

Definer of 'sexual harassment' as a legal term to speak on campus

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Catharine MacKinnon is an advocate for gender equality and theorizes, litigates on sexual harassment, rape, pornography and prostitution. (Photo by Gal Hermoni)

“Sexual harassment” is a familiar term in schools, in the workplace and in popular culture. But it was not always so common. In 1979, the text *Sexual Harassment of Working Women* by feminist activist, lawyer, teacher and writer Catharine MacKinnon defined the term, causing courts, workers and scholars to reframe the issue as illegal sex discrimination.

For the last 40 years, MacKinnon has advocated for legal reform for gender equality and theorizes, litigates on sexual harassment, rape, pornography and prostitution. The author of 13 books, MacKinnon is one of the most widely cited legal scholars in the English language. In her most recent book, *Butterfly Politics*, MacKinnon argues through a collection of essays that seemingly small legal interventions can have a butterfly effect on global change.

MacKinnon will give a talk titled “Butterfly Politics: A Theory of Social Change Through Legal Practice” on Monday, Oct. 16, at 4:30 p.m. in Room 110 of John Giffen Weinmann Hall. A reception will follow in the Marian Mayer Berkett Multipurpose Room, where copies of *Butterfly Politics* will be available for purchase.

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“Professor MacKinnon pioneered the legal claim for sexual harassment, created ordinances recognizing pornography as a civil rights violation, and has advocated for models for abolishing prostitution,” said Jancy Hoeffel, Catherine D. Pierson Professor of Law at Tulane Law School. “Just as one example of her impactful litigation, she represented Bosnian women survivors of Serbian genocidal sexual atrocities, winning a \$745 million award and the first legal recognition of rape as an act of genocide.”

“MacKinnon’s special gift of reframing feminist issues and translating that conceptual analysis into legal doctrine and policy is especially welcome today as we come to understand that universities must lead the way to end sexual assault on campus, to protect students’ civil rights, to equal educational opportunity,” said Sally J. Kenney, executive director of the Newcomb College Institute.