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This week we launch into Unit 2 of the course, "The Tempest: Contesting Sexual Order, c. 1900-1920." For the next two weeks we will examine the ways in which commercialization, industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and other historical processes at the start of the twentieth century led to massive changes in the sexual lives and gender identities of Americans. This period of rapid change is sometimes referred to as the "progressive era," because it witnessed a sharp rise in activism geared toward what was called at the time "progressive" social change. Much of this activism addressed sexuality and gender directly (the "investigators" that show up throughout this week's reading are participants in this movement). Progressive politics in the twenty-first century differ in important ways from the politics of activists at the start of the twentieth, but as you read this week you might consider some similarities that unite "progressives," then and now.

During Session 3 we will focus on the lives and choices of urban, working women, and the politics that sprang up around reproduction during this period. As you read, consider how these two topics work together – how did the changing urban landscape of the United States lead to changes in American thinking about commercialized sexuality, publicity/privacy, choice and reproduction?

Required Texts

- Kathy Peiss, "Charity Girls and City Pleasures: Historical Notes on Working-Class Sexuality, 1880-1920," in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, Pies and Simmons eds. (1989) 57-67.
- Sarah Deutsch, "The Moral Geography of the Working Girl (And New Woman)" from *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston* (2000) 78-114. Linda Gordon, "Birth Control and Social Revolution," in *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*, Peiss, ed. (2002) 320-327.
- Molly Ladd Taylor, "Eugenics, Sterilization, and Social Welfare," in *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*, Peiss, ed. (2002) 327-336.
- O. Edward Janney, "White Slave Traffic, 1911," in *Documenting Intimate Matters: Primary Sources for a History of Sexuality in America*, Foster ed. (2012) 112-115.
- Robert Woods and Albert Kennedy, "Young Working Girls, 1913," in *Documenting Intimate Matters: Primary Sources for a History of Sexuality in America*, Foster ed. (2012) 108-111.
- George Kneeland, "Commercialized Prostitution in New York City, 1913," in *Documenting Intimate Matters: Primary Sources for a History of Sexuality in America*, Foster ed. (2012) 104-107.
- Mary Ware Dennett, "Birth Control Laws: Shall We Keep Them or Abolish Them, 1926," in *Documenting Intimate Matters: Primary Sources for a History of Sexuality in America*, Foster ed. (2012) 124-125.
- Hoffman, Caves, Sanger, SCOTUS, Letters to Sanger, "The Politics of Reproduction" Document Collection, in *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*, Peiss, ed. (2002) 309-318.

Questions to Consider:

Kathy Peiss is a cultural historian whose research on turn-of-the-century working-class sexuality emphasizes key differences in the experiences of women from differing class backgrounds. What choices were available for young, urban, working women at this time? What strategies did they use to navigate the chaotic, public world of the city, removed from the restraints and protection of home and family?

The Deutsch reading covers much of the same ground as the Peiss, but offers a more focused examination of the lives of working women here in Boston. Feel free to “closely skim” this reading, but try to pay attention to her treatment of race, ethnicity, and the moral implications of public and private space. The Janney, Woods/Kennedy, and Kneeland documents should be read alongside Peiss and Deutsch.

Linda Gordon and Molly Ladd-Taylor are both leading historians of American social policy. Gordon’s essay examines the radical roots of the early twentieth-century birth control movement, and the links early activists like Margaret Sanger made between birth control and social, political, and economic revolution. Ladd-Taylor explores the darker side of birth control activism during a slightly later period. As you read, consider the ways that race, class, and gender shaped arguments about who should be able to control female fertility, and how. What roles do science and medicine play in both accounts? Read the Dennett primary source and the “Politics of Reproduction” document collection (Hoffman, Caves, Sanger, SCOTUS, and letters to Sanger) along with Gordon and Ladd-Taylor.

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