

IRW/IWL Seminar 1999-2000
Urbanisms, Cityscapes, Environments

Regina Brisgone

Criminal Justice

“African-American Women, Cooperative Supervision, and Crime in the Inner City.”

Research has shown that neighborhoods with informal networks that promote and enforce conventional values and law-abiding behavior have lower levels of crime and disorder. I am proposing to study the protective factors against delinquency and victimization of children in inner-city neighborhoods with special emphasis on traditional styles of cooperative supervision and monitoring of children employed by African-American caretakers. This project would build upon a pilot study that looked at African-American care-taking styles in a single neighborhood. The project would include a synthesis of relevant literature, gathering census and crime data in the target city, and determining three comparable neighborhoods to study. A preliminary hypothesis is that neighborhoods with greater levels of cooperative monitoring and supervision will enjoy lower rates of crime and disorder than neighborhoods with more individualistic styles of supervision. Another hypothesis is that crime and disorder affect the levels of interaction among neighbors and that cooperative styles of supervision and monitoring would be affected by sudden increases in crime and violence.

Ed Cohen

English

"Common Immunities, Immune Communities"

For the IRW seminar I propose to focus on the final section of my book *The Body is Not a Defensible Boundary: On Autoimmunity and Other Paradoxes* entitled "Common Immunities/Immune Communities," which meditates on how we might move beyond the historically and geo-politically specific spatializations delimited by the biomedical concepts of both "immunity" and "autoimmunity" insofar as they circumscribe what we understand the experience of healing to be. In particular, I want to consider the possibilities that the practice of what I call "healing community" might offer us for reimagining the value of serious illness as both a human and a political crisis. This matrix reclaims healing from the individualizing and isolating bio-medical concept penumbra of immunity and reimagines it as part of the collective responsibilities and practices which we denominate as "municipal." Indeed, insofar as the bio-medical concept "immunity" emerged in the late nineteenth century precisely in order to specify the way an organism perdures within an environment that both supports and threatens its life—and where the city, the locus classicus for the spread of infectious diseases, serves as the exemplary ecological terrain, we might wonder why the metaphor of "community" could not perform much of the same imaginary work. How different would the practice and the politics of healing be if we not only thought of healing as a municipal responsibility, but if we also imagined our embodiments to incorporate a "commune system" rather than an "immune system"?

Kara Donaldson

English

“Sexuality, Spectacle, and the Public(izing) Woman: Harriet Beecher Stowe and New York City, 1870-74”

In the 1870s, Harriet Beecher Stowe published two novels examining New York City’s women that reflect the large post-war role newspapers had in forming public opinion. Published in her brother Henry Ward Beecher’s New York paper the *Christian Union*, Stowe’s serials claim that reforming urban society begins in the middle-class woman’s home. Maintaining and contesting traditions, Eva Van Arsdale reforms her domestic space, social circle and hopefully, the city. Stowe intervenes in the New York cityscape through two public women who frame Eva’s private career: a newspaper woman and a prostitute. Stowe’s representation of women’s transgression of prescribed urban spaces as spectacle provoked intertextual debates involving readers, Stowe, Beecher, women’s rights activists, and newspapermen in many New York papers. By examining Stowe’s urban reform philosophy as part of the current debate about women’s changing roles in New York City, I provide an analysis of the historical relationships among the women’s sphere, women’s sexuality, and New York City, the city of late 19th-century America.

Belinda Edmondson

English, Rutgers-Newark

“Public Spectacles: Caribbean Women and the Politics of Public Performance”

Carnival as a ritual is generally perceived to be a non-political, de-racialized site of cultural interaction among the various ethnicities and classes in the region. For that very reason it provides one of the most useful examples of subtly racialized discourse that is not part of the “official” narrative on race. The purpose of this project is to depart from the internationalized narrative of race that emerges out of postcolonial theory by re-instituting localized or regionalized narratives of race. By this I hope to illustrate how race as a category is produced, not solely by discourse about and between metropole and (ex)colony, but by intra-regional or strictly local discourses as well. The book-length manuscript that I hope will emerge from this project will be interdisciplinary in scope, utilizing literary theory, history, and cultural studies approaches to the material.

HEATHER M. FENYK

City and Regional Planning

“Gender Roles, City Streets, and Transportation Systems: Ritual, Ideology, and Negotiation.”

This research proposal has at its core an interest in the shaping of modern gender roles with respect to the tradition of ritual, ideology, and negotiation of city streets and transportation systems. Through a review of literature and available research, I plan to examine how transportation as a tool for moving through public space has become engendered, and how the ideological messages of the design of public roads and transportation systems communicate a gendered construction of space. Additionally, I intend to evaluate the impact of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program with respect to equal opportunity in transportation contracting markets for women. The culmination of my research will integrate

these studies in a paper examining the gendered discourse of our city streets and transportation systems.

Leslie Fishbein

American Studies

“Good Girls/Bad Girls; From Silence to Cacophony: Feminists, Prostitutes, and the Identity Formation in Urban Anti-Vice Crusades”

“Good Girls/Bad Girls” attempts to examine the irony that while both purity crusades and abolitionism precipitated women’s emergence from the domestic sphere into the public arena as reformers and launched the first wave of feminism, it was civil rights but not antiprostitution work that was critical to the founding of the second wave, and the failure to deal forthrightly with prostitution and its allied issues became one of the notable silences of the second wave feminism. By its ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity, the city confounded reformers who viewed the world through the prism of polarity between true women and their fallen sisters since within working-class culture, “charity girls”—those who traded their sexual favors for treats by men—and even occasional prostitutes might have little difficulty in entering marriage and leading respectable lives afterward. My project would address the issues that rendered modern feminist concerns with prostitution far more problematic than those of their predecessors, particularly the absence of a teleological reform like the eradication of prostitution in the second wave, including the blurring of the distinction between true women and the fallen sisters, the discord over whether prostitution was simply a form of patriarchal oppression or whether some women might be empowered by controlling their own sexuality for commercial ends, and prostitutes’ resistance against their status as victims and their increasing assertion of an identity autonomous of the one constructed by feminist reformers and would consider the possibility that this failure led to the waning of the feminist impulse and the rise of postfeminism.

Jennifer Jones

History and Women Studies

“Terese’s Enlightenment: Women in the Shadows of the Parisian Public Sphere”

I intend to pursue a social history of the women who, like Terese Le Vasseur, Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s companion and wife, lived on the margins of the Enlightenment. Some of these women were prostitutes, some “kept women,” and others wives. They provided their lovers with petty loans, served as drinking and dining companions, and mothered their children. Ultimately, I intend to tie the social history of this group of urban women back to the new cultural history of the Enlightenment, asking how the dissonance between these two worlds shape the gendered assumptions that stood at the heart of the philosophe’s attempt to remake love, marriage, and women’s place in the world.

Samira Kawash

English

“Palestinian Placelessness: Geography, Postcoloniality, Nation, and Body.”

No abstract

Anne Manuel

Political Science

“Founding the Moral American City: Work Requirements, Race, and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Boston and Twentieth-Century New York”

My project brings together data from two chapters of my dissertation in a new way. I plan to look at the Protestant work ethic, race and gender ideology in the context of two efforts to found or re-found an explicitly moralized American city: John Winthrop’s Boston (beginning in 1630) and Rudolph Giuliani’s New York (beginning in 1992). The two cases reveal many similarities in Winthrop and Giuliani’s understanding of their role as founders of cities, their dream of a transparent and morally pure city, their thinking on race, gender, and ethnic differences, and their views on work as it is linked to moralism, race, and gender with an urban context. Winthrop and Giuliani both governed cities that designed and enacted work requirements for a portion of the population—Native Americans in Boston and poor single parents in New York. Looking at these two cases will allow me to explore claims about the tenacity and evolution of ideology on work and idleness as it is produced through, and used to ground, ethnic, racial, class, and gender differences. These two cases will also allow me to explore what happens when work and difference ideology is linked to a city that is figured as a site ripe for moral redemption.

LESLIE McCall

Sociology and Women’s Studies

“New Directions in the Study of Regional Inequality”

My research has been centrally concerned with issues related to regionally situated inequalities, specifically the local sources of gender, racial, and class inequality in regions defined by different histories of economic restructuring, including both urban and non-urban areas in the U.S. I am particularly interested in “complex” regional economics which combine characteristics which, up until this point, I have studied only as isolated aspects of individual cities. An example of such a city/region would be Silicon Valley and the greater San Francisco metropolitan area, an area flush with high-technology activity in the global services and manufacturing industries, new forms of casualized employment, and immigrant workers. There’s been no research on the full and changing structure of inequality in this bedrock of high-tech development, let alone a more focused analysis of the changing fortunes of less educated and college-/technology-educated women workers of various racial and immigrant backgrounds, and yet the prevailing neoclassical explanation of rising inequality is technological change. For this seminar, I will either produce an in-depth case study of Silicon Valley or use my empirical research as the basis for thinking about new feminist methodological approaches to the study of macro and structural phenomena, such as issues of redistribution and social inequality in addition to feminist approaches to the politics of rising class and racial inequality in the U.S.

Lisa Servon

Urban Planning & Policy Development

“Information Technology and Poor Urban Women: Examining the Question of Access through a Gendered Lens”

Through this research project, I will examine the issue of access to information technology through the lens of gender. Current patterns of access to information technology hint at a disturbing story in which information “haves” and information “have-nots” are separated along the familiar lines of gender, race, and socioeconomic status. My research project starts with the assumption that access to information technology (IT) is important and that the current imbalances in access must be addressed. IT is critical both as a resource in itself and because it provides access to a broad spectrum of other resources, including education, job information, networks, and the ability to participate fully in democratic society. My proposed project builds on research I am currently undertaking that consists of: 1) reviewing state and local policy in the area of information technology; 2) conducting a telephone survey of 80 community-based computer networks (CBCNs) currently in existence; and 3) performing case studies of the following CBCNs: Austin Free-Net in Austin, Texas; Playing to Win in New York City; Charlotte’s Web in Charlotte, North Carolina; and Seattle Community Network in Seattle, Washington. I am focusing specifically on urban areas and, more specifically, on lower income communities for this work.

Zdravko Vassilev

Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute

“Inequitable Distribution of Hazardous Air Pollutants Across Urban and Rural Communities: Implications for the Reproductive Outcomes of Women”

Environmental equity is a principle promoting the fair treatment of all people regardless of their race, gender, income, and culture with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. In the past twenty years substantial research has shown inequitable distributions of environmental hazards among race, gender, and income groups. My project intends to explore the important public health question of what disparate exposures mean for the distribution of adverse reproductive outcomes among women living in rural and urban communities in New Jersey. I will use a cross-sectional approach integrating modeled outdoor hazardous air pollutant concentrations and data from the birth certificate registry. The results of the study are expected to illustrate the greater risk of adverse reproductive outcomes for women living in urban communities due to the higher concentrations of hazardous air pollutant in these areas. Factors like poverty, race, and income level also play roles in the observed inequities. Changes in current environmental policy and regulations are needed to deal successfully with the problems of women in the modern urban environments.