

## Call for Applications Institute for Research on Women

The IRW announces its twelfth annual interdisciplinary seminar, "Gendered Agency." Although the term agency has become increasingly popular in contemporary scholarship, the concept remains underspecified and often misused. What does agency mean? How is it constituted and expressed? Where is it located? How does agency shape and become shaped by structures of power like colonialism, capitalism, religion, and the media? Often "agency" is conflated with "resistance," and shaped by assumptions from classical Western thought about rational subjects exercising free will. Recent feminist work, however, has challenged the "romance of resistance" and assumptions about rational agents to offer more nuanced analyses of agency sensitive to questions of power, consciousness, intentionality, subjectivity, culture, history, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality and gender. But what evidence "counts" as reflective of gendered agency and how do we read and/or interpret how and why certain forms of agency are gendered?

This seminar will explore how attention to gender complicates and challenges contemporary understandings, uses and expressions of agency. We will consider whether there are explicitly gendered forms of agency, and, if so, how these are constituted, expressed, and experienced at different times, in different places, and through different media. By thinking about the relationship of gender and agency through a comparative, interdisciplinary lens, seminar participants will explore the specific social histories, political struggles, cultural assumptions, spiritual beliefs, economic constraints, and biological factors that shape how and why males and females act as they do.

We invite applications from faculty and advanced graduate students whose projects explore aspects of gendered agency. Such studies may focus on any time period(s) or geographical location(s) and be rooted in any disciplinary or interdisciplinary approach(es). Possible questions relevant to the seminar theme might include:

- How are the dynamics of gender and agency expressed in artistic, poetic, visual or literary forms?
- Are there primarily female or male domains for expressing critique, commentary, celebration, censure, complicity, or caution?
- How do women and men act in response to conditions such as impoverishment and globalization in ways that are gendered, creative, complicit, resistant, effective, or self-destructive (perhaps all at the same time)?
- What can attention to language, biology, food, material culture, embodiment, performance, religion, media and other domains tell us about the modes, forms and perhaps origins and motivations of gendered agency?

Individuals from all disciplines, schools, and programs on all three Rutgers campuses with projects related to the seminar theme are welcome to apply. We invite applicants from a wide range of backgrounds, including the humanities, social sciences, arts, sciences, medicine, public health, education, business, social work, information technology, engineering, public policy, law, and other fields. We also welcome proposals from Rutgers-based writers, artists, performers, and activists.

The seminar will support up to eight Rutgers Faculty Fellows and up to four Graduate Fellows from Rutgers professional schools and SAS departments/programs on the New Brunswick, Camden, and Newark campuses. Seminar fellows will attend the Thursday morning seminar meetings during Fall and Spring Semesters 2009-2010, provide a paper for discussion in the seminar, and open a seminar session with an extended response to another scholar's paper.

Graduate students will receive a \$5,000 stipend for the year as seminar fellows. Faculty fellows will receive either \$4,000 in research support or a one-course teaching release for one semester to enable them to participate in the year-long seminar. Departments will be reimbursed for instructional replacements at the contractual PTL rate. Financial arrangements will be made in advance of the seminar with the department chairs and/or appropriate deans.

Applications should be received at the IRW by Monday, November 17th, 2008. All decisions of the selection committee are final. 2009-2010 Seminar Fellows will be notified by December 8th, 2008. Please contact the IRW at [irw@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:irw@rci.rutgers.edu) if you have any questions or would like more information.

# RUTGERS

Institute for Research on Women  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
160 Ryders Lane  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8555