

Annual Report
Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers University, 2022-2023

Chie Ikeya (Director) & Sarah Tobias (Executive Director)

I. OVERVIEW

2022-2023 was a full and productive academic year at IRW. “Care” was our annual theme, and we explored it throughout our core programming—the weekly seminar, Distinguished Lecture Series, and undergraduate learning community. We ran seven professional development events, including four workshops in the Rutgers Public Engagement Project, which IRW organizes. We celebrated the publication of *The Perils of Populism*, the first volume in our new *Feminist Bookshelf* series with Rutgers University Press. We also published the eighth issue of our online journal *Rejoinder*, the second issue curated by a guest editor. In personnel changes, we welcomed new IRW Director, Dr. Chie Ikeya, and new administrative assistant, Alexandra Singh. The following report provides a brief summary of IRW’s activities and initiatives in the 2022-2023 academic year.

II. CORE PROGRAMMING

IRW Interdisciplinary Research Seminar

As mentioned above, the theme for IRW’s 2022-2023 interdisciplinary faculty/graduate student seminar—and for all of our core programming—was “Care.” In addition to the IRW Director and Executive Director, a total of 12 individuals participated in this year’s seminar: five faculty members, four graduate students, two visiting scholars, and a Douglass alumna. Scholars attending the seminar were associated with the Africana Studies, Anthropology, Asian Languages and Cultures, and History departments, as well as AMESALL, Childhood Studies (Camden), and the Writing Program. Seminar discussions showcased participants’ research on topics as varied as “Gendering Sanctions in North Korea through an Ethics of Care,” “Navigating Neglect and Care: Covid-19 Management and Adivasi Societies,” and “Insurgent Healing: The Radicalism of Black Women’s Care.”

Seminar members attended a workshop on scholarly publishing. Led by Angelique Haugerud (Anthropology; former editor-in-chief of *American Ethnologist* and *Africa Today*) and Peter Mikulas and Kim Guinta (Rutgers University Press), they learned about the intricacies of publishing in academic journals and how this process differs from publishing scholarly monographs. They also attended IRW’s public engagement workshops that were open to 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 “stimulating” and “inspiring,” as well as “collegial,” “insightful,” and “supportive.” A graduate student described how the feedback from other seminar participants on her dissertation chapter helped her successfully write fellowship applications (she subsequently won two awards). Another graduate student said that she had been able to “write a book chapter on medical care around Covid as a result of . . . participation in the seminar.” The experience of COVID-19 taught us the importance of offering a hybrid option for seminar participation, which enabled one graduate student to join us from California, where she was doing fieldwork, and other seminar participants to join the seminar if they were traveling or under the weather. Several seminar members said that they appreciated how this hybrid capacity facilitated “greater access and inclusivity.”

IRW Seminar on Care
Comments from evaluations

“The seminar introduced me to readings outside of my discipline that illuminated my work, and allowed me to engage with in-progress works of colleagues from other departments, which gave great insight into methodology, process, and disciplinary conventions.”

“The seminar provided a sense of intellectual community that I am unable to find in my home department. It provided time and resources to read beyond my narrow discipline and to engage in debate that will inform my next publication.”

“The seminar has been transformative for me and my work. The community of critical caring scholars has helped me to develop confidence in sharing my new (for me) experimental scholarship and writing. The experience has been incredibly generative and I know I’ve built relationships with other participants in which we will continue to nurture each other’s work in the years to come.”

“The seminar was my lifeline.”

IRW Distinguished Lecture Series

IRW held five events in its Distinguished Lecture Series during the 2022-2023 academic year. For the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, all events were held in person. Faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates from a range of departments attended each event, as did students in IRW’s undergraduate learning community, representatives from the Institute for Women’s Leadership, and local community members.

- In **“Mapping Communities of Care in Indigenous Art Practices”** (September 22, 2022), **Mishuana Goeman** (UCLA and University at Buffalo) described how cartographic mapping has been an important aspect of the erasure of California Indians, who are often relegated to a romanticized past. Her talk centered on the NDN Collective’s project “Tongvaland,” in which Tongva artists, including Cara Romero and Mercedes Dorame, created a set of billboards that were displayed throughout Los Angeles and designed to combat Indigenous erasure within their homelands. This art reflects Indigenous futurities and relationships between people and places, the human and the non-human. As such, the art is an act of care that counters the destruction that has been repeatedly inflicted on Indigenous communities and their landscapes.
- In **“Care and Unfreedom”** (November 18, 2021), Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (USC and Princeton) discussed her ethnographic study of Filipina women who had migrated to the United Arab Emirates as live-in domestic workers. These women were “bound workers,” and hence “unfree:” forced to work *only* for the employer they initially contracted with and subject to their arbitrary power. Parreñas argued that liberal and Marxist definitions of freedom and its absence are too totalizing to capture the diversity of domestic workers’ experience. Some employers dehumanize or infantilize their employees, while others treat

them with care and respect. A republican understanding of freedom, one in which a person's susceptibility to domination is minimized through public regulation and private morality, is more analytically useful under such circumstances.

- In **“In a Human Voice”** (December 8, 2022), Carol Gilligan (New York University) reflected on the history of her work on the ethic of care and the “different voice” that she first identified in the 1970s. She argued that this voice is neither essentially nor exclusively women's, even if a concern with relational morality is more often articulated by women than men. Care ethics are rather an approach to morality in a “human voice,” a method of resisting the gender binary and hierarchy, which are the building blocks of a patriarchal order. Resting on a commitment to equal voice, care ethics call for a practice of radical listening where everyone is respectfully heard. Through this practice, the ethics of care becomes an ethic of love and liberation that is fundamental to “thick” democratic citizenship.
- In **“How Capitalism Invented the Care Economy”** (March 2, 2023), Premilla Nadasen (Barnard) interrogated the concept of carework, defined as both paid and unpaid household labor usually associated with women and white, middle-class gender norms. Care work, she maintained, is less about the tasks carried out than the assumption they require emotional investment. The language of care has masked inequality and labor exploitation by centering the needs of middle-class families and employers and obscuring links to capitalism. The language of care thereby does a disservice to campaigns for justice. We should instead use the language of social reproduction, which makes visible the role of power and capital in labor related to the maintenance and reproduction of human beings.
- In **“The Politics of Care”** (March 30, 2023), Deva Woodly (The New School for Social Research) outlined an approach to governance that draws from the practices and philosophy of the Black Lives Matter movement and radical Black feminist pragmatism. This politics starts from the premise that structural disadvantage matters and accordingly, government should take special care of those people and groups at society's margins, who are most affected by domination and oppression. The politics of care recognizes human interdependence and avoids, wherever possible, inflicting pain. It also focuses on restorative justice and acknowledges that the process of healing from socially induced trauma requires political action as well as unapologetic Blackness and the celebration of Black joy.

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. During 2022-2023, IRW ran two semester-long learning communities (Fall 2022 and Spring 2023), led by Undergraduate Learning Community Coordinator Sara Perryman. Ms. Perryman is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Rutgers-New Brunswick, writing a dissertation on critical university studies and decolonizing composition pedagogies.

IRW Undergraduate Learning Community on Care
Comments from evaluations

“This course allowed me to explore myself in another artistic way, which I am grateful for. The professor’s positivity and inclusivity really allowed everyone to be themselves and strive to reach their own goals in the course.”

“Ms. Perryman has shown that students will take initiative on their own learning when they are not pressured to be excellent; this made room for creativity and intellectual growth!”

“Sara Perryman has been an extremely positive member of my educational journey. She effectively balanced creating a community and low-pressure environment with learning and growth through open discussion, interactivity, and communication. She was prepared with new and thought-provoking material and discussion topics, and kept us engaged throughout the course.”

Under Sara’s guidance, a total of 33 students from 22 majors, ranging from Computer Science and Business Analytics to Philosophy and Criminal Justice, participated in the IRW’s Learning Community during the 2022-23 academic year. Students attended the IRW’s Distinguished Lecture Series, gathered to connect and discuss related readings, films, and other classroom materials, and actively engaged in the course Canvas site, as they developed their own research/activist projects related to the theme of “Feminist Care.” These projects culminated in an array of audio, visual, and written work through which students learned about public scholarship and how to tell their research stories through innovative formats. In the fall semester, podcasting was the primary focus; in-class workshops taught research skills, interview and recording techniques, and how to use podcast-editing software. Final audio projects included podcasts on mental health, social expectations of motherhood, menstruation politics, and more. In the spring, students created “Post-Pandemic Feminist Care Survival Guide Zines,” crafting yet another form of public engagement designed to expose students to a classic DIY feminist mode of communication, art, and politics. Students attended several zine-making workshops with Art Librarian, Megan Lotts, which culminated in a zine exchange with faculty and students from the Rutgers Writing Program at the Art Library on April 24, and a joint exhibit from April 25 – May 24 (see: <https://libguides.rutgers.edu/eventsandexhibits/RUwritingprogramzines2023>).

“Feminist Care” asked students to imagine what constitutes care in a post-pandemic, post-Roe v. Wade world, examined the complex intersections between politics and health, and considered what it will take to create effective action to support women’s bodily autonomy. Topics were explored through a range of activities both inside and outside of class. Students built tiny terrariums with live plants and found objects, and went on a hike and picnic at Rutgers Gardens, as a way to think about how craft and nature can nurture well-being. They attended “Liberation Social: BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ Celebration” at the Zimmerli Art Museum after reading Indigenous and Black women’s theories of care. They also viewed the film, *Belly of the Beast*, Erika Cohn’s 2020 documentary film on forced sterilizations of women in California prisons, after reading excerpts from Angela Davis’ *Are Prisons Obsolete?* In the spring semester, students went on a field trip to the Museum of Sex in New York City.

Evaluations described the learning community as a creative and supportive feminist classroom that exposes students to a broad range of topics from multiple perspectives. Workshops on research methodologies and digital technology helped students build practical skills and develop 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 ran a series of professional development workshops during 2022-2023, including four events in the Rutgers Public Engagement Workshop. In addition to our Scholarly Publishing workshop held on November 17, 2022 (discussed earlier in this report in the section on IRW's seminar), these include:

- On November 18, 2022, Crystal Bedley (Tyler Clementi Center), Catherine Bliss (Sociology), Jaime Coan (ISGRJ and WGSS), and Anjali Nerlekar (AMESALL) spoke at our **Job Market Basics** panel for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars on the academic and non-academic job markets.
- On December 1, 2022, Thaler Pekar (Thaler Pekar & Partners) led a workshop on **Writing Op-Eds**.
- On November 4, 2022, Mimi Schwartz led a workshop on **Writing Creative Nonfiction**.
- On February 10, 2023, Jina B. Kim (Smith College), Laura Porterfield (Rutgers-Newark) and Stephanie Rytlahti (University of Wisconsin) spoke on a panel entitled **Care and Caregiving in the Academy**.
- On March 2, 2023, Thaler Pekar (Thaler Pekar & Partners) led a workshop on **Storytelling and Persuasive Communication for Academics**.
- On March 30, 2023, Brittney Cooper (WGSS, Rutgers) led a workshop entitled **On Blogging, Twitter, and Substack**.

IV. IRW PUBLICATIONS

IRW Book Series: *The Feminist Bookshelf*

IRW celebrated the publication of *The Perils of Populism*, the first book in its new Rutgers University Press book series, *The Feminist Bookshelf: Scholarship for the 21st Century*. The volume was published in September 2022, and formally launched in January 2023 with an event featuring several contributors, including: Amrita Basu, Heather Booth, Khadijah Costley White, L.A. Kauffman, Sabine Hark, and Jyl Josephson. The book, edited by IRW Executive Director Sarah Tobias and former IRW Director Arlene Stein, is an interdisciplinary collection of essays featuring the work of feminist scholars and activists who were part of IRW's 2017-2018 Distinguished Lecture Series.

The second book in the new series, *Feeling Democracy: Emotional Politics in the New Millennium*, should be published in Spring 2024. This volume will feature essays that are based on presentations from IRW's 2020 spring conference. Contributors include: Noelle McAfee, Kathryn Abrams, Nermin Allam, Deborah Gould, Ileana Nachescu, Kirin Gupta, and Ciara Torres Spelliscy. The third book in the series, *Public Catastrophes, Personal Losses*, is based on IRW's work in the 2018-2019 academic year and is currently slated for publication in Winter 2024-2025.

***Rejoinder* Journal**

In May 2023, IRW published the eighth issue of its online journal, *Rejoinder*, a forum for feminist, queer, and social justice-inspired work. The theme of this issue was “Textual-Sexual-Spiritual: Artistic Practice and Other Rituals as Queer Becoming and Beyond,” and the issue was guest edited by Jocelyn E. Marshall, a scholar from the Emerson College. This issue of *Rejoinder* features artwork and writing by: BAEVY, Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle, Carisa Showden and María DeGuzmán, Laura Gelsomini, Allison Fradkin, Dmitry Borshch, Tahmidal Zami and Debadrita Saha, Liss LeFleur and Katherine Sobering, Gail Thacker, Conrad Ventur, Christine DeVuono, and Kini Sosa. IRW Executive Director Sarah Tobias is *Rejoinder's* founding editor and editor-in-chief. The journal is a partnership with The Feminist Art Project. It may be viewed online at: <http://irw.rutgers.edu/rejoinder>.

V. CO-SPONSORSHIPS

As part of our commitment to collaborating with other units, IRW continued to co-sponsor events with a diverse spectrum of centers, departments, institutes, and collaboratives, including AMESALL, FeminEast, Global Asias, and the Rutgers Advanced Institute for Critical Caribbean Studies. The range of our co-sponsored activities in 2022-2023 can be seen in IRW's calendar of events (attached). The Director and Associate Director will continue to cultivate significant relationships and pursue possible collaborations with Rutgers units and entities beyond the university.

VI. VISITING SCHOLARS AT IRW

In fall 2022, we briefly welcomed back Dr. Leslye Obiora (University of Arizona/Nigeria), who had been a Global Scholar at IRW before the onset of COVID-19; Dr. Obiora was not in residence during the spring. Our former IRW Global Scholar, Dr. Basuli Deb (Queens College, CUNY/India) also joined the seminar online during the fall.

VII. TOWARDS 2023-2024

IRW's annual theme for 2023-2024 is “Possession.” 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. In 2023-2024, IRW 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 hope that the School of Arts and Sciences will continue to support our infrastructure and programming as we explore the important issues that our annual theme raises.

IRW Staff 2022-2023	About the IRW
<p>Director Professor Chie Ikeya</p> <p>Executive Director Sarah Tobias, Ph.D.</p> <p>Undergraduate Learning Community Coordinator Sara Perryman</p> <p>Administrative Assistant Alexandra Singh</p>	<p>At the forefront of feminist research for nearly fifty 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, gender, and sexuality 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>