

Funding Announcement for 2008-2009 IRW Global Scholars

The Culture of Rights/The Rights of Culture

Institute for Research on Women (IRW) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey (USA)

The Institute for Research on Women (IRW) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey announces a new initiative to support IRW Global Scholars from the Global South whose work addresses our 2008-2009 theme, "The Culture of Rights/The Rights of Culture." We invite applications from university scholars and scholar/activists whose work is compatible with the theme.

The IRW plans to make three awards of up to \$20,000 each toward travel and living expenses for international scholars currently living outside of the United States. Preference will be given to applicants from Africa, Latin America and South Asia. Seed funding for this initiative has been provided through the Rutgers Academic Excellence Fund.

Deadline for applications (via email only) is March 1, 2008.

About the IRW

The Institute for Research on Women (IRW) promotes innovative scholarship on women and gender through interdisciplinary forums, lectures, and conferences.

The IRW's weekly seminar will allow Global Scholars to discuss drafts of their work with Rutgers faculty and graduate students, all of whom will be working on writing projects related to "The Culture of Rights/The Rights of Culture."

Global Scholars will have the opportunity for affiliation with the Rutgers Center for African Studies, Latin American Studies Program, and South Asian Studies Program as appropriate.

In addition, our Global Scholar Program provides an opportunity for postdoctoral scholars and activists to benefit from Rutgers' unique resources in the study of women and gender, which include the Center for American Women and Politics, Center for Women and Work, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Department of Women's and Gender Studies, Institute for Women and Art, and Institute for Women's Leadership.

IRW Global Scholars

IRW Global Scholars typically hold jobs or academic appointments elsewhere but wish to be in residence at the Institute for a semester or a year. IRW Global Scholars enjoy private offices equipped with networked PCs and Internet access. The offices surround an open conference room which is available for scholars' meetings. Next door to the Institute, the Wittenborn Scholars Residence offers affordable accommodations reserved for scholars affiliated with the IRW or the other Rutgers units focused on women and gender. Scholars receive university email accounts and modest photocopying and long-distance telephone support, access to University lectures, colloquia and seminars, recreational facilities, and library borrowing privileges.

Global Scholars are expected to be in residence at the IRW at least 3-4 days per week and participate in the weekly seminar along with Rutgers faculty and graduate students whose work explores the seminar theme from a variety of disciplinary and methodological perspectives. Funded Global Scholars are also expected to present a public lecture to the University community, visit classes and community centers, and meet with interested faculty and students.

IRW Interdisciplinary Research Seminar

The IRW's eleventh annual interdisciplinary seminar takes as its theme "The Culture of Rights/The Rights of Culture." Selected Rutgers faculty, advanced graduate students and IRW Global Scholars whose projects frame studies of rights through the lens of women and/or gender will participate in the 2008-2009 seminar, meeting weekly from September through April. Seminar fellows will attend the Thursday morning seminar meetings, provide a paper for discussion in the seminar, and open a seminar session with an extended response to another scholar's paper.

"Rights," whether environmental, human, indigenous, children's or women's, are often perceived as global or transnational discourses that are produced and circulated by international institutions such as the United Nations, then imposed on "local" communities. Moreover, rights, especially those deemed "universal," are assumed to be ahistorical and acultural, despite the long histories of struggle over the meanings, classification, and consequences of certain rights at many scales. In contrast, "cultures" are seen as fundamentally local, moored to specific places, people and times. Culture (or at least so-called "third world" or "traditional" culture) is often attacked as the obstacle to rights, the impediment to human progress and prosperity. But such views of social progress are themselves predicated on static, ahistorical definitions of cultures.

This seminar will explore the tensions and questions raised by the linkage of "rights" and "culture" and their associated discourses, practices and assumptions. By considering the local-global articulations of rights and cultures through a comparative lens, seminar participants will explore the specific social histories, political struggles and cultural assumptions that have produced certain rights and/or reframed long-standing debates in the language of rights.

Such studies may focus on any time period(s) or geographical location(s) and be rooted in any disciplinary or interdisciplinary approach(es). The seminar aims to open up conversations about the gender-specific ways that rights-based protocols like human rights have been analyzed, deployed and legislated in the past and the present, and the implications for women and men, adults and children, in various social and geographical locations. Relevant questions might include:

- How and why have "rights" become the dominant discourse through which claims to social justice are made?
- What kinds of opportunities and limitations does such a "culture of rights" provide to seekers of justice, whether individuals or collectivities?
- How are the dynamics of rights and cultures expressed in artistic, poetic, visual or literary forms?
- How and why do female bodies often become the site of contention in contexts pitting cultural against juridical perspectives?
- What are the gendered policy implications of the culture of rights/the rights of culture?
- Are there productive alternatives to rights-based discourses for political change?
- How have activists, scholars, policymakers, and others influenced the discourse of rights and culture, and how have these discourses in turn shaped their practices, ideas and interventions?
- How do idioms and practices of citizenship invoked, displayed and produced by activists, nation-states and transnational organizations in debates over rights and cultures?

Application Procedures

Postdoctoral scholars working in any discipline may apply. Applications should include the following: letter of intent specifying project title and proposed dates of visit; project description (five pages maximum, double-spaced); curriculum vitae and email address; names and contact information of four professional references.

DEADLINE for applications (via email only) is March 1, 2008; applicants will be notified regarding their application via email by March 15.

Applicants interested in further information about this program or the IRW are invited to contact the Institute (irw@rci.rutgers.edu; <http://irw.rutgers.edu>).

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