

# IRW Network News

2019-2020



Our weekly seminar, now in its 23rd year, remains a vibrant space for interdisciplinary feminist exchange. It brings together faculty, graduate students, and visiting scholars to discuss their work-in-progress connected to an annual theme. The lively mix of voices around this year's seminar table includes representatives from the School of Law at Newark, the English Department at Camden, and numerous New Brunswick-based departments and schools. Our seminar helps create a small, tight-knit community of scholars at Rutgers, forging highly generative collaborations and warm relationships. Since our theme changes every year, there are always new opportunities to participate. Watch for our seminar call each November and apply if your work overlaps with ours!

By the time you receive this newsletter, IRW's spring 2020 undergraduate learning community will be well underway. Our learning community is an intimate seminar for Rutgers undergraduates. Under the expert guidance of our learning community coordinator, students meet weekly to learn scholarly skills, develop research projects related to our annual theme, and translate their findings into podcasts. They also attend the events in our Distinguished Lecture Series and receive mentoring from members of IRW's seminar. Join us on April 30 at 4.30 pm in the Cook Student Center to see the extraordinary work this community produces.

This is just a small snapshot of what IRW does. In addition to our core programming, we organize special events and programs, such as our upcoming artist's talk with Saya Woolfalk on March 12 at the Zimmerli Museum. We also run the Rutgers Public Engagement Project, develop publications (including a new Rutgers University Press book series and the online journal *Rejoinder*), support working groups, and host visiting scholars from around the world. We hope you enjoy learning more about our work.

**I**t has been another busy year at the **Institute for Research on Women**. Our annual theme for 2019-2020, "This is What Democracy Looks Like: Feminist Re-imaginings," has generated a number of very engaging discussions. After two successful Distinguished Lecture Series panels in the fall, in spring 2020 we look forward to three major democracy-related events.

The first event, "**Organizing for Power: The Grassroots Struggle for Inclusive Democracy**," on February 27, puts veteran organizers Heather Booth and Eric K. Ward in conversation with Rutgers-Newark's Jyl Josephson. A second panel, "**Economic Inequality and the Threat to Democracy**," on April 23, will feature leading U.S. political historian Nancy MacLean and Brazilian economist Lena Lavinias. Finally, our upcoming spring conference, "**Feeling Democracy: A Conference on Politics and Emotions**," will be held on April 17. Keynote speaker feminist philosopher Noelle McAfee will be joined by an array of researchers from across the nation and beyond.



## Weaving with Words: Creative Nonfiction for Academics

**“What’s in a name?”** Our Creative Nonfiction for Academics workshop provided a set of unexpected and thought-provoking answers to this question. The December 5 workshop was facilitated by author and writer **Mimi Schwartz**, who is professor emeritus in writing at Richard Stockton University and a pioneer teacher in the field of creative nonfiction. It was Mimi’s second workshop for the Rutgers Public Engagement Project, which IRW runs. Last academic year she gave a workshop on memoir writing; it was so well received that we invited her back to campus for more.

Mimi began the workshop by outlining different forms of creative nonfiction – from personal essays to op-eds. She then tackled strategies for making academic writing more compelling before setting the group an assignment: to write about their name (or someone else’s name), first in a literal sense, and then exploring its personal significance. We found out that one workshop participant had no attachment to her name whatsoever, that another relished her name’s gender-neutrality, and that a third, whose own name began with the letter “s,” was surrounded by close friends and family members whose names all started with the letter “j.” In the process of discovery, we learned how to weave the “creative” into nonfiction and have fun with writing – and with each other.

## Hong Kong Protests 101: Student Activism and the Pro-Democracy Movement

**The Rutgers community got a small but indelible taste of the Hong Kong democracy movement at an IRW-supported event on November 11.** The undergraduate-organized 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 described how the protests began as a peaceful attempt to oppose legislation that would have made it possible for Hong Kongers accused of crimes to be extradited to China for trial, potentially undermining the “one country, two systems” policy that has operated in the territory since 1997. The protesters’ demands subsequently swelled to five: withdrawal of the Extradition Bill (now accomplished); amnesty for those arrested in the protests; recognition that the protests are not “riots”; universal suffrage in key elections; and an independent inquiry into police brutality. One additional demand, the abolition of the police force itself, was added later. The panelists gave powerful accounts of the dangers Hong Kong residents confront at the hands of the militarized police. As they did so, the audience watched harrowing videos of police beating civilians and sexually abusing women.

The Hong Kong democracy event sparked controversy; weeks before the event, organizers became aware of threats to protest and potentially sabotage it. At the event itself, audience members repeatedly interrupted the panelists, and a group walked out en masse at one point during the Q&A. The audience members who remained in the room were impressed by the bravery of the Hong Kong students. It turned out that the police were firing tear gas into their campus as they spoke to us. “You cannot even imagine something like this happening to you until the police are right outside your dorm and attacking you,” the panelists wrote after the event. “We are all currently safe, but we do not know how long that will last ... I hope someone can read this and remember us.”

IRW supported the Hong Kong democracy event through its working groups program. We provide small amounts of seed money to get new research projects started, build bridges between researchers and activists, hold events, and encourage public scholarship and professional development. If you have an idea for a working group, big or small, please reach out to us.

Join us in a conference call with local Hong Kong student organizers

# HONG KONG PROTESTS

Five demands, not one less!

Heung gong yan, ga yau!

- Human rights
- Democracy
- Student movements
- Police brutality
- Police sexual violence

NOVEMBER 11, 2019  
7:30 PM - 9:30 PM  
TRAYES HALL, DOUGLASS STUDENT CENTER

Sponsored by the Institute for Research on Women.

# Upcoming IRW Events

FEBRUARY 13

## RUTGERS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

“Writing Books for General Audiences,”  
a workshop with Arlene Stein

RDJC conference room, 10.30 am to 12 noon

FEBRUARY 27

## IRW DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

“Organizing for Power: The Grassroots Struggle for Inclusive Democracy,” a panel discussion with Heather Booth (Organizer and Strategist, Midwest Academy), Jyl Josephson (Political Science & Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Rutgers University-Newark), and Eric K. Ward (Organizer and Strategist, Western States Center)

RDJC conference room, 4 pm reception; 4:30 pm event

MARCH 12

## RUTGERS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

“Storytelling for Podcasting,”  
a workshop with Chenjerai Kumanyika

RDJC conference room, 10.30 am to 12 noon

MARCH 12

## IRW SPECIAL EVENT

Artist’s talk with Saya Woolfalk

Zimmerli Museum, 4 pm reception; 4.30 pm event

APRIL 2

## RUTGERS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

“Academics as Writers: How to Overcome Blocks, Find Time to Write, and Polish Your Prose,”  
a workshop with Angelique Haugerud

RDJC conference room, 10.30 am to 12 noon

APRIL 17

## IRW SPRING CONFERENCE

“Feeling Democracy: A Conference on Politics and Emotions”

RDJC conference room, all day event

APRIL 23

## IRW DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

“Economic Inequality and the Threat to Democracy,” a panel discussion with Lena Lavinias (Welfare Economics, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) and Nancy MacLean (History and Public Policy, Duke University)

RDJC conference room, 4 pm reception; 4.30 pm event

APRIL 30

## IRW UNDERGRADUATE LEARNING COMMUNITY

Final Project Presentations and Podcast Festival

Cook Student Center, Room 202 BC, 4.30 pm to 6 pm



## Announcing IRW’s 2020-2021 Theme - Knowing Bodies: Science and the Sex/Gender Distinction

This theme will link together our seminar, distinguished lecture series, and undergraduate learning community during the 2020-2021 academic year.

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. This IRW seminar considers 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.

## Open Call for Visiting Global Scholars

IRW hosts feminist researchers from around the world as Global Scholars, enabling them to pursue their own research and writing in a supportive environment while accessing Rutgers’ unique feminist resources.

View the latest call for global scholars at: <https://irw.rutgers.edu/people/global-scholars/467-2020-2021-irw-global-scholars-call-knowing-bodies-science-and-the-sex-gender-distinction>.

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## SUPPORT OUR WORK

Visit <https://irw.rutgers.edu/support> to help support IRW's research and programming.

Thank you for contributing to our continued success!

## JOIN IRW

Join our mailing list by sending your name, email, and street address to [irw@sas.rutgers.edu](mailto:irw@sas.rutgers.edu).



### Institute for Research on Women

**Arlene Stein**, Director  
**Sarah Tobias**, Associate Director  
**Andrea Zerpa**, Administrative Assistant  
**Sara Perryman**, Learning Community Coordinator

### Executive Committee

**Tyler Carson**, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (New Brunswick)  
**Asenath Dande**, Center for Global Services (New Brunswick)  
**Kayo Denda**, Mabel Smith Douglass Library (New Brunswick)  
**Anette Freytag**, Landscape Architecture (New Brunswick)  
**Chie Ikeya**, History (New Brunswick)

**Suzanne Kim**, Law (Newark)  
**Suzy Kim**, Asian Languages and Cultures (New Brunswick)  
**Sara Perryman**, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (New Brunswick)  
**Nancy Rao**, Music (New Brunswick)  
**Kyla Schuller**, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (New Brunswick)

**Cat Fitzpatrick**, Women's and Gender Studies (Newark)  
**Mary Trigg**, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (New Brunswick)

### 2019-2020 IRW Seminar Fellows

**Sahar Aziz**, Law (Newark)  
**Paloma Caravantes-González**, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (New Brunswick)  
**Shanyn Fiske**, English (Camden)  
**Brittany Friedman**, Sociology (New Brunswick)

**Donna Gustafson**, Zimmerli Art Museum (New Brunswick)  
**Erica He**, Graduate School of Education (New Brunswick)  
**Suzanne Kim**, Law (Newark)  
**Haley Norris**, Political Science (New Brunswick)  
**Arev Pivazyan**, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (New Brunswick)

### 2019-2020 IRW Visiting Global Scholars

**Basuli Deb** (CUNY)  
**Leslye Obiora** (University of Arizona)