



# Dr. Tim Stretton – Department of History

Dr. Tim Stretton	Research Interests	
<b>Faculty &amp; Position</b>	<p>The cause of women's rights in Western nations has been marked by long and often bitter struggles stretching back not just decades, but centuries. Dr Stretton's research focuses on the history of those struggles as they have played out in the field of law. His first book, <u>Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England</u> (Cambridge University Press, 1998) exposed not just the bleakness of women's legal position compared to men's, but the surprising numbers of women who found ways of compensating for their diminished status. It is surprising to learn, for example, that per capita far more women were parties to law suits in 16th century England than in modern England, Canada or even the United States.</p> <p>His current research project, funded by the SSHRC, looks at the particular status of married women. For over seven centuries</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate Professor &amp; Graduate Coordinator</li> </ul>		
<b>Education</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PhD - Cambridge University</li> <li>• LL.B - Adelaide University</li> <li>• B.A. (Hons) - Adelaide University</li> </ul>		
<b>Biography</b>	<p>the English Common Law regarded husband and wife as one person, sharing a single legal identity. In theory married women could not buy or sell goods, enter into contracts, litigate (except in church courts), or make a will without the co-operation of their husbands. Their husbands, meanwhile, assumed ownership of their moveable goods and control of their real property, and were legally entitled to use force against them. Yet behind this unrelenting story of secondary status lies a surprising story of change, both in the way Parliament and legal institutions justified denying rights to wives and in the way married women managed to use the law to their advantage. For the idea that two people could become one was so bizarre (it led Mr Bumble in <i>Oliver Twist</i> to exclaim that 'the law is an ass') that it often produced contradictions and loopholes that women could exploit. Understanding this legacy from the past provides a vital context for achieving real and lasting equality for women and men in the present and future.</p>	
<p><i>Dr Stretton grew up in Australia, completing a B.A in History (First Class Honours) and a Law degree at the University of Adelaide. In 1998 he moved to Britain to complete his PhD at Cambridge University under the supervision of Keith Wrightson, now a Professor at Yale. Prior to joining Saint Mary's in 2001 he held a three year Research Fellowship at Clare Hall in Cambridge, was a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Renaissance &amp; Reformation Studies at the University of Toronto, and taught at Durham University in England, Waikato University in New Zealand, and Dalhousie University in Halifax.</i></p>		



Left to Right: Nadia Lewis, Tom Peace, Tim Stretton, Judy Dietz, Stefanie Winters, & Emily Burton • [www.smu.ca/academic/arts/history](http://www.smu.ca/academic/arts/history)

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