

Gender & Women's Studies Spring 2019

Thursday, January 24
3:45 pm
3401 Sterling Hall

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"Revisioning Gender Regimes and Welfare States Past: The Male Breadwinner Model as Everyday Practice"



For scholars of gender and social policy, the postwar welfare state is identified with the ideal of a "male-breadwinner model family." A gendered and gendering "regime" along these lines is especially apparent in the British social security system of the mid-twentieth century, an institution that assumed and encouraged full-time male labor market participation combined with female home-making and caregiving. Such critical analyses have profoundly influenced the study of welfare, gender, and public policy. They have also become integral

to welfare state historiography that ties transformations in politics, governance, gender norms, and labor markets to global structural shifts and the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1970s and 1980s. The study reflects on how civil servants debated and sought to make sense of perceived contradictions within and between policies and mutually constitutive gender norms. In doing so it highlights unsettled meanings of constructed categories and subject positions, including masculine identities of bureaucrats themselves, and how they made up complex and shifting hierarchies of gender, class, and race. Finally, it suggests how interpretive research may contribute to a fruitful re-assessment of our scholarly narratives and historiographies that give meaning to social policies past and present.

Wheelchair accessible, free, and open to the public.

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