them the wealth which does not belong to them. The woman who is unmarried has only one feeble right; ancient and inhuman laws refuse to her for her children the right to the name and the wealth of their father; no new laws have been made in this matter. If it is considered a paradox and an impossibility on my part to try to give my sex a honorable and just consistency, I leave it to men to attain glory for dealing with this matter; but while we wait, the way can be prepared through national education, the restoration of morals, and conjugal conventions.

Form for a Social Contract Between Man and Woman
We, _____ and ______, moved by our own will, unite ourselves for the duration of our lives, and for the duration of our mutual inclinations, under the following conditions: We intend and wish to make our wealth communal, meanwhile reserving to ourselves the right to divide it in favor of our children and of those toward whom we might have a particular inclination, mutually recognizing that our property belongs directly to our children, from whatever bed they come, and that all of them without distinction have the right to bear the name of the fathers and mothers who have acknowledged them, and we are charged to subscribe to the law which
punishes the renunciation of one's own blood. We likewise obligate ourselves, in case of separation, to divide our wealth and to set aside in advance the portion the law indicates for our children, and in the event of a perfect union, the one who dies will divest himself of half his property in his children's favor, and if one dies childless, the survivor will inherit by right, unless the dying person has disposed of half the common property in favor of one whom he judged deserving.

That is approximately the formula for the marriage act I propose for execution. Upon reading this strange document, I see rising up against me the hypocrites, the prudes, the clergy, and the whole infernal sequence. But how it [my proposal] offers to the wise the moral means of achieving the perfection of a happy government! . . .

Moreover, I would like a law which would assist widows and young girls deceived by the false promises of a man to whom they were attached; I would like, I say, this law to force an inconstant man to hold to his obligations or at least [to pay] an indemnity equal to his wealth. Again, I would like this law to be rigorous against women, at least those who have the effrontery to have recourse to a law which they themselves had violated by their misconduct, if proof of that were given. At the same time, as I showed in Le Bonheur primitif de l'homme, in 1788, that prostitutes should be placed in designated quarters. It is not prostitutes who contribute the most to the depravity of morals, it is the women of society. In regenerating the latter, the former are changed. This link of fraternal union will first bring disorder, but in consequence it will produce at the end a perfect harmony.

I offer a foolproof way to elevate the soul of women; it is to join them to all the activities of man; if man persists in finding this way impractical, let him share his fortune with woman, not at his caprice, but by the wisdom of laws. Prejudice falls, morals are purified, and nature regains all her rights. Add to this the marriage of priests and the strengthening of the king on his throne, and the French government cannot fail.


4. THE MONOGAMOUS FAMILY.

It develops from the pairing family, as we have already shown, during the time of transition from the middle to the higher stage of barbarism. Its final victory is one of the signs of beginning civilization. It is founded on male supremacy for the pronounced purpose of breeding children of indisputable paternal lineage. The latter is required, because these children shall later on inherit the fortune of their father. The monogamous family is distinguished from the pairing family by the far greater durability of wedlock, which can no longer be dissolved at the pleasure of either party. As a rule, it is only the man who can still dissolve it and cast off his wife. The privilege of conjugal faithlessness remains sanctioned for men at least by custom (the Code Napoleon concedes it directly to them, as long as they do not bring their concubines into the houses of their wives). This privilege is more and more enjoyed with the increasing development of society. If the woman remembers the ancient sexual practices and attempts to revive them, she is punished more severely than ever.

The whole severity of this new form of the family confronts us among the Greeks. While, as Marx observes, the position of the female gods in mythology shows an earlier period, when women still occupied a freer and more respected plane, we find woman already degraded by
the supremacy of man and the competition of slaves during the time of the heroes. Read in the Odysseia how Telemachos reproves and silences his mother. The captured young women, according to Homer, are delivered to the sensual lust of the victors. The leaders in the order of their rank select the most beautiful captives. The whole Iliad notoriously revolves around the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon about such a captured woman. In mentioning any hero of importance, the captured girl sharing his tent and bed is never omitted. These girls are also taken into the hero’s home country and his house, as Kassandra by Agamemnon in Aeschylus. Boys born by these female slaves receive a small share of the paternal heirloom and are regarded as free men. Teukros is such an illegitimate son and may use his father’s name. The wife is expected to put up with everything, while herself remaining chaste and faithful. Although the Greek woman of heroic times is more highly respected than she of the civilized period, still she is for her husband only the mother of his legal heirs, his first housekeeper and the superintendent of the female slaves, whom he can and does make his concubines at will. It is this practice of slavery by the side of monogamy, the existence of young and beautiful female slaves belonging without any restriction to their master, which from the very beginning gives to monogamy the specific character of being monogamy for women only, but not for men. And this character remains to this day.

For the Greeks of later times we must make a distinction between Dorians and Ionians. The former, with Sparta as their classic example, have in many respects still more antiquated marriage customs than even Homer illustrates. In Sparta existed a form of the pairing family modified by the contemporaneous ideas of the state and still recalling group marriage in many ways. Sterile marriages were dissolved. King Anaxandridas (about 650 before Christ) took another wife besides his childless one and kept two households. About the same time King Ariston added another wife to two childless ones, one of which he dismissed. Furthermore, several brothers could have one wife in common; a friend who liked his friend’s wife better than his own could share her with him, and it was not considered indecent to place a wife at the disposal of a sturdy “stallion,” as Bismarck would have said, even though he might not be a citizen. A certain passage in Plutarch, where a Spartan matron refers a lover, who persists in making offers to her, to her husband, seems to indicate — according to Schoemann — even a still greater sexual freedom. Also adultery, faithlessness of a wife behind her husband’s back, was unheard of. On the other hand, domestic slavery in Sparta, at least during the best time, was unknown, and the serf Helots lived on separate country seats. Hence there was less temptation for a Spartan to hold intercourse with other women. As was to be expected under such circumstances, the women of Sparta occupied a more highly respected place than those of other Greeks. Spartan women and the Athenian hetaerae were the only Greek women of whom the ancients speak respectfully and whose remarks they considered worthy of notice.

Quite a different condition among Ionians, whose representative is Athens. The girls learned only to spin, weave and sew, at the most a little reading and writing. They were practically shut in and had only the company of other women. The women’s room formed a separate part of the house, on the upper floor or in a rear building, where men, especially strangers, did not easily enter and whither the women retreated when male visitors came. The women did not leave the house without being accompanied by a female slave. At home they were strictly guarded. Aristophanes speaks of Molossian dogs that were kept to frighten off adulterers. And at least in the Asiatic towns, eunuchs were kept for guarding women. Even at Herodotus’ time these eunuchs were manufactured for the trade, and according to Wachsmuth not for barbarians
alone. By Euripides woman is designated as "oikurema," a neuter signifying an object for housekeeping, and beside the business of breeding children she served to the Athenian for nothing but his chief house maid. The man had his gymnastic exercises, his public meetings, from which the women were excluded. Besides, the man very often had female slaves at his disposal, and during the most flourishing time of Athens an extensive prostitution which was at least patronized by the state. It was precisely on the basis of this prostitution that the unique type of Ionic women developed; the hetaerae. They rose by esprit and artistic taste as far above the general level of antique womanhood as the Spartan women by their character. But that it was necessary to become a hetaera before one could be a woman, constitutes the severest denunciation of the Athenian family.

The Athenian family became in the course of time the model after which not only the rest of the Ionians, but gradually all the Greeks at home and abroad molded their domestic relations. Nevertheless, in spite of all seclusion and watching, the Grecian ladies found sufficient opportunity for deceiving their husbands. The latter who would have been ashamed of betraying any love for their wives, found recreation in all kinds of love affairs with hetaerae. But the degradation of the women was avenged in the men and degraded them also, until they sank into the abomination of boy-love. They degraded their gods and themselves by the myth of Ganymedes.

Such was the origin of monogamy, as far as we may trace it in the most civilized and most highly developed nation of antiquity. It was by no means a fruit of individual sex-love and had nothing to do with the latter, for the marriages remained as conventional as ever. Monogamy was the first form of the family not founded on natural, but on economic conditions, viz.: the victory of private property over primitive and natural collectivism. Supremacy of the man in the family and generation of children that could be his offspring alone and were destined to be the heirs of his wealth—these were openly avowed by the Greeks to be the sole objects of monogamy. For the rest it was a burden to them, a duty to the gods, the state and their own ancestors, a duty to be fulfilled and no more. In Athens the law enforced not only the marriage, but also the fulfillment of a minimum of the so-called matrimonial duties on the man's part.

Monogamy, then, does by no means enter history as a reconciliation of man and wife and still less as the highest form of marriage. On the contrary, it enters as the subjugation of one sex by the other, as the proclamation of an antagonism between the sexes unknown in all preceding history. In an old unpublished manuscript written by Marx and myself in 1846, I find the following passage: "The first division of labor is that of man and wife in breeding children." And to-day I may add: The first class antagonism appearing in history coincides with the development of the antagonism of man and wife in monogamy, and the first class oppression with that of the female by the male sex. Monogamy was a great historical progress. But by the side of slavery and private property it marks at the same time that epoch which, reaching down to our days, takes with all progress also a step backwards, relatively speaking, and develops the welfare and advancement of one by the woe and submission of the other. It is the cellular form of civilized society which enables us to study the nature of its now fully developed contrasts and contradictions.

The old relative freedom of sexual intercourse by no means disappeared with the victory of the pairing or even of the monogamous family. "The old conjugal system, now reduced to narrower
limits by the gradual disappearance of the punaluan groups, still environed the advancing family, which it was to follow to the verge of civilization.... It finally disappeared in the new form of hetaerism, which still follows mankind in civilization as a dark shadow upon the family." By hetaerism Morgan designates sexual intercourse of men with unmarried women outside of the monogamous family, flourishing, as is well known, during the whole period of civilization in many different forms and tending more and more to open prostitution. This hetaerism is directly derived from group marriage, from the sacrificial surrender of women for the purpose of obtaining the right to chastity. The surrender for money was at first a religious act; it took place in the temple of the goddess of love and the money flowed originally into the treasury of the temple. The hierodulae of Anaitis in Armenia, of Aphrodite in Corinth and the religious dancing girls of India attached to the temples, the so-called bajaderes (derived from the Portuguese "balladera," dancing girl), were the first prostitutes. The surrender, originally the duty of every woman, was later on practiced by these priestesses alone in representation of all others.

Among other nations, hetaerism is derived from the sexual freedom permitted to girls before marriage—also a survival of the group marriage, only transmitted by another route. With the rise of different property relations, in the higher stage of barbarism, wage labor appears sporadically by the side of slavery, and at the same time its unavoidable companion, professional prostitution of free women by the side of the forced surrender of female slaves. It is the heirloom bequeathed by group marriage to civilization, a gift as ambiguous as everything else produced by ambiguous, double-faced, schismatic and contradictory civilization. Here monogamy, there hetaerism and its most extreme form, prostitution. Hetaerism is as much a social institution as all others. It continues the old sexual freedom—for the benefit of the men. In reality not only permitted, but also assiduously practised by the ruling class, it is denounced only nominally. Still in practice this denunciation strikes by no means the men who indulge in it, but only the women. These are ostracised and cast out by society, in order to proclaim once more the fundamental law of unconditional male supremacy over the female sex.

However, a second contradiction is thereby developed within monogamy itself. By the side of the husband, who is making his life pleasant by hetaerism, stands the neglected wife. And you cannot have one side of the contradiction without the other, just as you cannot have the whole apple after eating half of it. Nevertheless this seems to have been the idea of the men, until their wives taught them a lesson. Monogamy introduces two permanent social characters that were formerly unknown: the standing lover of the wife and the cuckold. The men had gained the victory over the women, but the vanquished magnanimously provided the coronation. In addition to monogamy and hetaerism, adultery became an unavoidable social institution—denounced, severely punished, but irrepressible. The certainty of paternal parentage rested as of old on moral conviction at best, and in order to solve the unreconcilable contradiction, the code Napoléon decreed in its article 312: "L'enfant conçu pendant le mariage a pour père le mari;" the child conceived during marriage has for its father—the husband. This is the last result of three thousand years of monogamy.

Thus we have in the monogamous family, at least in those cases that remain true to historical development and clearly express the conflict between man and wife created by the exclusive supremacy of men, a miniature picture of the contrasts and contradictions of society at large. Split by class-differences since the beginning of civilization, society has been unable to reconcile
and overcome these antitheses. Of course, I am referring here only to those cases of monogamy, where matrimonial life actually remains in accord with the original character of the whole institution, but where the wife revolts against the rule of the man. Nobody knows better than your German philistine that not all marriages follow such a course. He does not understand how to maintain the control of his own home any better than that of the State, and his wife is, therefore, fully entitled to wearing the trousers, which he does not deserve. But he thinks himself far superior to his French companion in misery, who more frequently fares far worse.

The monogamous family, by the way, did not everywhere and always appear in the classic severe form it had among the Greeks. Among the Romans, who as future conquerors of the world had a sharper although less refined eye than the Greeks, the women were freer and more respected. A Roman believed that the conjugal faith of his wife was sufficiently safeguarded by his power over her life and death. Moreover, the women could voluntarily dissolve the marriage as well as the men. But the highest progress in the development of monogamy was doubtless due to the entrance of the Germans into history, probably because on account of their poverty their monogamy had not yet fully outgrown the pairing family. Three facts mentioned by Tacitus favor this conclusion: In the first place, although marriage was held very sacred—"they are satisfied with one wife, the women are protected by chastity"—still polygamy was in use among the distinguished and the leaders of the tribes, as was the case in the pairing families of the American Indians. Secondly, the transition from maternal to paternal law could have taken place only a short while before, because the mother's brother—the next male relative in the gens by maternal law—was still considered almost a closer relative than the natural father, also in accordance with the standpoint of the American Indians. The latter furnished to Marx, according to his own testimony, the key to the comprehension of German primeval history. And thirdly, the German women were highly respected and also influenced public affairs, a fact directly opposed to monogamic male supremacy. In all these things the Germans almost harmonize with the Spartans, who, as we saw, also had not fully overcome the pairing family. Hence in this respect an entirely new element succeeded to the world's supremacy with the Germans. The new monogamy now developing the ruins of the Roman world from the mixture of nations endowed male rule with a milder form and accorded to women a position that was at least outwardly far more respected and free than classical antiquity ever knew. Not until now was there a possibility of developing from monogamy—in it, by the side of it or against it, as the case might be—the highest ethical progress we owe to it: the modern individual sexlove, unknown to all previous ages.

This progress doubtless arose from the fact that the Germans still lived in the pairing family and inoculated monogamy as far as possible with the position of women corresponding to the former. It was in no way due to the legendary and wonderfully pure natural qualities of the Germans. These qualities were limited to the simple fact that the pairing family indeed does not create the marked moral contrasts of monogamy. On the contrary, the Germans, especially those who wandered southeast among the nomadic nations of the Black Sea, had greatly degenerated morally. Beside the equestrian tricks of the inhabitants of the steppe they had also acquired some very unnatural vices. This is expressly confirmed of the Thaifali by Ammianus and of the Heruli by Prokop.

Although monogamy was the only one of all known forms of the family in which modern sexlove could develop, this does not imply that it developed exclusively or even principally as mutual
love of man and wife. The very nature of strict monogamy under man's rule excluded this. Among all historically active, i. e., ruling, classes matrimony remained what it had been since the days of the pairing family—a conventional matter arranged by the parents. And the first historical form of sexlove as a passion, as an attribute of every human being (at least of the ruling classes), the specific character of the highest form of the sexual impulse, this first form, the love of the knights in the middle ages, was by no means matrimonial love, but quite the contrary. In its classic form, among the Provençals, it heads with full sails for adultery and their poets extol the latter. The flower of Provençal love poetry, the Albas, describe in glowing colors how the knight sleeps with his adored—the wife of another—while the watchman outside calls him at the first faint glow of the morning (alba) and enables him to escape unnoticed. The poems culminate in the parting scene. Likewise the Frenchmen of the north and also the honest Germans adopted this style of poetry and the manner of knightly love corresponding to it. Old Wolfram von Eschenbach has left us three wonderful "day songs" treating this same questionable subject, and I like them better than his three heroic epics.

Civil matrimony in our day is of two kinds. In Catholic countries, the parents provide a fitting spouse for their son as of old, and the natural consequence is the full development of the contradictions inherent to monogamy: voluptuous hetaerism on the man's part, voluptuous adultery of the woman. Probably the Catholic church has abolished divorce for the simple reason that it had come to the conclusion, there was as little help for adultery as for death. In Protestant countries, again, it is the custom to give the bourgeois son more or less liberty in choosing his mate. Hence a certain degree of love may be at the bottom of such a marriage and for the sake of propriety this is always assumed, quite in keeping with Protestant hypocrisy. In this case hetaerism is carried on less strenuously and adultery on the part of the woman is not so frequent. But as human beings remain under any form of marriage what they were before marrying, and as the citizens of Protestant countries are mostly philistines, this Protestant monogamy on the average of the best cases confines itself to the community of a leaden ennui, labeled wedded bliss. The best mirror of these two species of marriage is the novel, the French novel for the Catholic, the German novel for the Protestant brand. In both of these novels they "get one another:" in the German novel the man gets the girl, in the French novel the husband gets the horns. It does not always go without saying which of the two deserves the most pity. For this reason the tediousness of the German novels is abhorred as much by the French bourgeois as the "immorality" of the French novels by the German philistine. Of late, since Berlin became cosmopolitan, the German novel begins to treat somewhat timidly of the hetaerism and adultery that a long time ago became familiar features of that city.

In both cases the marriage is influenced by the class environment of the participants, and in this respect it always remains conventional. This conventionalism often enough results in the most pronounced prostitution—sometimes of both parties, more commonly of the woman. She is distinguished from a courtesane only in that she does not offer her body for money by the hour like a commodity, but sells it into slavery for once and all. Fourier's words hold good with respect to all conventional marriages: "As in grammar two negatives make one affirmative, so in matrimonial ethics, two prostitutions are considered as one virtue." Sexual love in man's relation to woman becomes and can become the rule among the oppressed classes alone, among the proletarians of our day—no matter whether this relation is officially sanctioned or not. Here all the fundamental conditions of classic monogamy have been abolished. Here all property is missing and it was precisely for the protection and inheritance of this that monogamy and man
rule were established. Hence all incentive to make this rule felt is wanting here. More still, the funds are missing. Civil law protecting male rule applies only to the possessing classes and their intercourse with proletarians. Law is expensive and therefore the poverty of the laborer makes it meaningless for his relation to his wife. Entirely different personal and social conditions decide in this case. And finally, since the great industries have removed women from the home to the labor market and to the factory, the last remnant of man rule in the proletarian home has lost its ground—except, perhaps, a part of the brutality against women that has become general since the advent of monogamy. Thus the family of the proletarian is no longer strictly monogamous, even with all the most passionate love and the most unalterable loyalty of both parties, and in spite of any possible clerical or secular sanction. Consequently the eternal companions of monogamy, hetaerism and adultery, play an almost insignificant role here. The woman has practically regained the right of separation, and if a couple cannot agree, they rather separate. In short, the proletarian marriage is monogamous in the etymological sense of the word, but by no means in a historical sense.

True, our jurists hold that the progress of legislation continually lessens all cause of complaint for women. The modern systems of civil law recognize, first that marriage, in order to be legal, must be a contract based on voluntary consent of both parties, and secondly that during marriage the relations of both parties shall be founded on equal rights and duties. These two demands logically enforced will, so they claim, give to women everything they could possibly ask. This genuinely juridical argumentation is exactly the same as that used by the radical republican bourgeois to cut short and dismiss the proletarian. The labor contract is said to be voluntarily made by both parties. But it is considered as voluntary when the law places both parties on equal terms on paper. The power conferred on one party by the division of classes, the pressure thereby exerted on the other party, the actual economic relation of the two—all this does not concern the law. Again, during the term of the contract both parties are held to have equal rights, unless one has expressly renounced his right. That the economic situation forces the laborer to give up even the last semblance of equality, that is not the fault of the law.

In regard to marriage, even the most advanced law is completely satisfied after both parties have formally declared their willingness. What passes behind the juridical scenes where the actual process of living is going on, and how this willingness is brought about, that cannot be the business of the law and the jurist. Yet the simplest legal comparison should show to the jurist what this willingness really means. In those countries where a legitimate portion of the parental wealth is assured to children and where these cannot be disinherited—in Germany, in countries with French law, etc.—the children are bound to secure the consent of their parents for marrying. In countries with English law, where the consent of the parents is by no means a legal qualification of marriage, the parents have full liberty to bequeath their wealth to anyone and may disininherit their children at will. Hence it is clear that among classes having any property to bequeath the freedom to marry is not a particle greater in England and America than in France and Germany.

The legal equality of man and woman in marriage is by no means better founded. Their legal inequality inherited from earlier stages of society is not the cause, but the effect of the economic oppression of women. In the ancient communistic household comprising many married couples and their children, the administration of the household entrusted to women was just as much a public function, a socially necessary industry, as the procuring of food by men. In the
patriarchal and still more in the monogamous family this was changed. The administration of the household lost its public character. It was no longer a concern of society. It became a private service. The woman became the first servant of the house, excluded from participation in social production. Only by the great industries of our time the access to social production was again opened for women—for proletarian women alone, however. This is done in such a manner that they remain excluded from public production and cannot earn anything, if they fulfill their duties in the private service of the family; or that they are unable to attend to their family duties, if they wish to participate in public industries and earn a living independently. As in the factory, so women are situated in all business departments up to the medical and legal professions. The modern monogamous family is founded on the open or disguised domestic slavery of women, and modern society is a mass composed of molecules in the form of monogamous families. In the great majority of cases the man has to earn a living and to support his family, at least among the possessing classes. He thereby obtains a superior position that has no need of any legal special privilege. In the family, he is the bourgeois, the woman represents the proletariat. In the industrial world, however, the specific character of the economic oppression weighing on the proletariat appears in its sharpest outlines only after all special privileges of the capitalist class are abolished and the full legal equality of both classes is established. A democratic republic does not abolish the distinction between the two classes. On the contrary, it offers the battleground on which this distinction can be fought out. Likewise the peculiar character of man’s rule over woman in the modern family, the necessity and the manner of accomplishing the real social equality of the two, will appear in broad daylight only then, when both of them will enjoy complete legal equality. It will then be seen that the emancipation of women is primarily dependent on the re-introduction of the whole female sex into the public industries. To accomplish this, the monogamous family must cease to be the industrial unit of society.

We have, then, three main forms of the family, corresponding in general to the three main stages of human development. For savagery group marriage, for barbarism the pairing family, for civilization monogamy supplemented by adultery and prostitution. Between the pairing family and monogamy, in the higher stage of barbarism, the rule of men over female slaves and polygamy is inserted.

As we proved by our whole argument, the progress visible in this chain of phenomena is connected with the peculiarity of more and more curtailing the sexual freedom of the group marriage for women, but not for men. And group marriage is actually practised by men to this day. What is considered a crime for women and entails grave legal and social consequences for them, is considered honorable for men or in the worst case a slight moral blemish born with pleasure. But the more traditional hetaerism is changed in our day by capitalistic production and conforms to it, the more hetaerism is transformed into undisguised prostitution, the more demoralizing are its effects. And it demoralizes men far more than women. Prostitution does not degrade the whole female sex, but only the luckless women that become its victims, and even those not to the extent generally assumed. But it degrades the character of the entire male world. Especially a long engagement is in nine cases out of ten a perfect training school of adultery.
We are now approaching a social revolution, in which the old economic foundations of monogamy will disappear just as surely as those of its complement, prostitution. Monogamy arose through the concentration of considerable wealth in one hand—a man's hand—and from the endeavor to bequeath this wealth to the children of this man to the exclusion of all others. This necessitated monogamy on the woman's, but not on the man's part. Hence this monogamy of women in no way hindered open or secret polygamy of men. Now, the impending social revolution will reduce this whole care of inheritance to a minimum by changing at least the overwhelming part of permanent and inheritable wealth—the means of production—into social property. Since monogamy was caused by economic conditions, will it disappear when these causes are abolished?

One might reply, not without reason: not only will it not disappear, but it will rather be perfectly realized. For with the transformation of the means of production into collective property, wage labor will also disappear, and with it the proletariat and the necessity for a certain, statistically ascertainable number of women to surrender for money. Prostitution disappears and monogamy, instead of going out of existence, at last becomes a reality—for men also.

At all events, the situation will be very much changed for men. But also that of women, and of all women, will be considerably altered. With the transformation of the means of production into collective property the monogamous family ceases to be the economic unit of society. The private household changes to a social industry. The care and education of children becomes a public matter. Society cares equally well for all children, legal or illegal. This removes the care about the "consequences" which now forms the essential social factor—moral and economic—hindering a girl to surrender unconditionally to the beloved man. Will not this be sufficient cause for a gradual rise of a more unconventional intercourse of the sexes and a more lenient public opinion regarding virgin honor and female shame? And finally, did we not see that in the modern world monogamy and prostitution, though antitheses, are inseparable and poles of the same social condition? Can prostitution disappear without engulfing at the same time monogamy?

Here a new element becomes active, an element which at best existed only in the germ at the time when monogamy developed: individual sexlove.

Before the middle ages we cannot speak of individual sexlove. It goes without saying that personal beauty, intimate intercourse, harmony of inclinations, etc., awakened a longing for sexual intercourse in persons of different sex, and that it was not absolutely immaterial to men and women, with whom they entered into such most intimate intercourse. But from such a relation to our sexlove there is a long way yet. All through antiquity marriages were arranged for the participants by the parents, and the former quietly submitted. What little matrimonial love was known to antiquity was not subjective inclination, but objective duty; not cause, but corollary of marriage. Love affairs in a modern sense occurred in classical times only outside of official society. The shepherds whose happiness and woe in love is sung by Theocritos and Moschus, such as Daphnis and Chloë of Longos, all these were slaves who had no share in the state and in the daily sphere of the free citizen. Outside of slave circles we find love affairs only as products of disintegration of the sinking old world. Their objects are women who also are standing outside of official society, hetaerae that are either foreigners or liberated slaves: in Athens since the beginning of its decline, in Rome at the time of the emperors. If love affairs...
really occurred between free male and female citizens, it was only in the form of adultery. And to the classical love poet of antiquity, the old Anakreon, sexlove in our sense was so immaterial, that he did not even care a fig for the sex of the beloved being.

Our sexlove is essentially different from the simple sexual craving, the Eros, of the ancients. In the first place it presupposes mutual love. In this respect woman is the equal of man, while in the antique Eros her permission is by no means always asked. In the second place our sexlove has such a degree of intensity and duration that in the eyes of both parties lack of possession and separation appear as a great, if not the greatest, calamity. In order to possess one another they play for high stakes, even to the point of risking their lives, a thing heard of only in adultery during the classical age. And finally a new moral standard is introduced for judging sexual intercourse. We not only ask: "Was it legal or illegal?" but also: "Was it caused by mutual love or not?" Of course, this new standard meets with no better fate in feudal or bourgeois practice than all other moral standards—it is simply ignored. But neither does it fare worse. It is recognized just as much as the others—in theory, on paper. And that is all we can expect at present.

Where antiquity left off with its attempts at sexual love, there the middle ages resumed the thread: with adultery. We have already described the love of the knights that invented the day songs. From this love endeavoring to break through the bonds of marriage to the love destined to found marriage, there is a long distance which was never fully traversed by the knights. Even in passing on from the frivolous Romanic race to the virtuous Germans, we find in the Nibelungen song Kriemhild, who secretly is no less in love with Siegfried than he with her, meekly replying to Gunther's announcement that he has pledged her in troth to a certain knight whom he does not name: "You need not beg for my consent; as you will demand, so I shall ever be; whomever you, sir, will select for my husband, I shall willingly take in troth." It does not enter her head at all that her love could find any consideration. Gunther asks for Brunhild, Etzel for Kriemhild without ever having seen one another. The same is true of the suit of Gutrun Sigebant of Ireland for the Norwegian Ute and of Hetel of Hegelingen for Hilda of Ireland. When Siegfried of Morland, Hartmut of Oranien and Herwig of Sealand court Gutrun, then it happens for the first time that the lady voluntarily decides, favoring the last named knight. As a rule the bride of the young prince is selected by his parents. Only when the latter are no longer alive, he chooses his own bride with the advice of the great feudal lords who in all cases of this kind have a decisive voice. Nor could it be otherwise. For the knight and the baron as well as for the ruler of the realm himself, marriage is a political act, an opportunity for increasing their power by new federations. The interest of the house must decide, not the arbitrary inclination of the individual. How could love have a chance to decide the question of marriage in the last instance under such conditions?

The same held good for the bourgeois of the medieval towns, the members of the guilds. Precisely the privileges protecting them, the clauses and restrictions of the guild charters, the artificial lines of division separating them legally, here from the other guilds, there from their journeymen and apprentices, drew a sufficiently narrow circle for the selection of a fitting bourgeois spouse. Under such a complicated system, the question of fitness was unconditionally decided, not by individual inclination, but by family interests.
In the overwhelming majority of cases the marriage contract thus remained to the end of the middle ages what it had been from the outset: a matter that was not decided by the parties most interested. In the beginning one was already married from his birth—married to a whole group of the other sex. In the later forms of group marriage, a similar relation was probably maintained, only under a continual narrowing of the group. In the pairing family it is the rule for mothers to exchange mutual pledges for the marriage of their children. Here also the main consideration is given to new ties of relationship that will strengthen the position of the young couple in the gens and the tribe. And when with the preponderance of private property over collective property and with the interest for inheritance paternal law and monogamy assumed the supremacy, then marriage became still more dependent on economic considerations. The form of purchase marriage disappears, but the essence of the transaction is more and more intensified, so that not only the woman, but also the man have a fixed price—not according to his qualities, but to his wealth. That mutual fondness of the marrying parties should be the one factor dominating all others had always been unheard of in the practice of the ruling classes. Such a thing occurred at best in romances or—among the oppressed classes that were not counted.

This was the situation encountered by capitalist production when it began to prepare, since the epoch of geographical discoveries, for the conquest of the world by international trade and manufacture. One would think that this mode of making the marriage contract would have been extremely acceptable to capitalism, and it was. And yet—the irony of fate is inexplicable—capitalist production had to make the decisive breach through this mode. By changing all things into commodities, it dissolved all inherited and traditional relations and replaced time hallowed custom and historical right by purchase and sale, by the "free contract." And the English jurist, H. S. Maine, thought he had made a stupendous discovery by saying that our whole progress over former epochs consisted in arriving from status to contract, from inherited to voluntarily contracted conditions. So far as this is correct, it had already been mentioned in the Communist Manifesto.

But in order to make contracts, people must have full freedom over their persons, actions and possessions. They must furthermore be on terms of mutual equality. The creation of these "free" and "equal" people was precisely one of the main functions of capitalistic production. What though this was done at first in a half-conscious way and, moreover, in a religious disguise? Since the Lutheran and Calvinist reformation the thesis was accepted that a human being is fully responsible for his actions only then, when these actions were due to full freedom of will. And it was held to be a moral duty to resist any compulsion for an immoral action. How did this agree with the prevailing practice of match-making?

Marriage according to bourgeois conception was a contract, a legal business affair, and the most important one at that, because it decided the weal and woe of body and spirit of two beings for life. At that time the agreement was formally voluntary; without the consent of the contracting parties nothing could be done. But it was only too well known how this consent was obtained and who were really the contracting parties. If, however, perfect freedom of decision is demanded for all other contracts, why not for this one? Did not the two young people who were to be coupled together have the right freely to dispose of themselves, of their bodies and the organs of these? Had not sexual love become the custom through the knights and was not, in opposition to knightly adultery, the love of married couples its proper bourgeois form? And if
it was the duty of married couples to love one another, was it not just as much the duty of lovers to marry each other and nobody else? Stood not the right of lovers higher than the right of parents, relatives and other customary marriage brokers and matrimonial agents? If the right of free personal investigation made its way unchecked into the church and religion, how could it bear with the insupportable claims of the older generation on the body, soul, property, happiness and misfortune of the younger generation?

These questions had to be raised at a time when all the old ties of society were loosened and all traditional conceptions tottering. The size of the world had increased tenfold at a bound. Instead of one quadrant of one hemisphere, the whole globe now spread before the eyes of West Europeans who hastened to take possession of the other seven quadrants. And the thousand-year-old barriers of conventional medieval thought fell like the old narrow obstacles to marriage. An infinitely wider horizon opened out before the outer and inner eyes of humanity. What mattered the well-meaning propriety, what the honorable privilege of the guild overcome through generations to the young man tempted by the gold and silver mines of Mexico and Potosi?

It was the knight errant time of the bourgeoisie. It had its own romances and love dreams, but on a bourgeois footing and, in the last instance, with bourgeois aims. Thus it came about that the rising bourgeoisie more and more recognized the freedom of contracting in marriage and carried it through in the manner described above, especially in Protestant countries, where existing institutions were most strongly shaken. Marriage remained class marriage, but within the class a certain freedom of choice was accorded to the contracting parties. And on paper, in moral theory as in poetical description, nothing was more unalterably established than the idea that every marriage was immoral unless founded on mutual sex-love and perfectly free agreement of husband and wife. In short, the love match was proclaimed as a human right, not only as droit de l'homme—man's right—but also for once as droit de femme—woman's right.

However, this human right differed from all other so-called human rights in one respect. While in practice other rights remained the privileges of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, and were directly or indirectly curtailed for proletarians, the irony of history once more asserted itself in this case. The ruling class remains subject to well-known economic influences and, therefore, shows marriage by free selection only in exceptional cases. But among the oppressed class, love matches are the rule, as we have seen. Hence the full freedom of marriage can become general only after all minor economic considerations, that still exert such a powerful influence on the choice of a mate for life, have been removed by the abolition of capitalistic production and of the property relations created by it. Then no other motive will remain but mutual fondness.

Since sexlove is exclusive by its very nature—although this exclusiveness is at present realized for women alone—marriage founded on sexlove must be monogamous. We have seen that Bachofen was perfectly right in regarding the progress from group marriage to monogamy mainly as the work of women. Only the advance from the pairing family to monogamy must be charged to the account of men. This advance implied, historically, a deterioration in the position of women and a greater opportunity for men to be faithless. Remove the economic considerations that now force women to submit to the customary disloyalty of men, and you
will place women on a equal footing with men. All present experiences prove that this will tend much more strongly to make men truly monogamous, than to make women polyandrous. However, those peculiarities that were stamped upon the face of monogamy by its rise through property relations, will decidedly vanish, namely the supremacy of men and the indissolubility of marriage. The supremacy of man in marriage is simply the consequence of his economic superiority and will fall with the abolition of the latter.

The indissolubility of marriage is partly the consequence of economic conditions, under which monogamy arose, partly tradition from the time where the connection between this economic situation and monogamy, not yet clearly understood, was carried to extremes by religion. Today, it has been perforated a thousand times. If marriage founded on love is alone moral, then it follows that marriage is moral only as long as love lasts. The duration of an attack of individual sexlove varies considerably according to individual disposition, especially in men. A positive cessation of fondness or its replacement by a new passionate love makes a separation a blessing for both parties and for society. But humanity will be spared the useless wading through the mire of a divorce case.

What we may anticipate about the adjustment of sexual relations after the impending downfall of capitalist production is mainly of a negative nature and mostly confined to elements that will disappear. But what will be added? That will be decided after a new generation has come to maturity: a race of men who never in their lives have had any occasion for buying with money or other economic means of power the surrender of a woman; a race of women who have never had any occasion for surrendering to any man for any other reason but love, or for refusing to surrender to their lover from fear of economic consequences. Once such people are in the world, they will not give a moment's thought to what we to-day believe should be their course. They will follow their own practice and fashion their own public opinion about the individual practice of every person—only this and nothing more.

But let us return to Morgan from whom we moved away a considerable distance. The historical investigation of social institutions developed during the period of civilization exceeds the limits of his book. Hence the vicissitudes of monogamy during this epoch occupy him very briefly. He also sees in the further development of the monogamous family a progress, an approach to perfect equality of the sexes, without considering this aim fully realized. But he says: "When the fact is accepted that the family has passed through four successive forms, and is now in a fifth, the question at once arises whether this form can be permanent in the future. The only answer that can be given is that it must advance as society advances, and change as society changes, even as it has done in the past. It is the creature of the social system, and will reflect its culture. As the monogamian family has improved greatly since the commencement of civilization, and very sensibly in modern times, it is at least supposable that it is capable of still farther improvement until the equality of the sexes is attained. Should the monogamian family in the distant future fail to answer the requirements of society, assuming the continuous progress of civilization, it is impossible to predict the nature of its successor."
Week Four: First Wave Feminism and Women’s Suffrage

Readings for this Week

Available on WyoCourse as:

3. De Gouges, Olympe. 1791. Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen (4 pages)

4. United States Declaration of Independence. 1776

5. Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions. 1848.


You may consult all of these sources online in open access format at the Project Gutenberg website (https://www.gutenberg.org) by searching for the title and then going directly to the assigned pages.

Context and Relevance

As you continue to deepen your understanding of Gender & Women’s Studies as an academic discipline, you will observe how many different sociopolitical perspectives have historically informed the movement for gender equality known as feminism. This week we read five texts from the United States and Western Europe that date from the roughly 120 year span beginning in the mid-late 1700s, a time of revolution in both geographical regions, and ending in 1920, by which time women had obtained the right to vote in the United States and much of Western Europe. This historical period bridges the European Enlightenment, which we read about last week, and major political, legal, and social changes concerning women. Taken together, the struggles for these changes and the achievement of these goals constitutes the first wave of feminism.

First wave feminism’s central goals revolved around the attainment of basic rights and freedoms for women, such as the right to vote, to own property, to earn an income, and to marry/divorce a chosen partner. The first wave occurred in tandem with abolitionist movements to end slavery, which in the United States achieved their goal in 1865 Emancipation Proclamation. In 1870, African American men obtained the legal right to vote although their abilities to exercise it were severely constrained by racist polling practices until much later. Wyoming women were the first in the United States to win the right to vote, in 1869, fifty-one years prior to women’s voting rights becoming universal across the U.S. Our five readings for this week encapsulate some of the most prominent social movements circulating at the time, all of which continue to influence contemporary society.
Working class women and women of color played an important role in first wave feminism although, as is often the case in social movements, their voices and contributions are unfortunately less-acknowledged than those of their more privileged peers who had more resources and time to devote to political activities. Yet women and men of all social classes and races contributed to the attainment of suffrage and other basic legal rights and freedoms for women. Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, who escaped from enslavement, were passionate advocates for both the abolition of slavery and women’s suffrage. Advocates of women’s suffrage faced arrest, public scorn, and other life-changing consequences when protesting for the right to vote, and these advocates included women who worked in factories as well as women married to wealthy men. As often occurs in social movements, these advocates were broadly divided into groups that took different approaches to achieve the same goal. Suffragists mobilized for the right to vote by evoking public sympathy through enactment of then-prevailing gender norms, often by protesting in their best clothes and not resisting arrest. Suffragettes, with their motto of “deeds not words” took a much more radical approach by staging public hunger strikes, confronting politicians, and otherwise flouting the dominant culture’s ideas about propriety for women.

Reading the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions alongside the 1776 U.S. Declaration of Independence, authored seventy-two years apart, offers deep insight into the challenges first wave feminists faced as they worked to attain basic legal rights and freedoms for women that were already guaranteed to most men. The authors and signatories of the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, led by prominent suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, modeled the language used in the Declaration on the verbiage of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. Consider the following juxtaposition of excerpts from both texts, the first from the Declaration of Independence and the second from the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions:

Prudence, indeed, will dictate the Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such a Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government (U.S. Declaration of Independence)

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience has shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and
such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled (Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions)

There are many more examples throughout both documents that use similar language, and identifying these can help you to think critically about how the individuals who make up social movements advocate for their shared goal in strategic ways.

The authors and signatories of the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions were not the first to use the language of the powerful to achieve their political goals. Olympe de Gouges took a similar strategy modeled her 1791 Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen on the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which documented the Enlightenment era principles of liberty and equality that sparked the French Revolution. de Gouges argues in this document that nature itself mandates equality between women and men. She denounces prominent male thinkers of the time who espouse the principles of liberty, equality, and scientific enlightenment for men, but not for women, noting, “Bizarre, blind, bloated with science and degenerated— in a century of enlightenment and wisdom—into the crassest ignorance, he wants to command as a despot a sex which is in full possession of its intellectual faculties; he pretends to enjoy the Revolution to claim his rights to equality in order to say nothing more about it.” de Gouges ends the document with a “Form for a Social Contract Between Man and Woman,” which evokes our Week Three reading of Rousseau but does so by offering a new status quo with respect to gender, one which she promises will ensure “the French government cannot fail.” de Gouges makes powerful connections between rights, responsibilities, social transformation, and patriotism during a politically tumultuous time in France, noting that “woman has the right to mount the scaffold [for execution]; she must equally have the right to mount the rostrum [to speak publicly].” de Gouges was executed as an enemy of the state by guillotine in 1789.

Frederick Douglass’ article in the suffragist publication The Woman’s Journal offers numerous accounts of progress toward the attainment of women’s rights and directly connects the exclusion of women from basic legal rights and freedoms to the struggles enslaved persons faced prior to emancipation in 1863. Douglass makes a powerful persuasive argument by presenting the arguments against equal legal rights for women and then refuting them. “Years ago,” he writes,

“I heard the same arguments employed against the abolition movement. The slaves were then contented and happy people, who would not have their liberty if it were given them; just as we are now told that women are contented and happy, and would not have the ballot if it were given them. It was not true of the slaves then, and it is not true of woman now. The same men who told us of the contentment and happiness of the slaves were, at the same time, busy framing laws to prevent their escape from slavery. The same is being done now in Congress and in State Legislatures against woman suffrage.”

During this revolutionary social period other scholars and activists were also addressing issues related to poverty and class inequality. This week we also read a chapter from German philosopher Frederick Engels’ The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, in which the author argues that the married, monogamous pair comprised of a man and a woman who own
property and have children together is a relatively new historical development. Engels also argues that the family is a microcosm of society and, by extension, family structures feature small-scale versions of much larger-scale social inequalities and problems. He envisions a new world in which equality means shared community resources and the end of entitlements given to individuals on the basis of class, sex, race, and other identity categories assigned at birth, noting that individuals and families change as society changes. Engels outlines what he regards as the numerous contradictions of monogamy and sexism, arguing that both support prostitution, the degradation of poor women in particular, and advocates instead the ideal of companionate marriage, in which two equal partners are contributors to both their family and to the society of which they are a part. Throughout the chapter and the book of which it is a part, Engels describes the social construction of love, sexuality, and marriage throughout human history, arguing that economics and socio-cultural forces are inseparable from one another.

**Reading Questions**

- Are there aspects of the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions that remain relevant today, just as they were when they were written in 1848?
- All fifty-six signatories to the Declaration of Independence were men; sixty-eight women and thirty-two men signed the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions. What did the authors of the U.S. Declaration of Independence need to believe in order to exclude women from this founding document, and why did the authors of the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions choose it as their model?
- Olympe de Gouges argues that the exclusion of women from political and social life is contrary to nature, engaging directly with some of the Enlightenment era notions about society we read in Rousseau’s work last week. What is the basis of her argument, and how does our analysis of it improve when we envision her as in dialogue with leading thinkers and political activists of her time?
- Olympe de Gouges was the daughter of a poor butcher who may have worked for a time as a Parisian prostitute and Frederick Douglass was born an enslaved African American, yet both rose to prominence in social movements that denounced inequality and exercised tremendous influence on their respective countries’ histories. We continue to read their work today. How might their personal experiences with sexism, classism, and racism have influenced their perspectives and the role they were able to play in fighting against these social problems?
- Often proponents of radical social change will use morality as the basis of their claims because they appeal to notions of inherent rightness and good. Douglass, for instance, writes that no one “who believes in government of the people, by the people, and for the people” has the right to exclude women from the vote, noting that, “There is no such right outside the right of the robber and the usurper.” In what ways is Douglass’ argument most convincing, and how might his numerous critics have responded to it?
• As is true today, many authors of the historical period we read about this week make claims to what is natural, normal, or otherwise good. What assumptions does Engels make about what is natural, good, or otherwise the proper order of the world? How do some of these assumptions read as quite contemporary, whereas others seem very dated?

**Additional Resources**

All of the sources assigned this week are available online on the open access site Project Gutenberg.
First Wave Feminism and Women’s Suffrage

Week Four

Authors in dialogue

- Many sociopolitical perspectives historically inform the movement for gender equality known as feminism
- Five texts spanning 120 years from mid/late 1700s-1920
- Revolutionary time period
- Bridges the European Enlightenment and major political, legal, and social changes concerning women
- Readings capture the most prominent social movements of the time that shaped the world we live in today
First wave feminism:
goals

- Attainment of basic rights and freedoms for women
- Voting
- Property ownership
- Divorce/marry by choice
- Occurred in tandem with abolitionist movements to end slavery

First wave feminism was diverse

- Working class women and women of color
- Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth
- Suffrage supporters faced arrest, public scorn
Different tactics to achieve the same goal

- **Suffragists: polite protest**
  - Evoked public sympathy by keeping up appearances
  - Abided by then-prevalent gender norms

- **Suffragettes: deeds not words**
  - Flouted dominant cultural ideas about propriety for women
  - Public hunger strikes and confrontations with politicians

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words matter

- 1848 Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions
- 1776 U.S. Declaration of Independence
- Authored 72 years apart using essentially similar language; comparison illustrates challenges facing first wave feminists
- Efforts to attain basic legal rights and freedoms for women that were already available to men
- How individuals in social movements advocate for their shared goals in strategic ways
Olympe de Gouges
Modeled on 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen
Principles of liberty and equality that sparked the French Revolution
Argues that nature mandates gender equality

de Gouges denounces prominent male thinkers who espouse principles of liberty, equality, and scientific enlightenment for men but not for women
“Bizarre, blind, bloated with science and degenerated— in a century of enlightenment and wisdom— into the crassest ignorance, he wants to command as a despot a sex which is in full possession of its intellectual faculties; he pretends to enjoy the Revolution to claim his rights to equality in order to say nothing more about it.”
Master’s tools/master’s house
Authors in dialogue:
Form for a social contract between men and women

- de Gouges offers a new gender status quo
- Connects rights, responsibilities, social transformation, and patriotism during a politically tumultuous time
- “Woman has the right to mount the scaffold [for execution]; she must equally have the right to mount the rostrum [to speak publicly].”

Frederick Douglass

- Published in pro-suffrage newspaper The Woman’s Journal
- Connects first wave feminism to abolitionist movements
- Presents and refutes arguments against women’s suffrage and gender equality
"I heard the same arguments employed against the abolition movement. The slaves were then contented and happy people, who would not have their liberty if it were given them; just as we are now told that women are contented and happy, and would not have the ballot if it were given them. It was not true of the slaves then, and it is not true of woman now. The same men who told us of the contentment and happiness of the slaves were, at the same time, busy framing laws to prevent their escape from slavery. The same is being done now in Congress and in State Legislatures against woman suffrage."

The origins of the family, private property, and the state (1908)

- Industrial Revolution
- Poverty and class inequality a central concern
- Married, monogamous, property-owning pair with children are historically new
- Family as a microcosm of society
- Small-scale versions of large-scale social problems
Engels

- Equality means shared community resources & end to entitlements on basis of sex, class, race, and other identity categories assigned at birth
- Numerous contradictions of marriage and monogamy
- Ideal of companionate marriage, in which two equal partners are equal contributors to both their family and the society of which they are a part
- Social construction of love, sexuality, and marriage throughout human history
- Inseparability of economics and socio-cultural forces

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