2016-2017 Call for Applicants - IRW Global Scholars

Feminist In/Security: vulnerability, Securitization, and States of Crisis

Institute for Research on Women
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Each year, the Institute for Research on Women (IRW) invites several individuals to join us as IRW Global Scholars for four to nine months. While Global Scholars are expected to provide their own funding, IRW offers office space, institutional affiliation, access to the Rutgers library, and participation in a lively interdisciplinary feminist community. The theme for our discussions from September 2016 through April 2017 will be “Feminist In/Security: Vulnerability, Securitization, and States of Crisis.” We invite applications from university scholars and scholar/activists whose work is compatible with the theme.

About the IRW

IRW promotes innovative scholarship on women, gender, and sexuality through interdisciplinary forums, lectures, and conferences. IRW’s weekly seminar allows Global Scholars to discuss drafts of their work with Rutgers faculty and graduate students, all of whom are working on writing projects related to the annual theme. In addition, our Global Scholar Program provides an opportunity for postdoctoral scholars and activists to benefit from Rutgers’ unique resources related to the study of women and gender. The IRW is a member of the Institute for Women’s Leadership (IWL), a consortium of 9 different Rutgers units focused on women and gender, also including Douglass Residential College, the Women’s and Gender Studies Department, the Center for American Women and Politics, the Center for Women’s Global Leadership, the Center for Women and Work, the Center on Violence against Women and Children, the Institute for Women and Art, and the Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics.

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. Global Scholars do not receive any financial support from Rutgers or the IRW, but we are happy to arrange access to University libraries and recreational facilities, provide office space, and extend invitations to participate in university lectures, colloquia, and seminars. Scholars also receive university email accounts and modest photocopying and long-distance telephone support. Former IRW Scholars have received funding through Fulbright, IREX, other local foundations, and their own institutions. University regulations limit our ability to accept applicants who are not funded through their home institutions or through external grants, fellowships, and awards, but we can usually accept one scholar in this situation per academic year.

We invite applications from prospective scholars whose individual research or activism is compatible with the theme of our interdisciplinary research seminar. We expect that Global Scholars will
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.

Located within the Women's Scholarship and Leadership Complex at Rutgers, our Global Scholar offices surround an open conference room that is available for scholars' meetings. Next door to the Institute, the gracious Wittenborn Scholars Residence is available to house individual scholars affiliated with the IRW on a first come, first served basis.

**IRW Interdisciplinary Research Seminar**

IRW’s twentieth annual interdisciplinary seminar takes as its theme “Feminist In/Security: Vulnerability, Securitization, and States of Crisis.” We live in a time of fear, when “security” has become a keyword, promising to alleviate threats of violence at home and abroad. Securitization has also become big, transnational business. Techniques, methods, and technologies of securitization are mobile and adaptable, and they travel alongside experts and expertise within a global market that brings together various—and sometimes surprising—actors. During the 2016-17 academic year, IRW will look at questions of international and domestic security from a range of feminist and queer perspectives. How might feminist and queer analyses and methods help us better understand regional, international, and transnational crises—from Ebola to the spread of ISIS to the mass movement of refugees? How do concepts such as homonationalism (Puar) or methods derived from “queer intellectual curiosity” (Weber) disrupt conventional understandings of sexuality, power, statehood, and international politics?

Feminist and queer scholarship have challenged and re-conceptualized many of the key assumptions of international security discourse, critiquing mainstream debates and revisiting constructs, including political realism (Tickner, Peterson), militarism (Enloe), post colonialism (Alexander, Talpade Mohanty), and human rights (Thoreson, Aradau). Influenced by feminist scholars and activists, the United Nations has broadened its interpretation of security, incorporating aspects of human security, such as freedom from rape, environmental degradation, and poverty, into a definition typically associated with the territorial integrity and autonomy of states. Yet despite its lip-service to gender equity, the UN’s approach often conceals gender-based injustices (including those related to gender identity and expression) and regularly ignores the intersectionality of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and legal status. Indeed, gender is often introduced into studies of international and human security in ways that are trivial and tokenistic rather than addressing the complex realities of vulnerable subjects globally. Although these approaches aim at securing women or sexual minorities, technologies and theories of securitization are often articulated through class, racial, and gender difference. Old problems gain new descriptions: under- and unemployed young men, for example, are no longer threats to the health of a national economy but become security threats (Amar).

At the level of the state, feminist and queer scholars and activists have used the concept of security to critically examine a variety of issues, including mass incarceration, profiling, domestic violence, and sex work. For example, the Black Lives Matter movement developed an explicitly feminist analysis of state violence under white supremacy and the ways communities of color are acutely susceptible to police brutality. Within a transnational context, scholars have demonstrated how the migration apparatus of the United States inflicts violence and terror on migrant families, often in the name of “security” for the homeland (Schmidt Camacho, Golash-Boza). Trans Studies scholars have noted similarities between the policing of national borders and the policing of genders, and described how gender-nonconforming bodies can disrupt systems of surveillance utilized in the
name of national security (Aizura, Beauchamp). Indeed, surveillance technologies are increasingly used both to terrorize women and to profile populations of South Asian and Middle Eastern descent, resulting in heightened surveillance and the increasing vulnerability and criminalization of already marginalized communities. Yet while vulnerability can prove dangerous, “brittle,” or insecure, scholars also note its potential to reorient relationships between self and others, creating generative spaces for feminist interventions through solidarity and resistance (Ahmed, Butler).

Studies may focus on any time period(s) or geographical location(s) and be rooted in any disciplinary or interdisciplinary approach(es). Some possible topics relevant to the seminar theme include, but are not limited to:

- Cybersecurity
- Vulnerability and grievability
- Precarity
- Black Lives Matter
- Masculinities, secularization, and crisis
- Tourism and leisure studies
- Economic development
- International relations theory
- Border studies
- Migration
- Human trafficking
- Refugees and asylum
- The carceral state
- Hurricane Sandy and human security
- Latin American financial crises
- Food systems
- Governance and biopolitics
- Trauma, fear and its multigenerational legacies
- Domestic violence
- Militarism
- Virality
- Settler/colonial studies
- Terrorism/the war on terror
- Environmental threats

**Application Procedures**

Postdoctoral scholars working in any discipline may apply. Applications should be sent by email to irw@rci.rutgers.edu with “Global Scholars” in the subject line. They 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. Prospective global scholars are invited to discuss the relevance of their project to “Feminist In/Security: Vulnerability, Securitization, and States of Crisis” as part of their application. Applicants interested in further information about this program or the IRW are invited to visit our website http://irw.rutgers.edu or contact the institute by email (irw@rci.rutgers.edu) or phone (848-932-9072).