

Call for Applications Institute for Research on Women

Possession is a complex phenomenon that takes multiple forms, both material (land, money, bodies) and incorporeal (knowledge, reputation, lineage). It conveys a variety of meanings (economic, emotional, legal, medical, political, spiritual, sexual, territorial). It implies a gendered relationship of power between possessor and possessed. Historically, societies have understood children, women, queer people, and men from subordinated classes, castes, races, and religions to be particularly susceptible to possession: the condition of being controlled, seized, and owned as property, as well as the state of being dominated or inhabited by a spirit. Possessed people are often ascribed the status and condition of femininity, incapacity, vulnerability, and/or dependency.

Yet, possession in its religious connotation also means to invoke, access, and channel power and authority that the possessed are otherwise denied. The very state of being controlled by a divine or otherworldly force—of losing the autonomous self and submitting to the will of another—allows the possessed, if only temporarily, to transgress prescriptive norms and categories, express forbidden desires, and engage in what are often viewed as deviant and subversive patterns of social behavior and relations. As an act of communicating with the immaterial world, spirit possession also sustains relations and communities across temporal boundaries, reanimating and reclaiming ties to and memories of human and nonhuman kin. As such, possession is a potent site in which to challenge the logic of secular modernity, heteropatriarchy, and the (neo)liberalism of individualism and private ownership. Possession is a modality of disempowerment, but potentially of empowerment and refusal too.

Over the last decade, a growing body of literature has emerged on the cultures, histories, landscapes, laws, economies, and politics of dispossession that interrogates racial capitalist, (neo)colonial, and heteropatriarchal modes of accumulation by dispossession. The subject of possession has not become a widespread subject of feminist, queer scholarship in the way that dispossession has. This seminar will explore feminist and queer frameworks for analyzing and theorizing possession and its intersectional dynamics. How might feminist and queer analyses of possession complement and complicate existing understandings of dispossession and how it ought to be studied and redressed? How might feminist and queer approaches to possession diverge?

We invite applications from faculty and advanced graduate students (ABD status required) whose projects explore aspects of our theme. Such studies may examine any time period(s) or geographical location(s) and be rooted in any disciplinary or interdisciplinary approach(es), including anthropology, art and art history, childhood studies, economics, geography, history, law, linguistics, literature, medicine, political theory, psychology, religious studies, and women, gender, and sexuality studies.

The seminar will support up to six Rutgers Faculty Fellows and up to four Graduate Fellows from the New Brunswick, RBHS, Camden, and Newark campuses. Seminar fellows are expected to attend **all** Thursday morning seminar meetings during Fall and Spring Semesters 2023-2024, provide a paper for discussion in the seminar, and open a seminar session with an extended response to another scholar's paper.

Graduate students will receive a \$5,000 stipend for the year as seminar fellows. Faculty fellows will receive either \$4,000 in research support or a one-course teaching release for one semester to enable them to

participate in the year-long seminar. In the latter case, departments will be reimbursed for instructional replacements at the minimum contractual PTL rate. Financial arrangements will be made in advance of the seminar with the department chairs and/or appropriate deans.

Applications should include a project title and 150-word abstract, a project description of up to five double-spaced pages, a reference list of five key books/articles or five scholars/activists whose work speaks to your project and the theme, and an updated curriculum vitae. Applications should be received at IRW by **Friday, January 27, 2023**. All decisions of the selection committee are final. 2023-2024 Seminar Fellows will be notified by **Friday, March 3, 2023**. Please contact IRW at irw@sas.rutgers.edu if you have any questions.



School of Arts and Sciences

Institute for Research on Women
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
160 Ryders Lane
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8555

IRW Seminar 2023-24

Possession

Please review the guidelines in our online FAQ (<http://irw.rutgers.edu/programs/interdisciplinary-faculty-graduate-seminar/18-programs/seminar/55-frequently-asked-questions-about-the-irw-s-seminar>).

- 1. Rutgers graduate students:** Please complete sections A and B, sign the form and acquire your department chair or mentor's signature. Submit with a project title and 150-word abstract, a project description of up to five double-spaced pages, reference list, and an updated curriculum vitae. To be eligible for a stipend, students must be ABD by or before December 15, 2022.
- 2. Rutgers faculty members:** Please fill out sections A and C, sign the form and acquire the signature of your department chair, director or dean [if no dept. structure]. Submit with a project title and 150-word abstract, a project description of up to five double-spaced pages, reference list, and an updated curriculum vitae.

Please use the subject line: IRW Seminar Application <Your last name> to email the documents and this application form (PDF format preferred) to irw@sas.rutgers.edu by **Friday, January 27, 2023**. Receipt will be confirmed via return email.

SECTION A (All Applicants)

Name: _____

Project Title: _____

Department and School: _____ Email: _____

Campus address and phone #: _____ Campus: _____

SECTION B (Prospective Rutgers Graduate Students only)

- ☐ I am/will be ABD by December 15, 2022 and **agree to participate in *all* weekly seminar meetings**, Thursday mornings from 10:30 to noon, during both Fall and Spring semesters.

My dissertation committee comprises of the following: _____

SECTION C (Prospective Rutgers Faculty Fellows only)

If accepted as a Faculty Fellow of the IRW Seminar, **I will participate in *all* weekly seminar meetings**, Thursday mornings from 10:30 to noon during both the Fall and Spring semesters.

- ☐ I am requesting one course reduction for the 2023-2024 Fall or Spring semester (circle one); the IRW will arrange for coadjutant funding at an approved level for instructional replacement.

OR

- ☐ I am requesting research funds of \$4,000 from the IRW in support of my seminar project.
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SIGNATURES (All applicants)

Applicant Signature _____

ADMINISTRATIVE ENDORSEMENT FROM DEPARTMENT CHAIR, DIRECTOR, OR DEAN (FACULTY) OR MENTOR (GRAD STUDENT)

In signing this application, department chair or mentor indicates support of the candidate's research proposal and candidacy for the seminar and that the department accepts the terms of seminar participation and support requested above.

Name (please print or type) _____ Signature _____