

Co-hosted with Women's Studies

'Honky Tonk Women: The Right to Bodily Autonomy and Prostitution'

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This paper focuses on the issue of how heterosexual women can identify themselves as sexual agents under patriarchy given various constraints – external, internal, and social—that threaten their control over their own sexual identity. I take up the case of the prostitute. Martha Nussbaum might fall into the camp of feminist who believe that prostitutes who freely choose their profession completely control their sexual identity, make free and autonomous choices about sex, exercise their right to bodily autonomy, and even dismantle sexist stereotypes when it comes to sex. Other feminists, though, deny these beliefs, and insist that all prostitution is sexual slavery. I examine the right to bodily autonomy in the context of sexual identity. I argue that prostitutes neither control their sexual identity nor exercise their right to bodily autonomy. Rather, the prostitute perpetuates the sexist stereotype of sex object. I examine the notion of sex object and objectification in sex, favoring a Kantian view. I argue that the prostitute waives or even violates her right to bodily autonomy in prostitutional sex, and since the right to bodily autonomy is prior to one's being able to identify oneself sexually, the prostitute seems to give up genuinely sexually identifying herself.

Friday, March 1, 2013
Hagey Hall, Room 334
3:30 – 5:00 p.m.