On behalf of the Critical Theory Institute, welcome to today's presentation.

As you may know, the Institute identifies topics to be explored for three year periods. Our current topic is Politics, Theory and Contemporary Culture. In addition to today's presentation, we have planned the following events for this academic year:

- Gabriele Schwab on November 15th
- Alex Gelley in December
- Catharine Stimpson in January
- John Rowe in February
- Jacques Derrida in April

Joan Scott is Professor of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton.

She wrote two works of social history - The Glassworkers of Carmaux in 1974 and with Louise Tilly, Women work and Family in 1978.

For the past twenty years historians have explored the problematic of "social history." In writing that history they have used Marxist theory, quantitative methodologies, cultural anthropology. With sophisticated methods they have written the histories of lower class groups, movements, crowds, villages. Yet women rarely appeared as important figures in these studies, or, if they were studied, they were conceived through categories that were designed by men to study men. Women were thus being incorporated into the past without really changing it.

More recently however gender has become a direct focus of concern. And the issue of an epistemological break - a reshuffling of our tools of analysis - is finally being addressed. When the question of the gender system is seriously posed, the discursive apparatus of the discipline of history will surely receive a thoroughgoing overhaul.

An important step in that direction came in 1988 with Joan Scott's Gender and the Politics of History. This book provokes historians to rethink the basic assumptions of the field. It argues that the issue of women in particular urges not simply the exploration of new topics but a drastic reorientation of the discipline. Joan Scott's work open
directions for historical writing that are most promising in getting us beyond what has been called a crisis in social history and a long period of stagnation in intellectual history.