

[PDF] Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage

Stephanie Coontz - pdf download free book



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Description:

Politics, economics, greed, sex, cars—without them, matrimony wouldn't have caused the historical revolution ensuing today, concludes social historian Stephanie Coontz, in *Marriage, a History*. Modern marriage is in crisis; but don't pine for a return to "the good old days," when men earned money and women kept house. Don't even assume the crisis is all bad. For as Coontz reveals in this ambitious, multi-century trek through wedlock, marriage has morphed into the highest expression of

commitment in Western Europe and North America; and though assumptions no longer exist regarding which partner may say "I do" to work, childcare, or other shared responsibilities, a clear set of rules about saying "I don't" (to infidelity and irresponsibility) rings loud as church bells.

"This is not the book I thought I was going to write," Coontz admits. She intended to show that marriage was *not* in crisis; merely changing in expected ways. But her exhaustive research suggested the opposite was true. Tracing matrimony's path from ancient times (when some cultures lacked a word for "love" and the majority of pairings were attempts to seize land or family names) through present day, she closely examines the many external forces at play in shaping modern marriage. Coontz details how society's attempts to toughen this institution, have actually made it more fragile. Her rich talent for analyzing events, statistics, and theories from a myriad of sources—and enabling the reader to put them all in perspective—make this provocative history book an essential resource.--*Liane Thomas* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Starred Review. When considered in the light of history, "traditional marriage"—the purportedly time-honored institution some argue is in crisis thanks to rising rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock births, not to mention gay marriage—is not so traditional at all. Indeed, Coontz (*The Way We Never Were*) argues, marriage has always been in flux, and "almost every marital and sexual arrangement we have seen in recent years, however startling it may appear, has been tried somewhere before." Based on extensive research (hers and others'), Coontz's fascinating study places current concepts of marriage in broad historical context, revealing that there is much more to "I do" than meets the eye. In ancient Rome, no distinction was made between cohabitation and marriage; during the Middle Ages, marriage was regarded less as a bond of love than as a "career" decision"; in the Victorian era, the increasingly important idea of true love "undermined the gender hierarchy of the home" (in the past, men—rulers of the household—were encouraged to punish insufficiently obedient wives). Coontz explains marriage as a way of ensuring a domestic labor force, as a political tool and as a flexible reflection of changing social standards and desires. She presents her arguments clearly, offering an excellent balance between the scholarly and the readable in this timely, important book. *Agent, Susan Rabiner. (May)*

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