Sex Inequality, Feminism and the Law

Alicia Kelly, Associate Dean & Distinguished Professor of Law
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6:30 pm, Thursday, April 26th
100 Luek Hall

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Q: Why is a feminist analysis of the law important? Sex discrimination and stereotyping are part of our everyday lives, harming individuals and society. Yet gender norms are so deeply embedded that they can be invisible--we often fail to see them and the power they have to shape and limit our thinking. Although there has been significant progress in women's status in the US, sex inequalities continue to be alive and well in the legal system and the larger culture. Yet the legal system can also be a tool to combat these problems. Feminism matters because it beckons us to pay attention and work to change the foundations and impacts of sex discrimination, expanding our possibilities as individuals.

Consider a few examples of the systemic forces at work. There was a time not all that long ago that women were the legal property of their fathers and then their husbands and where the law allowed husbands to beat or rape their wives. There are significant lingering issues flowing from this legacy. Today women are discriminated against every day in places of employment-- where sexual harassment continues to be pervasive and women are still fired or not hired because they are also mothers. As a group, women have far fewer economic resources than men. Most mothers take significant time away from work to provide caregiving, experiencing wage and retirement losses as a result. Despite this, the U.S. is the only developed Western nation that doesn't have a national system for becoming sick or for pregnancy or caring for a child or other loved one. Women working full time are paid almost 20 cents less per dollar than men who work full time, and the pay gap is far greater for women of color. Women do not have equal protection under the U.S. Constitution. I look forward to a lively discussion of issues!

Bio

Distinguished Professor of Law, Alicia Kelly, is an expert in Family Law, Property Law and Elder Law. Professor Kelly's scholarship focuses on family relationships, economic behavior, inequality, and gender. Her work addresses laws and policies concerning economic relations, laws for married and unmarried couples, and inter-generational family relationships. She is currently working on the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in Delaware.

In addition to teaching, Professor Kelly serves as co-director of the Family Health Law & Policy Institute at Widener Law Delaware that is dedicated to public education and service, and to reforming laws and policies that concern families and their health. She serves on the steering committee for Delaware ERA Now, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing women's status through education and anti-discrimination advocacy. Additionally, Professor Kelly is the co-director of Wills for Heroes DE, a volunteer organization that trains legal professionals and provides free estate planning documents for police, firemen and other first responders in the state of Delaware. She continues to serve on the executive board of Association of American Law Schools Section on Family & Juvenile Law, following a term as section Chair in 2010-2011. Professor Kelly is also member of the Executive Committee for the Section on Women and Legal Education, a Collaborative Research Network for Law & Aging as well as a CRN for Feminist Legal Theory. Professor Kelly holds an LL.M. in Legal Education from Temple University School of Law, where she was an Abraham L. Freedman Fellow and Lecturer of Law, and also earned her B.A. (magna cum laude) and her J.D. (cum laude) from Temple University. She is the co-author of numerous law review articles and two books: *Chartacourse Family Law: Cases, Policies, and Practices* (2015) and *Property Law: Context and Practice* (2016).