

Annual Report
Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers University, 2019-2020

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

I. OVERVIEW

2019-2020 was a year of both continuity and change at the Institute for Research on Women (IRW). It marked the start of IRW Director Arlene Stein's second term, bringing welcome stability to the institute's helm. It also brought the Covid-19 pandemic, necessitating that we rapidly transition all our public programming, including our spring conference, "Feeling Democracy," into an online format. This year's annual theme, "This is What Democracy Looks Like: Feminist Re-imaginings," was threaded through our weekly faculty/graduate student seminar, Distinguished Lecture Series, and undergraduate learning community. We continued to run, and organize events for, the Rutgers Public Engagement Project. The following report provides a brief summary of IRW's activities and initiatives in the 2019-2020 academic year.

II. CORE PROGRAMMING

IRW Interdisciplinary Research Seminar

As mentioned above, the theme for IRW's 2019-2020 interdisciplinary seminar—and for all of our core programming—was "This is What Democracy Looks Like: Feminist Re-imaginings." We explored the role of democratic citizenship in a global world now rife with nationalism, and, through a feminist lens, considered whether it is possible to reclaim a sense of commonality while acknowledging difference. In addition to the IRW Director and Associate Director, a total of 15 individuals participated in this year's seminar: 5 faculty members, 5 graduate students, 1 global scholar (originally from India but now affiliated with US institutions), 2 postdoctoral associates, one dean emerita, and one Douglass alumna. Scholars attending the seminar were associated with the History, Political Science, English (Camden), Sociology, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies departments, as well as the Graduate School of Education, Law School, and the Zimmerli Museum. Seminar discussions showcased participants' research on topics as varied as "Are Emancipatory Images Possible? On the Relationship Between Embodied Carcerality and Criminal Justice Photography," and, "Over the Dragon Gate: Episodes in a Sino-American Alliance."

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 a series of 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 "enriching . . . rigorous and supportive." They appreciated the seminar's interdisciplinarity: "So often people stay in their own disciplines," one seminar fellow wrote, "and the seminar provided a space to move beyond those boundaries." Several of the papers presented in this year's seminar are already slated for publication, and some fellows commented that the seminar had inspired them to greater productivity. "My writing output has increased dramatically," one participant said, noting that "the accountability and feedback" from other seminar fellows was central to this. Several participants are engaging with each

other beyond the weekly seminar sessions, providing feedback on each other's research and planning events together. 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 This is What Democracy Looks Like: Feminist Re-imaginings
Comments from evaluations

“I have learned the value of having a working group of colleagues that meets on a regular basis for purposes of intellectual development and encouragement. I will try to replicate the experience.”

“It was very productive and fruitful. Both faculty and graduate student provided new approaches to each others work.”

“It was a wonderful experience with a group of supportive and encouraging academics, which can be hard to find.”

IRW Distinguished Lecture Series

During the 2019-2020 academic year, IRW planned four events in its Distinguished Lecture Series, all panel discussions that featured scholars from within and outside the university as well as public intellectuals and members of the activist community. Three of the four events went ahead as planned; the fourth event was cancelled after a panelist was unable to participate due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The first three events attracted large audiences and 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. Faculty teaching courses in several disciplines also encouraged students to attend or brought their classes to the events.

- In “Just the Facts? Fragile Democracies in a Post-Truth Era” (October 24, 2019), Cynthia Miller-Idriss (American University), Valentine M. Moghadam (Northeastern University), and Khadijah White (Rutgers-New Brunswick) discussed how, in an era of intense political polarization, democracies are under an unusual amount of stress. They addressed the relationship between contemporary populism and post-truth politics, considering how manipulation of the truth affects the operations of the media, the workings of the government, and public debate, making democracies increasingly fragile.
- In “Beyond Walls and Borders: Immigration, Citizenship, and Security Reconsidered” (November 21, 2019), Linda Bosniak (Rutgers Law School), Debanuj DasGupta (University of Connecticut), and Renée Feltz (Journalist) considered whether borders are anti-democratic entities. They fleshed out what a humane immigration policy might look like while addressing questions about democracy and belonging, and the rights of citizens and

non-citizens. Finally, they explored how a focus on gender and sexuality could change the way we think about democracy, immigration, and security.

- In “Organizing for Power: The Grassroots Struggle for Inclusive Democracy” (February 27, 2020), Heather Booth (Midwest Academy), Scot Nakagawa (ChangeLab), and Jyl Josephson (Rutgers-Newark) described contemporary threats to democracy that range from atomized communities and unaccountable corporate power to the pervasive growth of authoritarian populism. Arguing that community organizing is a mechanism to strengthen democracy, they identified some of the most successful strategies they have used to campaign for progressive, political change.
- “Economic Inequality and the Threat to Democracy,” with Nancy MacLean (Duke University) and Lena Lavinias (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro), originally scheduled for April 23, 2019, was canceled due to Covid-19.

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 2019 and Spring 2020) 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 entitled “Eco-Sensoriums and Geographies of Risk: Detroit, Michigan’s Affective Futurity.”

*IRW Undergraduate Learning Community on This is What Democracy Looks Like: Feminist
Re-imaginings
Comments from evaluations*

“I thoroughly enjoyed the experiential component of the course, from our field trip and yoga class to weekly dinners and hearing incredible lectures!”

“This program should never be eliminated; in fact, more of these types of classes should be added to multiple departments, as it's an amazing course.”

“The podcast project is really fun and helped me polish my skills in audio and video editing. Besides, doing research and interviews on my topic encouraged me to be more self-reflective.”

Under Sara’s guidance, a total of 39 students from 23 majors, ranging from Cognitive Science and Environmental Policy to Criminal Justice and Asian Studies, participated in the IRW’s Learning Community during 2019-2020. 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 “This Is What Democracy Looks Like: Feminist Re-Imaginings.” 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 the Fordham Multimedia Lab Manager Stacey Carton 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 Zimmerli Art Museum, the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, and a restorative yoga class. When classes transitioned to remote learning in the spring, the Learning Community held synchronous online discussions, went on a virtual tour of the British Museum, and watched the documentary film, “The Great Hack.” 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 2019-2020, extending 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 5 other professional development events that were open to the entire university community. An additional event was cancelled due to the Covid-19 crisis:

A. Public Speaking Workshop with Karla Jackson-Brewer

On Thursday, November 7, 2019, Karla Jackson-Brewer (Sine Qua Non: Allies in Healing, Africana Studies, and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies), gave a workshop on public speaking, focusing on strategies to improve presentation techniques, connect with audience members, and deliver powerful messages.

B. Job Market Basics Workshop

On Monday, November 11, 2019, 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), Julie Rajan (Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies), and Diane Shane Fruchtman (Religion). The event was moderated by Sarah Tobias (IRW) and co-sponsored by the Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics.

C. Creative Nonfiction for Academics with Mimi Schwartz

On Thursday, December 5, 2019, Mimi Schwartz (Professor Emerita in Writing at Richard Stockton University) gave a workshop on using storytelling techniques to improve professional writing.

D. Writing Books for General Audiences with Arlene Stein

On Thursday, February 13, 2020, Arlene Stein (IRW and Sociology) led a workshop on how to break into trade publishing and bridge scholarly and general audiences.

E. From Voice to Power: Using Podcasting and Audio Documentary to Engage, and Amplify Hidden Histories and Contemporary Social Justice Struggles with Chenjerai Kumanyika

This workshop, an introduction to the critical narrative skills needed to make podcasts, was originally scheduled for Thursday, March 12, 2020, but canceled when the university prohibited all in-person meetings and events between March 12, 2020 and April 15, 2020 due to Covid-19.

F. Academics as Writers: How to Overcome Blocks, Find Time to Write, and Polish Your Prose, with Angelique Haugerud

On Thursday, April 2, 2020, Angelique Haugerud (Anthropology) led a virtual 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, polish their writing, and maintain momentum.

IV. OTHER INITIATIVES, NEWS, AND PROGRAMMING

A. Feeling Democracy: A Conference on Politics and the Emotions

The Covid-19 crisis led IRW to hold its spring conference, long planned for April 17, 2020, in a virtual context. “Feeling Democracy” was designed to explore whether feminism can help us make sense of the complex relationship between politics and emotions. Politicized emotions can galvanize participation and inspire democratic renewal. But emotional appeals can also undermine democratic stability, as demonstrated by the global rise of authoritarian populism. Our conference considered the extent to which solidarities around gender, race, and sexuality are catalysts of a passionate democratic politics, and asked, among other questions, whether the expression of emotion in democratic politics is only acceptable when it is voiced by certain types of people or communities.

Noelle McAfee (Emory University) was the conference’s keynote speaker. Her talk, “Cherchez La Thing: The Melancholic Demands of Extremism,” melded feminist theory, political theory, and psychoanalysis to address some of the challenges posed to democracies by political radicalism. Other speakers included: Kathryn Abrams (University of California, Berkeley), Nermin Allam (Rutgers-Newark), Nancy Chi Cantalupo (Barry University), Belinda Davis (Rutgers-New Brunswick), Deborah Gould (University of California, Santa Cruz), Kirin Gupta (Harvard), Barbara Koziak (St. John’s University), Ileana Nachescu (Rutgers-New Brunswick), Holloway Sparks (Agnes Scott College), and Ciara Torres Spelliscy (Stetson University). Conference presentations were rich and varied, with titles ranging from “Imagining the Anti-Colony: Rage, Mourning, and Terror in Women’s Solidarities in Afro-Asia” and “Women, Hope, and Activism in Egypt” to “Passion and Danger in the Age of Trump.”

The conference’s virtual format meant that we were able to attract a particularly wide-ranging audience. More than 120 people attended the online event. Audience members were drawn from Rutgers Newark, Camden, and New Brunswick, as well as from 26 external institutions, including: Stellenbosch University (South Africa), Seton Hall, William Paterson University, Drexel University, CUNY, Duke University, York University (Canada), University of Utrecht (The Netherlands), University of South Carolina, Massey University (New Zealand), Baghdad University (Iran), University of Windsor (Canada), The New School, Columbia University, and Princeton University.

B. *Rejoinder* Journal

In May 2020, IRW published the fifth—and largest ever—issue of its online journal, *Rejoinder*, a forum for feminist, queer, and social justice-inspired work. The theme of this issue was Storytelling for Social Change. Contributors examined how stories are often complicated, sometimes even ambiguous; their telling has disparate effects and their reception is contingent on the listener. They can forge group identity and be used to change law or policy; on other occasions they are not heard, or they are considered overly burdensome, co-opted, or put to harmful ends. This issue of *Rejoinder* features articles, poetry and artwork by: Lori Barkley, Regina A. Bernard, Shima Bhamra, Dmitry Borshch, Laura Bisailon, Jeanne Ciravolo, Christina Claes, Orlaith Darling, Monica Fuglei, Margaryta Golovchenko, Janet Jones, K.L. Kivi, Elizabeth Lanphier, Ferial Pearson, Laurie Riccadonna, Lina Rincón, Judy Rohrer, Lauren Sele, Valerie Suter, and Vicki Toscano. *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 Publications

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*. As this report goes to press, they are editing the contributions for the first volume in the series, *The Perils of Populism*. The new volume will be an interdisciplinary collection of essays featuring the work of feminist scholars and activists who have spoken at the institute as part of its Distinguished Lecture Series. Contributors to the book include: Nancy Fraser, Amrita Basu, L.A. Kauffman, Sabine Hark, Cynthia Miller-Idriss, and Valentine Moghadam.

In October 2018, the editorial board of *Feminist Formations* voted in favor of accepting a proposal submitted by IRW Associate Director Sarah Tobias and former IRW Director Nicole Fleetwood for a special issue tentatively entitled “The New Status Quo: Essays on Poverty in the United States and Beyond,” based on IRW’s work in the 2015-2016 academic year. The editors are currently waiting for peer reviews to be completed before finalizing content for the issue. The journal is scheduled for publication in Spring 2021.

C. IRW Working Groups

IRW actively supported two working groups during the 2019-2020 academic year. Our 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, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick), and Itzel Corona Aguilar (Ph.D. candidate, Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick), the group held a reading and book signing by poet and professor DaMaris Hill of her new book *A Bound Woman is a Dangerous: The Incarceration of African American Women from Harriet Tubman to Sandra Bland* on September 19, 2019.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, IRW was also proud to support its first undergraduate working group, on democracy in Hong Kong. On November 11, 2019, this working group organized a panel discussion on the Hong Kong democracy movement. The panel featured five student activists from the Chinese University of Hong Kong who Skyped in anonymously as a safety precaution, and spoke under pseudonyms about the pro-democracy protests occurring in their

homeland. Addressing a full house of 180 people in the Douglass Student Center, panelists discussed the history of the protests, the demands of the pro-democracy movement, and gave powerful accounts of the dangers (including sexual violence) that Hong Kong protestors confront at the hands of the militarized police force.

D. Gender Research Centers Conference

IRW Associate Director Sarah Tobias represented the institute at the Gender Research Center's Conference at Tulane University on March 9, 2020. The daylong event, a follow-up to the University of Michigan Gender Research Center's Conference in April 2018, attracted participants from throughout the United States (some participants from the West Coast and Canada cancelled at the last minute due to Covid-19). The conference addressed topics including strategic planning and marketing, public scholarship, sexual harassment policy reform on campus, and digital humanities. In addition to formal presentations, the conference provided opportunities for informal networking between participants, consolidating relationships that were forged at the 2018 conference.

E. IRW Oral History Project

During the 2019-2020 academic year, IRW continued working with the Rutgers Oral History Archives (ROHA) on a project to document the institute's past. ROHA finished transcribing interviews with IRW's first administrative assistant, Arlene Nora, and first Executive Officer, Ferris Olin. The transcripts are now publically accessible on ROHA's website. ROHA 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 2020, IRW held its second ever crowd-funding campaign in conjunction with the Rutgers University Foundation. The campaign raised over \$1500 to purchase new audio-visual equipment for our undergraduate learning community.

G. Co-sponsorships

As part of our commitment to collaborating with other units, IRW continued to co-sponsor events with a range of centers, departments and institutes including 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, Rutgers University Libraries, and the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. 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 2019-20 can be seen in Appendix B, IRW's calendar of events.

V. VISITING SCHOLARS AT IRW

During 2019-2020 academic year, the Institute for Research on Women continued to host Dr. Basuli Deb (Queens College, CUNY/India) as she finished a draft of her manuscript on indigenous and immigrant communities in comparative settler colonial security regimes.

VI. TOWARDS 2020-2021

IRW's annual theme for 2020-2021 is "Knowing Bodies: Science and the Sex/Gender Distinction." The distinction between sex and gender, nature and culture, has provided a foundation for feminist thought and activism over the past half-century. Today, however, this distinction is increasingly being called into question. Across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences, many now ask whether biology and culture are truly distinct phenomena. Scholars are also calling into question the idea that one can even think about "sex" without gender or race. Clearly, the meaning of the sex/gender distinction has shifted over time, as different generational cohorts have revised their understandings in relation to expert knowledge, emergent sensibilities, and dissident worldviews. We will consider conversations about gender, bodies, and science through the prism of cultural and generational change, exploring the growing complexity of how we understand sex, gender, and sexuality. 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 2019-2020	About the IRW
<p>Director Professor Arlene Stein</p> <p>Associate Director Sarah Tobias, Ph.D.</p> <p>Administrative Assistant Andrea Zerpa</p> <p>Undergraduate Learning Community Coordinator Sara Perryman</p>	<p>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, 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>