

2017-2018 Call for Applicants - IRW Global Scholars

The Perils of Populism: Feminist Perspectives on the Current Political Crisis in the West

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 2017 through April 2018 will be "The Perils of Populism: Feminist Perspectives on the Current Political Crisis in the West." 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 twenty-first annual interdisciplinary seminar takes as its theme "The Perils of Populism: Feminist Perspectives on the Current Political Crisis in the West." A rightwing populism that scapegoats society's most vulnerable populations is emerging across the west and enjoying growing political power. Drawing upon age-old themes of racial resentment, such movements pose nationalism as the solution to economic and social malaise. In the United States, the resurgence of populism has resulted in a dramatic rise of violence, harassment, and hate speech directed against immigrants, people of color, Muslims, Jews, LGBT people and other marginalized communities. How can a feminist lens diagnose the current political moment, and help us to move beyond it? What, if anything, can we learn from the ways feminists have challenged reactionary populism in Europe, as well as in South Asia, the Middle East and Latin America? Might feminism help us combat hatred and despair and move toward a more just future?

As observers have argued, globalization, growing social inequality, the changing media universe, and other factors contribute to the rise of reactionary populist movements. Though not always explicitly articulated, gender plays a central role as well, as it does in all aspects of political life. Gender shapes how the powerful mobilize, how social issues are framed, and whose narratives—and lives—count. Gender also intersects with race, sexuality, nationality, and class in organizing support for such movements, and resistance to them. Rage against the political system is frequently articulated in gendered terms as a defense of hegemonic forms of masculinity, reinforcing gender binaries and shunning gender transgression.

Feminist analyses have helped identify strategies for organizing, movement building, and the pursuit of policy change. Some feminists suggest that in order to oppose growing reactionary political tendencies, women must be elected to public office. Others have mobilized around salient gender-related issues, such as reproductive rights, employment equity, sexual harassment, and violence. Still others have played leading roles in movements with broader political objectives, from the LGBT movement to Black Lives Matter. Feminism has helped scholars and activists conceptualize powerful visions of a more just world.

In the 2017-18 IRW seminar we will build upon this important work, looking specifically at the roles feminist knowledge and praxis can play in a period of rightwing populism. While studies may examine any time period(s) or geographical location(s) and be rooted in any disciplinary or interdisciplinary approach(es), we particularly welcome contributions that look at how activist projects can imbue our scholarship, and how scholarship can advance activism. Some possible topics relevant to the seminar theme include, but are not limited to:

- gendering support for rightwing populism
- masculinity and foreign policy
- feminism, the state, and democracy

- the role of the feminist scholar in a time of repression
- gender and sexual migrants across national boundaries
- gendering Islamophobia
- genocide, ethnonationalism, and collective memory
- sexual violence and the politics of everyday
- the gender of racism and the racism of gender
- feminist organizing and coalition building
- gender, social media, and the (anti?) democratic public sphere
- affective politics: anger, rage, and embodiment
- gender and the mass psychology of the far right
- religious freedom and dissent
- human and civil rights
- class and urban/rural divides

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 “The Perils of Populism: Feminist Perspectives on the Current Political Crisis in the West” 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).