

Director's Preface

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The Institute for Research on Women, in collaboration with the Institute for Women's Leadership, is pleased to publish this collection of working papers from its seventh annual interdisciplinary seminary, *Femininities, Masculinities, and the Politics of Sexual Difference(s)*. In October 2002, when we issued our annual call for faculty and graduate students to submit applications for the seminar, we wanted to bring together a group of researchers interested in exploring the changing forms and representations of femininities and masculinities, the social construction and fluidity of bodies and of sexual differences, and the ways in which sexual difference sustains and subverts the structures, institutions, and relationships of power. We were hopeful that our theme would generate exciting interdisciplinary and path-breaking projects. As these papers attest, our expectations were fully justified.

The 2003-2004 Seminar brought together fourteen faculty and doctoral fellows, visiting scholars from France, India, Korea, and the United States, and other university and community researchers for weekly conversations linked to the seminar theme. This year's fellows, chosen from an unusually large group of applicants, represented a broad spectrum of departments and disciplines, including anthropology, political science, English, history, psychology, music, Jewish studies, women's and gender studies, sociology, education, and Germanic languages and literature.

Most of the weekly sessions in the yearlong seminar zeroed in on the writing projects of individual fellows, with each discussion launched by a prepared comment from another fellow. We also set aside four meetings over the course of the year for conversations with the IRW's distinguished visiting lecturers. During the fall, seminar members met with Lila Abu-Lughod

(Anthropology, Columbia University) and with R.W. Connell (Education, University of Sydney). Spring visitors included Joanne Meyerowitz (History, Yale University) and Deborah Willis (Photography and Imaging, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University).

In addition, seminar fellows participated in other lectures, conferences, and symposia sponsored by the Institute. The year opened with a talk by Rutgers University Board of Governors History Professor Suzanne Lebsack, who invited the 120 faculty, staff, and students in attendance to join her in rethinking "the existence, parameters, limits, and possibilities of the concept women's culture." The Institute's Distinguished Lecture Series concluded with a provocative paper by Liz Grosz (Women's and Gender Studies) on Alfred Kinsey's sexuality studies, and invited comments from Joan Scott (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton). The spring was particularly busy, with a symposium on African Women's Health and Sexuality, funded through a Research Council Grant to the IRW and the Women's and Gender Studies Department, and a daylong conference, *Labor, Class, and Sexuality*, supported in part by the Social Science Research Council.

I consider myself privileged to have been part of the seminar this year. It was a model of respectful and constructive interdisciplinary engagement, a constant source of intellectual inspiration and new bibliographic references, and a seemingly infinite well of laughter, eloquence, and good feeling. I am confident that this introduction to the stellar and illuminating work of the seminar fellows will encourage readers to seek out the many published articles, books, dissertations, and essays sparked by the working papers that follow.