Now is not the first period of rampant interest in consent. This seminar will explore the ways in which consent came to serve as the foundation of both political and marital legitimacy in the 18th century. Women’s contractual agency remained ambiguous in both cases, embedding discourses on rape and disenfranchisement within political theory. We will focus on constructions of will, desire, reason, autonomy, political voice, and law in theory and literature, and will examine their legacy for liberalism. Particular attention will be paid to the reciprocal authorization between political theory and the emerging field of biology. We will also engage with current debate on consent. Readings to include Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Schiller, Fichte, Marquis de Sade, Heinrich von Kleist, Percy Shelley, Hannah Arendt, and Carole Pateman. Students will have the opportunity to suggest readings.

Readings available in German and English. Discussions in English.