

**Annual Report**  
**Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers University, 2016-2017**

Arlene Stein (Director) & Sarah Tobias (Associate Director)

**I. OVERVIEW**

2016-2017 has been a year marked by both transition and continuity at the Institute for Research on Women (IRW). At the start of the year we welcomed Professor Arlene Stein as our new director and the institute has thrived under her leadership. Our core programming—the weekly seminar, Distinguished Lecture Series, and undergraduate learning community—explored the theme of “Feminist In/Security: Vulnerability, Securitization and States of Crisis.” We extended our professional development initiatives, launching two new workshops—on op-ed writing and protecting academic freedom online. We also sponsored a working group on feminist pedagogies. In other transitions, we hired Meliseta Shand as IRW’s new Administrative Assistant in October 2016. She replaced Stephanie East, who accepted a position in American Studies.

A May 2017 external review of the Institute for Women’s Leadership Consortium described IRW as “the intellectual ‘home base’ for those scholars on campus who work on interdisciplinary feminist scholarship.” The review noted that our role is “absolutely critical” to nurturing and sustaining feminist work among faculty and students at the university. The following report provides a brief summary of IRW’s activities and initiatives in the 2016-17 academic year.

**II. CORE PROGRAMMING**

**IRW Interdisciplinary Research Seminar**

As mentioned above, the theme for IRW’s 2016-17 interdisciplinary seminar—and for all of its core programming—was “Feminist In/Security: Vulnerability, Securitization and States of Crisis.” Throughout the year we examined questions of international and domestic security from a range of feminist and queer perspectives. In addition to the IRW Director and Associate Director, a total of 13 individuals participated in this year’s seminar: 4 faculty members, 5 graduate students, 2 Global Scholars (from Brown University and Queens College, CUNY), one Postdoctoral Fellow, and one Douglass alumna. Scholars attending the seminar were associated with the Anthropology, Sociology, Geography, Latino and Caribbean Studies, Women’s and Gender Studies, and Political Science Departments (New Brunswick and Newark), as well as the Program in Comparative Literature. Seminar discussions showcased participants’ research on topics as varied as “Science, Technology and the Martial Politics of Police/Military Violence: Thinking Beyond the Concepts of Militarization & Securitization” to “Sly Legibility and Refugee Insecurity: When Gendered ‘Asian Threat’ Imperils Hmong Americans.”

This year, for the first time, we also integrated public engagement skills training into our seminar. Fellows wrote blog posts each week to share with the group alongside their more formal presentations. We held a special workshop for seminar members on scholarly publishing. Led by Mary Hawkesworth (Women’s and Gender Studies; former editor of *Signs*) and Peter Mikulas (Rutgers University Press), seminar members learned about the intricacies of publishing in academic journals and how this process differs from publishing scholarly monographs. In addition, Women’s and Gender Studies professor Brittney Cooper and School of Communication and Information professor Mary Chayko led a workshop for seminar fellows on public scholarship. We supplemented

these with a series of professional development workshops that were open to seminar fellows and to the university community (see below).

Final evaluations by participants praised the seminar for providing a highly generative environment that was simultaneously “supportive, engaged, rigorous, and generous.” Faculty and graduate students commented that they benefited considerably from exploring the annual theme from an interdisciplinary perspective, an experience that has enriched their own research. They described the intellectual community fostered by IRW as “dynamic” and “very sustaining.” Participants were also consistently enthusiastic about our professional development initiatives: “I **loved** the hands-on workshops,” wrote one seminar fellow in her final evaluation. “More of these please!” In short, the IRW seminar continues to provide a model interdisciplinary space that enables its participants to grow and thrive as intellectuals.

### ***IRW Seminar on Feminist In/Security***

*Comments from evaluations*

“Participation in the seminar has been very generative for thinking through ideas for my dissertation, pushing me to produce a chapter, and fostering new avenues to pursue in the future.”

— *Graduate Student*

“Highly productive, mutually supportive, pushing my research in new directions.”

— *Faculty Member*

“Positive, positive, positive; knowledge, energy, exchange of ideas”

— *Global Scholar*

### **IRW Distinguished Lecture Series**

During the 2016-17 academic year, IRW hosted talks by six Distinguished Lecturers, esteemed academics from within and outside the university, each attracting 60-100 audience members. Events were attended by faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates from a range of departments, as well as by members of the IRW’s Undergraduate Learning Community, representatives from the Institute for Women’s Leadership, and local community members. Because we incorporated our events into the Douglass passport program we elicited the participation of many undergraduate transfer students. Faculty teaching courses in several disciplines also encouraged students to attend or brought their classes to the events.

- In “Queer Domesticity in the Time of Insecurity” (September 22, 2016), Martin F. Manalansan IV (University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign) described the daily life and entanglements of a group of 6 undocumented, queer immigrants of color in Queens, one of New York City’s largest transnational enclaves. Manalansan’s ethnographic study explored the seeming physical disarray of immigrants’ lives. By thinking queerly about “mess,” he

questioned the ways we understand refuge, domesticity and dwelling in a world devoid of welcoming sanctuaries and stable shelters.

- In “Playing on Insecurities” (November 3, 2016), Felicity D. Scott (Columbia University) discussed the role of architects in security discourses during the 1960s and 1970s. This volatile historical period exhibited several similarities to the present day, including rising urban instabilities in both the “West” and the so-called developing world, environmental emergencies, increased militarism and forces of globalization, and rising claims to self-determination. Scott’s talk investigated how and why the narratives, struggles, and conflicts of the period became institutionalized and architecturally represented.
- In “Why Is It So Hard to Get Women to the Peace Table? And Why Is That Not Even the Right Question?” (November 17, 2016), Carol Cohn (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) described how activists see women’s inclusion in the peace process as a path to ending wars more quickly and creating gender-equitable postwar societies. They have therefore sought to enhance women’s participation in negotiations. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 has provided an international policy framework for such a process however it has met with scant success. Cohn examined the reasons why women’s participation has incurred so much resistance and challenged the assumption that getting women to the table will result in a faster, more equitable peace.
- In “The Right to Maim: States of Debility/Capacity/Disability” (January 26, 2017), Jasbir Puar (Rutgers, New Brunswick) examined parallels between the shoot-to-kill approach of the Ferguson, Missouri police, which resulted in the death of African American Michael Brown, and the shoot-to-maim policy of Israelis targeting Palestinians in occupied Gaza. Puar argued that both the killings of black men by US police and the maiming of a captive population of Palestinians by an occupying Israeli army serve to deliberately debilitate a population. They reflect forms of racialization that liberal disability rights frameworks cannot fathom.
- In “Who Will Save the Children? Feminist Perspectives on the Contradictions of Education in States of In/Security and Crisis” (April 6, 2017), Thea Renda Abu El-Haj (Graduate School of Education, Rutgers, New Brunswick) argued that Lebanese education policy, which is designed to promote neoliberal citizenship, complicates relationships of care. In classrooms full of Syrian refugees and youth traumatized by war, Lebanese teachers are forced to follow a regimented curriculum designed to produce independent economic actors. This distracts from their ability to provide particularized attention to children and compromises their mission to “secure” the nation’s future.
- In “Paranoia, Sex, and the Workplace” (April 13, 2017), Jennifer Doyle (University of California, Riverside) explored sexual harassment dynamics and the university campus through Freud’s essay “A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Theory.” Weaving together feminist scholarship and theories of the relationship of individual subjects to groups and institutions, she argued that the persistence of the gendered division of labor means that the workplace remains a sexual space, even when sex is theoretically banished from it.

## IRW Undergraduate Learning Community

***IRW Learning Community on Feminist In/Security: Surveillance, Bodies, Borders***  
*Comments from evaluations*

“The IRWLC was important to me not simply because of what I was taught, but because of what I was able to realize about myself; it allowed me to grow and become a better person.”

“The IRW Learning Community creates a space that is both safe and informal, but also incredibly academic. I was inspired to express myself openly and think deeply about differing opinions and ideas”

“Sara encourages a collaborative learning environment. I enjoyed the freedom everyone had to learn from each other and even ‘teach’ our professor during discussions.”

“Topics raised in class are relevant to everyday experience and were crucial to my understanding of social justice.”

Since the 2007-8 academic year, IRW has pioneered the development of an undergraduate learning community based in a research institute, offering advanced undergraduate students an intimate yet rigorous environment for intellectual growth. With the support of the Office of Residence Life, IRW ran two semester-long learning communities (fall 2016 and spring 2017) led by Undergraduate Learning Community Coordinator Sara Perryman. Ms. Perryman is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies at Rutgers-New Brunswick, writing a dissertation entitled “Eco-Sensoriums and Geographies of Risk: Detroit, Michigan’s Affective Futurity.”

Under Sara’s guidance, a total of 38 students from a variety of majors, ranging from Mathematics and Public Health to Linguistics and Africana Studies, participated in IRW’s learning community during 2016-17. Participants attended IRW’s Distinguished Lecture Series, gathered to discuss related readings, and worked with mentors (faculty, visiting scholars or advanced IRW graduate student fellows) to develop their own research/activist projects related to the theme of “Feminist In/Security: Surveillance, Bodies, Borders.” In addition, participants met with Women’s and Gender Studies librarian Kayo Denda for a research methods class tailored to the learning community’s theme and objectives. They also continued their work outside of class by taking a trip to Philadelphia’s Eastern State Penitentiary in the fall semester, and to the Museum of Sex in New York City in the spring. Evaluations described the Learning Community as an exciting and supportive interdisciplinary space that facilitates honest communication and open inquiry. The intimate seminar-style class encourages students to work collaboratively on research projects and challenges them to think about issues from multiple perspectives.

### III. IRW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

IRW substantially extended its professional development initiatives during 2016-17, and included a focus on public engagement beyond scholarly communities. In addition to workshops on scholarly publishing and public scholarship that were organized in conjunction with the weekly seminar and described earlier in this report, IRW also held three very successful professional development events open to the entire university community:

#### A. Job Market Basics

On Monday, November 14, 2016, IRW held a workshop designed to provide strategic advice for students contemplating a job market that is increasingly comprised of visiting positions and post-doctoral fellowships rather than tenure track jobs. The workshop covered topics including multi-year searches, transitioning from post-doc to faculty positions, and negotiating tips. The panelists were: Cynthia Daniels (Political Science and Douglass Residential College), Laura Fabris (Materials Science and Engineering), Anjali Nerlekar (AMESALL: African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages and Literatures), and Maya Mikdashi (Women's and Gender Studies & the Center for Middle Eastern Studies). The event was moderated by Sarah Tobias (IRW). The event was co-sponsored by the Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics.

#### B. Protecting Academic Freedom in a Digital World

On Thursday, March 2, 2017, IRW held a workshop intended to educate scholars on how best to address threats to intellectual property, privacy violations, and online harassment. Panelists discussed the risks of using social media and other digital technologies and how individuals can minimize them, as well as measures universities can take to preserve academic freedom. The panelists were: Jessie Daniels, Professor of Sociology at Hunter College and The Graduate Center, CUNY, internationally recognized expert in Internet expressions of racism, and author of *Cyber Racism* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009) and *White Lies* (Routledge, 1997); Alice Marwick, Director of the McGannon Communication Research Center, Assistant Professor of Communication and Media Studies at Fordham University, and author of *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity and Branding in the Social Media Age* (Yale 2013); and Shireen Mitchell, Internet pioneer, founder of Digital Sisters/Sistas Inc. (the first organization to focus on women and girls of color in tech), Stop Online Violence Against Women (a project to address online race and gender-based threats against women), and Nonprofit 2.0 and Feminism 2.0 conferences. The event was co-sponsored by the Rutgers Public Engagement Project.

#### C. Writing Op-Eds

On Thursday, March 23, 2017, IRW organized a workshop on transforming academic work into op-eds aimed at a general audience with Thaler Pekar, an internationally recognized pioneer in the field of organizational narrative, leadership storytelling, and persuasive communication. Ms. Pekar led faculty and graduate students through a series of exercises designed to define important messages and create op-eds designed for publication. She also provided participants with advice on submitting and placing op-eds, and resources for follow-up. Participants represented a wide range of disciplines in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and STEM. The event was co-sponsored by the Rutgers Public Engagement Project.

In 2017-18, IRW will take responsibility for administering the Rutgers Public Engagement Project. This will enable the university community to continue to take advantage of skills training designed to

help scholars communicate their research to a broad audience. We anticipate holding a full schedule of professional development workshops during 2017-18.

#### **IV. OTHER INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMING**

##### **A. IRW Publications**

In April 2017, IRW published the second issue of its web journal, *Rejoinder*, an online forum for feminist, queer, and social justice-inspired work. The theme of this issue was Borders, Bodies, Homes. Contributors explored the way in which these concepts shape our understandings of selfhood and exile in an environment marked by migratory population flows, resurgent nationalisms, and state-sanctioned violence. This issue of *Rejoinder* featured essays, fiction, and artwork from: Joshua G. Adair, Connie Freid, Uddipana Goswami, Leigh Johnson, Elinor Meeks, Vukasin Nedeljkovic, Jeffrey Shandler, Rachida Yassine, and Helena Zeweri. *Rejoinder* is edited by IRW Associate Director Sarah Tobias.

##### **B. Feminist Pedagogies Working Group**

In Spring 2017, IRW launched a new working group, *Feminist Pedagogies*, organized by Enmanuel Martínez (Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Literature) and Dara Walker (Ph.D. candidate in History) designed to focus on material classroom practices as well as the theorization of feminist pedagogies. Working group participants included Ph.D. students, M.A. students, postdoctoral fellows and professors, representing departments such as Comparative Literature, History, East Asian Languages and Cultures, Sociology, English, Media Studies, Geography, Philosophy, and Religion. During the group's first meeting (February 17), participants discussed a selection of readings theorizing feminist pedagogies. In the second meeting (February 24), participants reviewed various case studies on the application of feminist pedagogies to the classroom. The third and final meeting (March 10) involved a presentation by Rutgers Professor of Latino and Caribbean Studies and Comparative Literature and former IRW Director Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel on best practices for integrating feminist pedagogies in the design of syllabi and assignments. The co-chairs will meet this summer to plan additional events for Fall 2017.

##### **C. Collaboration with IWL on Public Forum**

On January 19, 2017, IRW organized a panel discussion, "The Role of the Scholar in the Era of Trump: Speaking Truth to Power, Facts v. Fantasy," as part of an event coordinated by members of the Institute for Women's Leadership Consortium in the aftermath of the 2016 Presidential Election. IRW's panel brought together David Greenberg (History, Rutgers University-New Brunswick), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (Latino and Caribbean Studies & Comparative Literature, Rutgers University-New Brunswick), and Maya Mikdashi (Women's and Gender Studies and Middle East Studies, Rutgers University-New Brunswick) for a robust conversation about the role of the academy in the age of "alternative facts."

##### **D. Keynote Address, Sussex University Conference**

On May 26, 2017, IRW Director Arlene Stein and IRW Associate Director Sarah Tobias presented a keynote address at the University of Sussex's "Echoes of Fascism" conference in Falmer, UK. Their talk was entitled "The Holocaust Without Jews, US Without Muslims, and the Men in the White House."

### **E. Co-sponsorships**

As part of our commitment to collaborating with other units, IRW continued to co-sponsor a large number of events with a diverse spectrum of centers, departments and institutes, including the Department of Sociology, the Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Technology and Mathematics, the Center for Women in the Arts and Humanities, the Center on Violence Against Women & Children, and the Rutgers Public Engagement Project. The Director and Associate Director continue to cultivate significant relationships and pursue possible collaborations with many Rutgers units. The range of our collaborative and co-sponsored activities in 2016-17 can be seen in Appendix B, IRW's calendar of events.

### **V. FELLOWS AT IRW**

During 2016-17, the Institute for Research on Women hosted two Global Scholars: Maria Cecilia Hwang (Brown University), and Basuli Deb (Queens College, CUNY). Ms. Hwang, who was also an IRW Global Scholar during the 2015-16 academic year, continued to work on a project entitled *Mixing Work and Pleasure in Hong Kong: Women's Migration, Sex Work, Border Control, and the Politics of Trafficking*. Based on thirteen months of ethnography conducted in Hong Kong between 2010 and 2013, Hwang's study examines the migration and labor of women sex workers from the Philippines and interrogates how the global campaign against human trafficking has affected their lives and livelihoods. Dr. Deb joined us in fall 2017 to work on a project entitled *Indigenous Lives and Diasporic Aspirations*. Her work examines the heteropatriarchal politics of legislative and technological control of indigenous and immigrant communities in comparative settler colonial security regimes.

### **VI. TOWARDS 2017-2018**

IRW's annual theme for 2017-2018 is "The Perils of Populism." A rightwing populism that scapegoats society's most vulnerable populations is emerging across the globe 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. During the 2017-18 academic year we will explore how a feminist lens can help us to diagnose the current political moment, and potentially move beyond it. We will take a comparative approach to populism, considering how we can learn from the ways feminists have challenged reactionary populism in Europe, as well as in South Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. We hope that the School of Arts and Sciences will continue to support our infrastructure and programming as we undertake these important endeavors.

<b>IRW Staff 2016-17</b>	<b>About the IRW</b>
<p data-bbox="201 310 483 380"><b>Director</b> Professor Arlene Stein</p> <p data-bbox="201 422 456 491"><b>Associate Director</b> Sarah Tobias, Ph.D.</p> <p data-bbox="201 527 537 596"><b>Administrative Assistant</b> Meliseta Shand</p> <p data-bbox="201 632 711 743"><b>Undergraduate Learning Community Coordinator</b> Sara Perryman</p>	<p data-bbox="839 310 1458 1064">At the forefront of feminist research for over forty years, the Institute for Research on Women (IRW) advances feminist cutting-edge, interdisciplinary scholarship on gender, women and sexuality. Part of the School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, IRW was founded in the mid-1970s by faculty and administrators seeking to expand feminist scholarship and activism beyond the university's fledgling Women's Studies program. Today, IRW supports a broad range of programming designed to stimulate research on women and gender within and across the disciplines, throughout and beyond Rutgers. Promoting faculty and student connections and building intellectual community are also central to IRW's mission. Affiliate members of IRW currently include almost 900 faculty, graduate students, and advanced undergraduates drawn from a wide range of disciplines at the New Brunswick, Newark and Camden campuses.</p>