

2014-2015 Call for Applicants - IRW Global Scholars

Feminist Optics: Gender and Visual Studies

Institute for Research on Women (IRW)

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Each year, the Institute for Research on Women 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, the IRW offers private offices, institutional affiliation, access to the Rutgers library, and participation in a lively interdisciplinary feminist community. The theme for our discussions from September 2014 through April 2015 will be "Feminist Optics: Gender and Visual Studies." We invite applications from university scholars and scholar/activists whose work is compatible with the theme.

About the IRW

The Institute for Research on Women (IRW) promotes innovative scholarship on women, gender and sexuality through interdisciplinary forums, lectures, and conferences. The 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 "Feminist Optics: Gender and Visual Studies." 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 private offices, 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 provide networked PCs with internet access and a shared laser printer. The 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

The IRW's eighteenth annual interdisciplinary seminar takes as its theme "Feminist Optics: Gender and Visual Studies." Selected Rutgers faculty, advanced graduate students and IRW Global Scholars whose projects address this theme will participate in the 2014-2015 seminar, which meets 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.

This seminar will explore the past, present and futures of visual studies and feminist theory's impact on the field's development. How has feminist scholarship challenged practices of looking in the academy and beyond? From interpretations of the female nude in art history to inquiries about the phallogocentric gaze of cinema to studies of fashion sign systems, pornography and digital culture, feminist scholarship has opened up new avenues of engaging the visual world and has been foundational to the field of visual studies.

Influenced by literature, cinema and media studies, art history, technology studies, and neuroscience, visual studies has emerged in the past four decades as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that engages what has been described as "the visual turn" in knowledge production and reception. This includes an emphasis on training students from a very early age to be visually literate and to acquire information and data more frequently through image-based modes of communication. Also important is bio-medical research that challenges conventional understandings of how people see and acquire information. Crucial to the development of visual studies is the work of several feminist scholars whose theories of subjectivity, the gaze and optics, spectatorship and reception have radically altered studies of visual media, art, culture and technology, and everyday practices more broadly. The seminar provides an opportunity to take account of these historical, theoretical and disciplinary interventions and to consider their relevance at this moment. In addition to research in visual studies, the seminar invites inquiries into how feminist interventions in visuality and subjectivity have impacted ethnographic studies, empirical data collection, literary studies, interface software and technologies, and archival research. Also of interest are critiques of the primacy of the visual in intellectual inquiry and the growing interest in sound and haptic studies as they relate to gender and perception.

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:

- Feminist art
- Optics and perception
- Imaging and biomedicine

- Film, video or photography studies
- Visuality, the “crisis” in the humanities, and disciplinary transformation
- Mapping and the politics of cartography
- Participatory art, activism and pedagogy
- Visualizing institutional formations
- Haunting and the public imaginary
- Archival processes
- Pornography
- Surveillance
- Gaming
- War and simulation
- Empiricism
- Speculation

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 Optics: Gender and Visual Studies" 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).