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NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

FAREWELL TO MATERNALISM?

State Policies, Feminist Politics, and Mothers' Employment



Professor Orloff's talk draws from a new book on gender, equality, and care in the rich democracies. She examines shifts in the gendered character of welfare and employment policies in the U.S. and other capitalist democracies and the implications of those shifts for feminism. "Universal caregiver" or "dual earner/dual carer" models for feminist policy initiatives to promote greater gender equality may confront several institutional limits: First, capitalist business and political elites demand economic "efficiency," often understood as market employment for all, and an ideal worker who is singularly committed to the workplace. Second, "universal caregiver" or "dual earner/dual carer" models may confront limits inscribed in the social organization of gender, where "gender difference" remains potent culturally and psychically. Third, to date, maternalist, breadwinner and citizenship-based policies have implicitly depended on perceived similarities (often "racial" or national, religious) among beneficiaries. Do proposals to better value caregivers and care work through arguments that "children are public goods" depend on perceived population homogeneity? The paper explores these issues both normatively and through a cross-national empirical survey of contemporary feminist initiatives across the rich capitalist democracies.

Ann Orloff is Professor of Sociology and Political Science at Northwestern University. Her research focuses on gendered social policies and feminist politics. Orloff has authored and edited many books, including *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History and Sociology* (with Julia Adams and Elisabeth Clemens, 2005); *States, Markets, Families: Gender, Liberalism and Social Policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States* (with Julia O'Connor and Sheila Shaver, 1999); *Politics of Pensions: A Comparative Analysis of Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1880-1940* (1993); and *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States* (with Margaret Weir and Theda Skocpol, 1988). Orloff continues to co-edit the journal she helped to found, *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*. President of the Social Science History Association in 2009-2010, she has held visiting positions at the European University Institute (Florence), Sciences Po (Paris), the Institute for Future Studies (Stockholm), the Australian National University, and the Russell Sage Foundation.

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SOCIOLOGY COLLOQUIUM

Monday, October 17

2-3:30pm

402 Barrows Hall