

Annual Report
Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers University, 2018-2019

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

I. OVERVIEW

2018-2019 was an exceptionally busy and productive year at the Institute for Research on Women (IRW). Our core programming—the weekly seminar, Distinguished Lecture Series, and undergraduate learning community—explored the theme of “Public Catastrophes, Private Losses.” We continued our leadership of the Rutgers Public Engagement Project and held a variety of different workshops and events throughout the academic year. Toward the end of the year, IRW signed a contract with Rutgers University Press for a new book series, tentatively entitled *The Feminist Bookshelf: Scholarship for the 21st Century*, which will feature the most compelling speakers from the institute’s Distinguished Lecture Series and make the important conversations generated at IRW accessible to a wide audience. The following report provides a brief summary of IRW’s activities and initiatives in the 2018-19 academic year.

II. CORE PROGRAMMING

IRW Interdisciplinary Research Seminar

As mentioned above, the theme for IRW’s 2018-19 interdisciplinary seminar—and for all of its core programming—was “Public Catastrophes, Private Losses.” Inspired by feminism, we explored how, in the aftermath of catastrophe, families and communities become repositories for loss, silence, mourning, witnessing, reconstruction, and reparation. In addition to the IRW Director and Associate Director, a total of 15 individuals participated in this year’s seminar: 5 faculty members, 4 graduate students, 3 Global Scholars (originally from India, Romania, and Nigeria but now affiliated with US institutions), 2 Fulbright Scholars (from India and Albania), and one Douglass alumna. Scholars attending the seminar were associated with the Geography, English, Sociology, Spanish and Portuguese, Childhood Studies (Camden), and Women’s and Gender Studies departments, the Graduate School of Education and the School of Social Work. Seminar discussions showcased participants’ research on topics as varied as “Hidden Voices: Childhood, the Family, and Antisemitism in Occupation France” and “Living with, and Against, Slow Violence: Youth and Environmental Justice in Camden, New Jersey.”

Seminar members attended a workshop on scholarly publishing. Led by Mary Hawkesworth (Women’s and Gender Studies; former editor of *Signs*) and Peter Mikulas and Kim Guinta (Rutgers University Press), seminar members learned about the intricacies of publishing in academic journals and how this process differs from publishing scholarly monographs. They also attended a special presentation by South African poet, writer, and anti-apartheid activist Khosi Xaba. We supplemented these events with a series of public engagement workshops that were open to seminar fellows and the entire university community (see later in this report for more information on our public engagement initiatives).

Final evaluations by participants praised the seminar for being “serious, invested, generous, [and] supportive.” They appreciated the “wonderful camaraderie” that developed among seminar fellows and said they “loved the interdisciplinarity, one of [the] best parts of IRW.” One faculty member remarked that the seminar made her “feel more engaged and positive” about her scholarship and

“newly convinced of its importance.” A graduate student remarked that the seminar became a space in which “faculty and graduate students were able to share and interact as equals.” This lack of hierarchy was particularly evident when a cluster of seminar participants—faculty, graduate students, and visiting scholars from different disciplines—joined together to create a new, and very active IRW working group. In short, IRW’s seminar remains a model interdisciplinary space that is highly generative and enables its participants to grow and thrive as intellectuals.

IRW Seminar on Public Catastrophes, Private Losses

Comments from evaluations

“It has broadened my horizons and given me a safe, productive space to think about...my own work, and learn from others.”

—Graduate Student

“It was fantastic...and enhanced my graduate experience significantly. Such a supportive environment.”

—Graduate Student

“Very caring, enthusiastic, sharing, engaged.”

—Faculty Member

IRW Distinguished Lecture Series

During the 2018-19 academic year, IRW hosted five events in its Distinguished Lecture Series: four panel discussions and one lecture followed by a conversation. Our events featured scholars from within and outside the university as well as public intellectuals and members of the activist community. Each event attracted a large audience and was 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. Faculty teaching courses in several disciplines also encouraged students to attend or brought their classes to the events.

- In “The Inheritance of Loss: Transnational Families and Memory Work” (October 11, 2018), Grace M. Cho (College of Staten Island, CUNY) and Katka Reszke (independent scholar) discussed the ways in which traumatic experiences travel through time, impacting subsequent generations. They described how writing about their family legacies (the Korean War for Cho; the Holocaust for Reszke) affected both their relationships with family members and their communities of origin. They addressed what it was like to adopt different modes of representation and, as social scientists, to take unconventional, creative approaches to scholarship.

- In “My City Was Gone: Gentrification, AIDS, and Urban Change” (November 1, 2018), Amber Hollibaugh (writer, filmmaker, activist), Carmen Vázquez (AIDS Institute of the NYS Department of Health), and Mindy Fullilove (The New School) explored how the twin catastrophes of AIDS and gentrification are interlaced and have remade urban communities such as New York City and San Francisco. They discussed the challenges of getting the government to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations and considered what AIDS and anti-gentrification activism can teach us about the future of movement building.
- In “Slavery’s Shadows: The Afterlife of Dispossession” (March 28, 2019), Marisa J. Fuentes (Rutgers-New Brunswick) and Christina Sharpe (York University) explored how traumatic experiences of slavery travel through time and space, affecting the study of the past as well as the present. They discussed their distinctive methodological approaches to the archive, and how their respective work addresses issues of power, violence, and resistance on the one hand, and conceptions of ethics, freedom, and care on the other. This event was moderated by Michelle Commander (Schomburg Center).
- In “Labor of Loss: Climate Change and the Emerging Economy of Care and Repair” (April 4, 2019), Naomi Klein (Rutgers-New Brunswick) observed that climate change is a “risk multiplier” that requires a collective solution. She discussed the significance of the Green New Deal—an effort to promote social, economic, and climate justice—and compared it to FDR’s New Deal from the 1930s. After her talk, she was joined by Liz Ševčenko and Aleia Brown (Humanities Action Lab, Rutgers-Newark) for a conversation about the relevance of local/grassroots organizing for addressing climate injustice.
- In “Whose Lives Matter? Drugs, Criminalization, and Social Justice” (April 18, 2019), Angela Garcia (Stanford), Donna Murch (Rutgers New-Brunswick), and Jennifer Flynn-Walker (Center for Popular Democracy) explored the ways in which the US government and media’s response to drug use is contingent on the class, race, and geography of the affected communities. While variously framed by authorities as a “war” or “crisis,” they noted that drug use and addiction are also an ordinary form of everyday violence. They contemplated the losses—to individuals and communities—that are the inevitable corollary of widespread drug use and its criminalization

IRW Undergraduate Learning Community

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 the Chancellor at Rutgers-New Brunswick, IRW ran two semester-long learning communities (Fall 2018 and Spring 2019) 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.”

IRW Undergraduate Learning Community on Public Catastrophes, Private Losses
Comments from evaluations

“Nowhere else but the IRW have I really been pushed by my peers to consider the world through an intersectional lens. It allowed me to have a sanctuary where I could discuss topics that I don’t get to in my other classes.”

“I really loved conducting research and then learning how to make a podcast that was accessible to all different kinds of people! It was both intellectually stimulating and a deeply personal process.”

“Having dinner together each week in a community environment broke down barriers that normally exist in other classes. The environment is relaxed and challenging at the same time.”

Under Sara’s guidance, a total of 35 students from a variety of majors, ranging from Pharmacy and Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering to Sociology and Comparative Literature, participated in IRW’s learning community during 2018-19. 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 “Public Catastrophes, Private Losses.” These projects culminated in 5-10 minute podcasts, through which students learned about public scholarship and how to tell their research stories through sound. They met with Fordham Multimedia Lab Manager Stacey Carton and Molly Graham from the Rutgers Oral History Archive for classes specifically tailored to learn research skills, interview and recording techniques, and podcast editing software. They also continued their work outside of class by taking a trip to the Brooklyn Museum in the fall semester and the Museum of Sex in Manhattan in the spring. Evaluations described the learning community as a creative and supportive feminist classroom that exposes students to a broad range of topics from multiple perspectives. In-class workshops on research methodologies and digital technology helped students build practical skills and develop innovative and exciting research projects. Students felt inspired by one another and formed close relationships that strengthened their ability to communicate and conduct collaborative research.

III. IRW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

IRW continued to lead the Rutgers Public Engagement Project during 2018-2019, and extended its professional development initiatives in this capacity. In addition to the workshop on scholarly publishing that was organized in conjunction with the weekly seminar and described earlier in this report, IRW held 7 other professional development events that were open to the entire university community:

A. Defending Democracy: Making a Difference in the Midterm Elections with Andrea Catone, Winn Khuong, and Saily Avelenda

On Thursday, October 4, 2018, Andrea Catone (Movement Voter Project and Sociology) Winn Khuong (Action Together New Jersey), and Saily Avelenda (NJ 11th for Change) gave a workshop

on the many ways to become involved in the electoral process. Participants learned new strategies to encourage electoral participation—from creating a “post-it posse” to raise awareness of voting by mail to using their smart phones to send friends reminders to vote. This workshop was covered in a [feature story](#) by John Chadwick from The School of Arts and Sciences.

B. Participatory Writing with Angelique Haugerud

On Thursday, November 8, 2018, Angelique Haugerud (Anthropology) led a workshop intended to dispel the myths that keep people from writing. She shared tips designed to help participants overcome stalls and blocks, develop the ability to manage writing time, cope with pressure to produce, and balance writing for academic and non-academic audiences.

C. Job Market Basics Workshop

On Monday, November 12, 2018, 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), Crystal Bedley (Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics), Anjali Nerlekar (AMESALL: African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages and Literatures), and Dámaris Otero-Torres (Spanish and Portuguese). The event was moderated by Sarah Tobias (IRW) and co-sponsored by the Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics.

D. Oral History and Activism with Kate Rizzi

On Thursday, December 6, 2018, Kate Rizzi (Rutgers Oral History Archives) presented a practical guide to oral history for researchers interested in movement building and social justice. The workshop focused on techniques for those collecting oral histories of activists with archiving and preservation in mind.

E. Public Engagement for Academics with Thaler Pekar

On Thursday, February 21, 2019, Thaler Pekar led a workshop on how scholars can use narrative to reach wide audiences through op-eds, blogs, and social media—and to persuade grant-making entities.

F. Beyond the ‘I’: When Memoir Meets History, a talk and workshop with Mimi Schwartz

On Thursday, March 7, 2019, Mimi Schwartz led a workshop designed to help participants discover the power of combining memoir and social history in their own writing. Dr. Schwartz also read from her own essay collection *When History Is Personal*, which illuminates 25 moments—from immigration to assimilation, the women’s movement, social justice, and end-of-life issues—that have mattered in her life.

G. Storytelling for Social Change with Thaler Pekar

On Thursday, April 11, 2019, we welcomed back Thaler Pekar to lead a workshop on how narrative techniques can be used to enhance social change work.

IV. OTHER INITIATIVES , NEWS, AND PROGRAMMING

A. *Rejoinder* Journal

In May 2019, IRW published the fourth issue of its online journal, *Rejoinder*, a forum for feminist, queer, and social justice-inspired work. The theme of this issue was Me Too. Contributors examined the ways in which Me Too travels through space, time, and place, considering whose voices are prioritized and whose are diminished as the movement changes and grows. This issue of *Rejoinder* features articles and artwork by: Zakiya Adair, Linda Bond, Janet Braun-Reinitz, Kristina Fennelly, Judith Jackson-Pomeroy, Chaitanya Lakkimsetti, LaShawnda Lindsay-Dennis, Katrina Majkut, Rosemary Meza-DesPlas, Vanita Reddy, Eva Velasco, Michelle Warren, and Linda Williams. *Rejoinder* is edited by IRW Associate Director Sarah Tobias and Andrea Zerpa is the art editor. The journal is a partnership with The Feminist Art Project. It may be viewed online at: <http://irw.rutgers.edu/rejoinder>.

B. IRW Book Series

In April 2018, IRW Director Arlene Stein and Associate Director Sarah Tobias signed a contract with Rutgers University Press for a new book series, tentatively entitled *The Feminist Bookshelf: Scholarship for the 21st Century*. The new series will highlight the most compelling work presented at the institute each year in relation to its annual theme. Each *Feminist Bookshelf* volume will include essays varied in style and length, drawn mainly from the institute's Distinguished Lecture Series, which features prominent feminist scholars, activists, and public intellectuals from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and perspectives. As far as we are aware, no other comparable feminist research center has a book series that captures the richness of its work in such a sustained fashion.

C. IRW Special Issue

In July 2018, IRW Associate Director Sarah Tobias and former IRW Director Nicole Fleetwood were invited to submit a full proposal for a special issue of *Feminist Formations* based on the institute's work in the 2015-2016 academic year. In October 2018, the editorial board voted in favor of accepting the proposal for a special issue tentatively entitled "The New Status Quo: Essays on Poverty in the United States and Beyond." The special issue of *Feminist Formations* will be published in Spring 2021.

D. IRW Working Groups

IRW is currently supporting three working groups. Our working group on ***Gender, Race and Disability Politics of Science and Technology*** is led by Alison Howell (Political Science, Rutgers-Newark) and Daniel Asen (History, Rutgers-Newark). In Fall 2018, the Working Group hosted a well-attended public lecture by Dr. Melanie Richter-Montpetit (University of Sussex, UK) on the topic of "Technologies of Counterinsurgency." During her visit, Dr. Richter-Montpetit also had lunch with a group of undergraduate students and explored possible research collaborations with working group members. As a result, a research proposal has been submitted to the Leverhulme Trust in the hopes of securing a major grant to continue this collaboration. In Spring 2019 the working group hosted another well-attended presentation, this time by members of the activist group What Would an HIV Doula Do? Their presentation shared their archival activist project titled *Metanoia*, which examines community-based responses to the ongoing AIDS crisis in the US, centering on the experiences of cis and trans women of color who are at the forefront of movement work but often at the margins of AIDS archives, art shows, and histories.

IRW's working group on *Carceral Studies* is an interdisciplinary research and activist space that focuses on historicizing, theorizing, and deconstructing the expansive carceral system and its attendant political economy. Led by former IRW Director Nicole Fleetwood (American Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick) Che Gossett (Ph.D. candidate, Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick), and Itzel Corona Aguilar (Ph.D. candidate, Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick), the group held several meetings over the course of two semesters. Participants read texts such as Kelly Lytle Hernandez's *City of Inmates*, and shared their own work with the group. They also organized a talk by the artist Cameron Rowland on racial capitalism and the carceral state, as well as a conference, "Abolitionist Imperatives: The Urgency of Abolition in Times of Crisis," that featured presentations by Mariame Kaba, Stephen Dillon, Donna Murch, Micol Siegel, Marisa Belausteguigoitia Ruis, Martha Escobar, Terrance Wooten and more.

In Spring 2019, IRW began supporting a new working group on *Dalit and Adivasi Women*. The group, led by Julie Rajan (Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick), Priti Narayan (Geography, Rutgers-New Brunswick), Manjula Barathy (Fulbright Scholar, Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick), and Basuli Deb (IRW Global Scholar) organized two public events: "Dalit Feminisms and Femininity" on Thursday, March 7 and "Engendering the Adivasi Question" on Thursday, March 14. The events explored the lives of Dalit ("untouchable") and Adivasi (tribal) women and the distinct range of human rights violations they experience as a result their situation in India's colonial and postcolonial histories. Panelists who spoke at the first event discussed their experiences as Dalits residing within the United States and/or their research into the human rights violations faced by Dalit women in India. Panelists who spoke at the second event discussed their work with Adivasi women in India, focusing on the violence inflicted upon this community and on the responses to these human rights violations by women and/or other non-state actors working with them.

E. IRW Oral History Project

During the 2018-2019 academic year, IRW began working with the Rutgers Oral History Archives (ROHA) on an project to document the institute's past. ROHA has interviewed IRW's first administrative assistant Arlene Nora and former IRW Executive Officer Ferris Olin. They will continue to interview former staff and administrators associated with IRW to ensure that this important slice of women's history is captured for perpetuity.

F. IRW Crowdfunding Campaign

In Spring 2019, IRW initiated its first ever crowdfunding campaign in conjunction with the Rutgers University Foundation. The campaign attracted 49 donors and raised \$2000 to help support IRW's undergraduate learning community during the 2019-2020 academic year.

G. 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 Center for Chinese Studies, the School of Management and Labor Relations, the Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Technology and Mathematics, the Center for Women in the Arts and Humanities, the Center for American Women and Politics, the Department of American Studies, The School of Communication and Information, Rutgers Global, and Asian Languages and Cultures. 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 2018-19 can be seen in Appendix B, IRW's calendar of events.

V. VISITING SCHOLARS AT IRW

During the 2018-19 academic year, the Institute for Research on Women hosted three new scholars: Dr. Eriada Cela (Fulbright Scholar/Aleksander Xhuvani University, Albania), who works on critical feminist pedagogy; Dr. Danai Mupotsa (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa), who works on everyday intimacies and their visual, oral, and textual expression, and Dr. Leslye Obiora (University of Arizona/Nigeria), who works on gender, governance and democracy. Two visiting scholars extended their prior affiliation with us. Dr. Basuli Deb (Queens College, CUNY/India) continued to work on her project on indigenous and immigrant communities in comparative settler colonial security regimes, and Dr. Ileana Nachescu (Rutgers/Romania) undertook further research to explore the relationship between contemporary Eastern European immigrants and whiteness.

VI. TOWARDS 2019-2020

IRW's annual theme for 2019-2020 is "This is What Democracy Looks Like: Feminist Re-imaginings." Today democracy is under attack across the globe. The weakness of traditional political parties has enabled the rise of aggressive and stridently nationalistic strongmen. At the same time, politics increasingly takes the form of positional warfare, making compromise impossible. While enabled by electoral mechanisms and constitutions, many argue that democracy is much more than that: it is a way of thinking, a set of values, and even a way of being. For the political philosopher Hannah Arendt, the right to act and speak in public in ways that matter is the essence of democracy. Others focus on ideals of equality, fairness, or justice, or on processes such as deliberation and protest. Feminism has reinvigorated such discussions by enlarging the scope of the political imagination to include women, people of color, as well as the economically vulnerable, engaging many of those who have long been marginalized. We will reflect upon democracy's history and potential futures during the 2019-2020 academic year. How do we imagine democracy, construct it, critique it, and defend it? How can feminism help us to think through, and reclaim a sense of common purpose, cultivate empathy, and care for the most vulnerable? We hope that the School of Arts and Sciences will continue to support our infrastructure and programming as we explore these important issues.

IRW Staff 2018-19	About the IRW
<p data-bbox="201 310 483 380">Director Professor Arlene Stein</p> <p data-bbox="201 422 456 491">Associate Director Sarah Tobias, Ph.D.</p> <p data-bbox="201 527 537 596">Administrative Assistant Andrea Zerpa</p> <p data-bbox="201 632 711 743">Undergraduate Learning Community Coordinator Sara Perryman</p>	<p data-bbox="839 310 1453 1064">At the forefront of feminist research for over forty years, the Institute for Research on Women (IRW) advances cutting-edge, interdisciplinary, feminist 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>