

**Woloch, Nancy. *A class by herself: protective laws for women workers, 1890s-1990s*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015. 337 p. Cloth, \$39.50. ISBN: 978-0-691-00259-0**

Academic historian Woloch analyzes the roles and influences of women-only protective legislation from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Supported by primary source records, personal accounts, and scholarship, Woloch reveals that this legislation was a double-edged sword, paving the way for modern labor standards while inhibiting equal rights for women. Woloch traces minimum wage, maximum hour, occupational exclusion, and other single-sex protective labor laws from their inception, to mid-century attacks by feminists, to their demise at the hands of workplace equality advocates. She reveals that these laws served a dual purpose, rectifying unique labor market disadvantages for women while opening the door to general labor standards for all workers. This rationale appealed to multiple constituencies and initially succeeded but ultimately led to the collapse of protective laws for women during the 1960s and 1970s. However, relevant debates continued and questions remain. Woloch's narrative history and comprehensive analysis add to the scholarly conversation regarding this intersection of women's history and legal history, considering the context, goals, effects, resistance, and ramifications of single-sex protective legislation in rich detail.